



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**WATERWAYS COUNCIL, INC. COMMENDS U.S. ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS FOR REOPENING MCALPINE
LOCK AHEAD OF SCHEDULE**
*GROUP CAUTIONS THAT SIMILAR PROBLEMS MAY EXIST
THROUGHOUT THE INLAND SYSTEM*

Washington, DC – Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI) commends the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their professional efforts and around-the-clock diligence to reopen McAlpine Lock on the Ohio River, near Louisville, KY, three-and-one-half days ahead of schedule. The lock was closed August 9 for what was expected to be a 14-day shutdown to repair the antiquated lock.

“The Corps of Engineers did a spectacular job of alerting waterways transporters, shippers, and users in advance of the closure, and then working overtime to repair the failing mitre gate and disintegrating mechanical components,” said R. Barry Palmer, President/CEO of Waterways Council, Inc.

The closure affected river traffic moving key “building block” commodities such as coal, petrochemicals, aggregates, metallic ores, scrap metal, iron and steel products, ferro-alloys, minerals, grain and fertilizer from the Gulf Coast and the Lower Mississippi River Region, to and throughout the Ohio Valley. Closing the lock was of great concern to users of the waterways system because, unlike most navigation locks on the system, there is no auxiliary lock available at McAlpine, and the river was closed to all navigation at this location for the duration of the repairs.

WCI believes that the McAlpine lock closure should serve as a wake-up call for all those who understand the enormous importance of the Nation’s inland waterways system. Similar critical modernization needs clearly exist in many other locations throughout the system.

“The majority of the Nation’s locks and dams are beyond their 50 year economic design life, and funding to maintain these critical infrastructure projects is dangerously low. The costs to heavy industry, and ultimately the American public, of deferred maintenance at

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critical locations along America's river system are rising exponentially. Currently locks on the system are unavailable about 120,000 hours annually because of scheduled and unscheduled delays," Palmer continued.

WCI commissioned an interim report, "Study of the Effects on the Economy of the Upcoming Emergency Closure of the McAlpine Lock," which was released on July 21, 2004. WCI is currently conducting and will release a follow-up survey with stakeholders affected by the closure to determine further quantitative impacts.

Waterways carriers, shippers, port authorities and companies that use the Nation's waterways to transport essential bulk commodities such as coal, grain, petroleum and chemicals valued at more than \$31 billion annually rely upon a well-maintained and modern national system of ports and waterways.

A critical economic generator, the Nation's waterways transport key building block commodities such as coal, which supplies 50 percent of the Nation's electricity. The inland waterways is the most efficient mode of transportation, moving 16 percent of the Nation's freight for just two percent of the freight transportation cost, saving shippers and consumers more than \$7 billion annually compared to alternate transportation modes. Also more environmentally sound, waterways transport handles cargo equal to 40 million trucks or 10 million rail cars each year.

Waterways Council, Inc. is the national public policy organization advocating a modern and well-maintained national system of ports and inland waterways. The group is supported by more than 250 waterways carriers, shippers, port authorities, shipping associations and waterways advocacy groups from all regions of the country.

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