Icy winter not affecting Locks crew

140306

Marcy Misner/ Amy

**Locks—WRAP**

(length )

Some ships are still moving this winter in the St. Marys River, but none are going through the Soo Locks right now.

Annual inspections are underway.

Marcy Misner went down into the Poe Lock to see what’s left to be done before shipping resumes.

***Ambient sound of ice breaking***

The Sault Locks are high and dry - mostly - as crews finish up work ahead of the new shipping season.

**They’re going to re-water both Locks the week of March 17.**  a

That’s Kurt Bunker, Chief of the St. Marys River Section of the Corps of Engineers. He’s taking me through the de-watered Poe Lock and the network of tunnels that run around and beneath it. We’re standing in one of the 14-foot tall culverts at the bottom of the Lock.

***Ice - ambient***

It resembles a Roman catacomb – I can’t describe how ancient these stone walls look to me, even though construction was finished in 1968.

There’s still some ice on the floors and it crunches under our feet. It’s an eerie feeling, but secure. For now.

***(Ice breaking)***

Outside in the empty lock, crews are busy. They use steam to melt ice so they can keep working – and, Bunker says, so the Lock gates will be ready to open.

**They’re also doing maintenance work general maintenance work, some hydraulics work, airline works around them. They’ll do concrete repairs, general inspections, things they can’t do when there’s water in the Lock.**

Next week, Bunker says engineers will open the valve at the upper end of the Lock , and water will rush into the culverts and fill the Lock.

That will ensure that the locks are ready when the 2014 shipping season begins March 25.

SOQ

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140306

Marcy Misner/ar

**Locks—1—**

(length :28)

Officials say it’s T-minus- two-weeks until the Soo Locks open for the 2014 shipping season.

The locks are closed right now for the annual winter inspections and maintenance.

Mark Gill is the Director of Vessel Traffic for the US Coast Guard in Sault Ste. Marie,

He says although the locks are temporarily out of commission, ships are still moving on the St. Mary’s River.`

**Loc ks--1**

**During the closed navigation season, it doesn’t mean everybody stops. There is a tremendous amount of activity that’s going on around the Lakes, albeit very very slowly and with just a few amount of ships. So, coarse salt. We need road salt in the wintertime, that salt comes out of mines that are located underneath Lake Huron and lake Erie. It’s delivered via ships. Much of what’s moving around is heating oil, fuel oil gasoline and diesel. (:28)**

The locks are scheduled to reopen March 25.

Gill says even when the Locks are open, shipping lanes will still be clogged with ice. And he says, navigation will be challenging for some time to come

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Marcy Misner/ar

**Locks—2—**

(length :27)

Many areas have been enjoying more moderate temperatures. And the official first day of spring is only ten (nine) -days away.

The clock is ticking at the Soo Locks where annual maintenance work is finishing up before the 2014 shipping season begins.

Crews have been working hard through this cold winter , and they’re finally finishing up as the spring breakout begins for this year’s shipping season.

Kurt Bunker is Chief of the St. Marys River section of the US Corps of Engineers .

He says soon crews will low steam hoses into the water outside the Lock gates.

**Locks--2**

**Like you saw out there we’re starting to bubble our gates to free the ice from behind so we can get them swung open and we’ll be doing the same thing at the upper end where there are stop logs – that portable dam that we put in when we de-water our lock. So we can pull those bulkheads out and re-water the Lock. There’s really not anything on the horizon that’s going to prevent us from re-watering after next week. (:27)**

The locks are scheduled to reopen March 25.

Bunker says even when the Locks are open, shipping lanes will still be clogged with ice. And he says, navigation will be challenging for some time to come.

WEB VERSION

Some ships are still moving this winter in the St. Marys River, but none are going through the Soo Locks right now. Annual inspections are underway.

The Sault Locks are high and dry - mostly - as crews finish up work ahead of the new shipping season.

“They’re going to re-water both Locks the week of March 17,” said Kurt Bunker, Chief of the St. Marys River Section of the Corps of Engineers.

He’s taking this writer through the de-watered Poe Lock and the network of tunnels that run around and beneath it. We’re standing in one of the 14-foot tall culverts at the bottom of the Lock.

It resembles a Roman catacomb – I can’t describe how ancient these stone walls look to me, even though construction was finished in 1968.

There’s still some ice on the floors and it crunches under our feet. It’s an eerie feeling, but secure. For now.

Outside in the empty lock, crews are busy. They use steam to melt ice so they can keep working – and, Bunker says, so the Lock gates will be ready to open as the spring breakout begins for this year’s shipping season.

“They’re also doing maintenance work general maintenance work, some hydraulics work, airline works around them. They’ll do concrete repairs, general inspections, things they can’t do when there’s water in the Lock,” he said.

He says soon crews will low steam hoses into the water outside the Lock gates.

“Like you saw out there we’re starting to bubble our gates to free the ice from behind so we can get them swung open and we’ll be doing the same thing at the upper end where there are stop logs – that portable dam that we put in when we de-water our lock. So we can pull those bulkheads out and re-water the Lock. There’s really not anything on the horizon that’s going to prevent us from re-watering after next week,” Bunker said.

Next week, Bunker says engineers will open the valve at the upper end of the Lock, and water will rush into the culverts and fill the Lock.

That will ensure that the locks are ready when the 2014 shipping season begins March 25.

Even thought the locks are closed right now for the annual winter inspections and maintenance, ships are still moving on the St. Marys River and Great Lakes.

Mark Gill is the Director of Vessel Traffic for the US Coast Guard in Sault Ste. Marie,

“During the closed navigation season, it doesn’t mean everybody stops. There is a tremendous amount of activity that’s going on around the Lakes, albeit very very slowly and with just a few amount of ships. So, coarse salt. We need road salt in the wintertime, that salt comes out of mines that are located underneath Lake Huron and lake Erie. It’s delivered via ships. Much of what’s moving around is heating oil, fuel oil gasoline and diesel,” Gill said.

Gill says even when the Locks are open, shipping lanes will still be clogged with ice. And he says, navigation will be challenging for some time to come

Even when the Locks open, shipping lanes will still be clogged with ice. And the men say, navigation will be challenging for some time to come.