



## **LOCKS AGE UNGRACEFULLY**

*The American system of ports and waterways, the greatest commerce and transportation network in the world, could fall victim to lack of funding for modernization, maintenance and necessary infrastructure improvements. As a result, U.S. competitiveness could be eroded and ultimately U.S. consumers will pay the price.*

### **LOCKS AND DAMS SHOW THEIR AGE**

Today, more than half of the 240 operational Corps-funded lock chambers in the United States – which handle more than 620 million tons of freight each year – are over 50 years old and have exceeded their economic design lives. The replacement value of our lock and dam facilities has been estimated at more than \$125 billion. Owned and operated by the federal government, the system's infrastructure has been recapitalized with an investment of about \$4 billion since 1986, half of which was funded from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund.

Many locks currently in use are too small for today's larger tows. They are susceptible to closures and long delays for repairs and are unable to deal effectively with lines and wait times that result from their obsolescence. On the Upper Mississippi River, for instance, almost all lock chambers are 600 feet in length. However, the average length of a modern tow (15 barges pushed by a towboat) is 1,200 feet. Consequently, for a modern tow to navigate

through these antiquated locks, it must split in half and transit the lock one section at a time, resulting in costly delays.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reports increasing amounts of scheduled and unscheduled downtime at the locks on America's inland navigation system. In 2007, for example, the Corps reported navigation locks were unavailable 95,877 hours for scheduled repairs, 42,530 hours for unscheduled repairs and 19,023 hours for unscheduled mechanical breakdowns, totaling 157,430 hours or 6,560 days. Queue delays at congested or unavailable locks cost industry and consumers hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

*In 2007, navigation locks were unavailable a total of 157,430 hours due to repairs or mechanical breakdowns.*



*Lock and dam infrastructure improvements are essential to the nation's economic well-being.*



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*Waterways Council, Inc.  
is the national public policy organization  
advocating a modern and well-maintained  
national system of ports and inland waterways.*

## ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF INFRASTRUCTURE INATTENTION

Our country's inland navigation system plays a critical role in our nation's economy, moving hundreds of millions of tons of domestic commerce. Our inland waterways facilitate a significant portion of the \$951 billion worth of imports and exports to and from the United States each year. The transportation cost savings alone have been estimated to exceed \$7 billion annually compared to the cost of shipping this type of tonnage by alternative modes.

U.S. ports, which handle 95% of the volume of overseas foreign trade, must continue to modernize in order to maintain efficient operations and to handle the projected growth in trade. Key navigational channels must be deepened to accommodate newer, larger vessels. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must be given adequate resources to deepen ports and continue to properly maintain these vital gateways for domestic and international trade.



*Failure of miter gates, shown here, disrupts navigation for extended periods.*



## FUNDS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE ARE LIMITED

The surplus that had been gathering in the Inland Waterways Trust Fund – from \$200 million to \$400 million from 1992 to 2002 – has been spent down. Current tax revenues plus interest are running about \$85 - \$90 million per year. Obligations for FY 2006 – FY 2008 were about \$200 million per year, more than double the level in the 1990s. In 2009, revenues are expected to be equal to expenditures and beginning in 2010 trust fund revenues are expected to be insufficient to fund the ongoing construction program.

Waterborne transportation is generally out of sight, out of mind. But the inland waterways transportation system binds us together in this country and allows us to turn on lights, eat our cereal in the morning and drive our cars to work. It deserves our support and our commitment to nurture, not neglect.

*The nation's inland waterways transportation system needs our support.*



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