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Infrastructure Investments Prepare Seaway for New Shipping Season

WASHINGTON – In order to prepare for the 2019 shipping season, the U.S. Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC) has dedicated the winter shutdown season to investing in critical capital investment projects at the Seaway’s U.S. locks. Since 2009, the SLSDC has invested \$152 million in the maintenance, rehabilitation, and modernization of the U.S. locks under the ground-breaking Seaway Asset Renewal Program (ARP).

In 2019, the SLSDC will complete the installation of the first-of-its-kind Hands Free Mooring (HFM) technology at the U.S. locks. This will complete the deployment of this technology throughout the binational Seaway System.

“The state-of-the-art Hands Free Mooring technology is arguably the most important technological advance at the Seaway since 1959 and will revolutionize the vessel transit experience through the Seaway,” said SLSDC Deputy Administrator Craig H. Middlebrook. “Investments in our nation’s marine transportation infrastructure are critical to its safety, reliability, and competitiveness. The USDOT is committed to making the necessary capital investments to ensure the long-term viability of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System.”

The HFM system uses vacuum pads, each of which provides up to 20 tons of holding force, mounted on vertical rails inside the lock chamber wall to secure the ship during the lockage process as it is raised or lowered while keeping it at a fixed distance from the lock wall. The HFM technology will increase efficiency, improve safety, and reduce operating costs to Seaway users and will reduce lock transit times by nearly seven minutes per lockage, equating to 3-4 hours of potential time savings on a roundtrip transit. The use of HFM will also significantly increase the pool of vessels worldwide that will be able to enter the Great Lakes Seaway System.

Additional major winter work at the U.S. locks this year included concrete replacement, valve upgrades, and mechanical and electrical maintenance.

The St. Lawrence Seaway is scheduled to open on March 26, 2019. In 2018, the Seaway moved nearly 41 million metric tons of cargo, including 5.2 million metric tons of U.S. exports and 4.1 million metric tons of U.S. imports. This created more than \$35 billion in economic activity and more than 237,000 U.S. and Canadian jobs dependent upon maritime commerce on the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System, making the waterway a driver of economic development in the Great Lakes region and the nation.

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Direct link to [Saint Lawrence Seaway Winter Works 2019](#) video.

Hands Free Mooring technology installation at U.S. Seaway locks.

