



THE TIME IS NOW

A window of opportunity exists for a ballast water agreement

We are much closer to a workable solution to the ballast water challenge than we were 12 months ago. There are serious proposals for an effective federal ballast water regulation working their way through the Congress.

Owners of international vessels on the Great Lakes have invested heavily in promising ballast water treatment technology. A new ballast water treatment testing facility is now fully operational on the Great Lakes, thanks to a unique partnership of non-profit, private and governmental enti-

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ties. All the entities involved in these initiatives have decided to make difficult but responsible decisions to address the complex ballast water problem. It's now time, however, for one additional key stakeholder to make a similar responsible commitment to solving this long-running problem: the environmental community.

The environmental community has certainly been actively engaged in the ballast water debate for the past several years. But we have moved beyond the debate stage of this issue to the negotiation stage, where compromise by all parties is needed. No stakeholder group is going to get all of what it wants, as the legislative proposals put forth in the Congress make clear. But the actual pieces of what a comprehensive solution could look like are being identified and each stakeholder has a serious duty to decide, and decide soon, what it is willing to invest individually in order to gain an

overall solution to the ballast water problem. The window of opportunity will not remain open long.

The commercial maritime industry on the Great Lakes has committed itself to investing in an effective solution to this problem. Fednav, Ltd., the largest operator of ocean-going vessels on the Great Lakes, has invested considerable technical and financial resources in developing one of the most promising on-board ballast water treatment systems—the "OceanSaver" system.

The second largest international carrier in the system, Canfornav, Ltd., has also made significant investments in another promising technology, the "Electro-Clean" system, and has already received initial approval from the International Maritime Organization in London. Together, these two companies are among the world leaders in funding cutting-edge research and testing of a technological ballast water solution.

Moreover, the Great Lakes port community, in conjunction with various other partners from the private and public sectors, has invested in the Great Ships Ini-

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tiative. This, in turn, has resulted in development of the only freshwater ballast water treatment testing facility in North America. This facility, located in the twin ports of Duluth-Superior, is fully operational and ready to begin testing promising treatment technologies this fall (see story on page 72). In addition to these industry initiatives, the U.S. and Canadian Seaway Corporations are actively engaged in ballast water testing of ships entering the

Great Lakes Seaway System through their Enhanced Seaway Inspection program.

It is clear to me that the commercial maritime industry in the Great Lakes Seaway System understands that it must seriously invest in a solution to the ballast water

The Great Lakes port community, in conjunction with various other partners from the private and public sectors, has invested in the Great Ships Initiative, which has developed the only freshwater ballast water treatment testing facility in North America.

problem, in a way it has never been done before. It understands that it must be ready to compromise on what the workable solution will ultimately look like. The environmental community should acknowledge the industry's commitment and be ready to respond in an equally principled manner.

The period for all-or-nothing demands is over (if it was ever present). If the environmental community fails to heed the call for a responsible commitment to compromise on this vital issue, a priceless opportunity to fix a longstanding vexing problem will be lost. In such a case the public will be the ultimate loser. I urge the environmental community to not make perfection the enemy of the good. The public that we both serve in our respective ways deserves our best cooperation not useless argument. ■

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