

## Resources

### Snyder Urges Congress to Fund Soo Lock Upgrades

July 12, 2016

Last week, Governor Snyder wrote Michigan's congressional delegation to stress the importance of fully funding upgrades to the Soo Locks. Snyder urged Congress to replace the Davis and Sabin Locks with a single, larger lock that would provide redundancy should the Poe Lock fail. The Poe Lock is currently the only lock capable of handling the 1,000-foot freighters used to transport raw materials like iron ore. Snyder's letter describes the predicted fallout of a temporary shutdown:

- 75 percent of U.S. steel production would end within two weeks;
- only 35 percent of iron ore and coal would find alternative methods of transportation;
- 100 percent of automobile production would halt;
- 78 percent of mining operations would stop within weeks; and
- 87 percent of North American capacity to make tin cans, jar or bottle tops, and paints would cease.

According to Snyder and a report by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, a six month closure of the Soo Locks would leave 4 million people in the Great Lakes region out of work. I first wrote about the U.S. Department of Homeland Security report in March, after a *Detroit Free Press* article predicting "dire consequences" in the event of a Soo Lock failure.

The Governor's call for Congressional funding arrives ahead of the results of a \$1.35 million economic impact study currently being conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The study, set to be completed in 2018, looks into the economic impact a lock reconfiguration would have. The \$580 million reconfiguration was authorized by Congress in the 1980s, but has yet to be fully funded.

Like the Governor, Senators Stabenow and Peters penned a letter last May urging the Corps to complete the Soo Locks study as quickly as possible in order to fast track construction.

While construction on a new lock may not begin for some time, the Locks are set to receive a new control system this summer. Assistant Area Engineer Jim Peach told the *Detroit News* in April that the new control system would be more digital and automated.

Parties interested in providing goods or services to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for projects related to the Soo Locks should review the Federal Business Opportunities website. Soo Locks projects are categorized as Detroit District opportunities and use the contract code W911XK.

For more information, please contact Andrew J. Switalski, author of this alert, at 517-374-9140 or [aswitalski@dykema.com](mailto:aswitalski@dykema.com). You can also visit Dykema's Infrastructure Law & Policy Blog for more updates as we continue to monitor various infrastructure issues.

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