

# Great Lakes Shipping Chronicle

SINCE 2014

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## M/V Michipicoten Rescues Jet Skier



The *Michipicoten* in the Straits of Mackinaw a few days after the rescue- Image: B. Falkowski

**July 9-**On the evening of July 8, 2019, the self-unloading bulk carrier *Michipicoten* received a call from US Coast Guard Sector Soo that there was a missing jet skier out of Grand Portage, Minnesota. The missing man was located around 2 a.m. on July 9 and brought aboard. He was taken care of, and the Jet Ski was also brought aboard. The man was dropped off in Sault Ste. Marie, where he was met by family members. He was supposedly riding his jet ski from Grand Portage, Minnesota to Isle Royale, when he ran out of fuel, being left stranded out in the lake. Great job to the crew of the *Michipicoten* for the successful rescue!

## Soo Locks Ore Records Broken

**July 14-**July was a record-breaking month at the Soo Locks. The Iron Ore Tonnage Record was broken 3 times! In the early morning hours of July 8, 2019, the *Walter J. McCarthy Jr.* carried a record 75,387 net tons of taconite pellets through the locks. Only a few hours later, her sister *American Integrity* carried 76,063 net tons of iron ore. These two vessels broke *American Integrity's* previous record of 75,095 tons, set on September 23, 2017. Less than a week later on July 14, the *American Integrity* broke her own record yet again, laden with 76,358 net tons of iron ore, loaded to a draft of 30 feet, making it a record load and draft.

## LCA Study Shows Economic Loss Due to Sub-Par Icebreaking



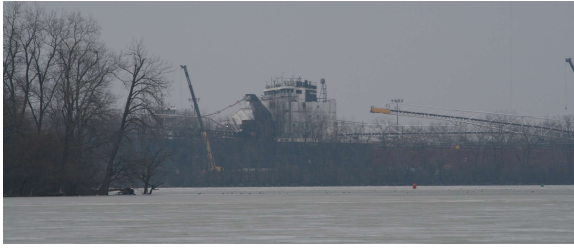
The USCGC *Mackinaw*, the US Coast Guard's only heavy icebreaker on the Great Lakes. Photo: Brendan Falkowski

**Aug. 1-**A recent study's results were announced by the Lake Carrier's Association, and they weren't very good. Just over the last winter, the economy suffered \$1 billion as well as over 5,000 jobs in loss due to icebreaking issues. That's not even what the government missed out on, which included \$125 million in lost tax dollars and almost \$50 million lost by local and state governments. Two years of these losses would be enough to compensate a new heavy-icebreaker on the Great Lakes. Money is lost when ships are delayed due to ice, which means fewer trips in a season, which leads to a loss in profit by shipping companies, manufacturers, and electric utilities. Having a second *Mackinaw*-sized icebreaker would help prevent economic losses such as these.

## Canada Introduces Plan to Build 6 New Icebreakers

**Aug. 2-**Canada's federal government announced a new plan to build 6 new icebreakers for the Canadian Coast Guard. The new vessels will operate in the Arctic, Eastern Canada, and the St. Lawrence Seaway.

## A Bit More on the *St. Clair* Fire



The *St. Clair* in Toledo after the fire-Photo: Brendan Falkowski

**July 23-**A marine safety alert was issued following the fire aboard the M/V *St. Clair* in Toledo this past February. The Coast Guard recommends:

- “Ensure that continuous fire, safety, and security watches are maintained and that the watchmen are provided specific written instructions regarding their duties in the event of a fire or other emergency situation; and
- That persons with vessel engineering experience and knowledge of engine room systems are used during lay-up preparations to prevent unintended circumstances such as the flooding of the machinery space in this instance.”

With the alert came more information on what happened on the fateful night of February 16. The watchman assigned to the vessel was not present at the time of the disaster; he had gone home for the weekend a few hours earlier. That day, crews had done welding work in the ballast tanks and conveyor tunnel areas deep within the vessel. The work crews left the ship at around 6 in the evening, and only two hours later, a watchman aboard one of the nearby ships observed the *St. Clair* on fire.

Arrival of authorities on the scene was delayed because the watchman contacted the contractors before dialing 911. Once authorities arrived, they began to spray water on the hull and accommodations block to cool down the vessel. But even then complications arose. There was only one fire hydrant at the dock, and it was frozen.

All of these delays resulted in the engine room and machinery spaces burning for almost a day and a half, and the fire spread up into the accommodations block and also the conveyor belts for the self-unloading system, which run underneath the cargo hold and up on deck to the 250’ long boom. During all of this, shore power failed, and several pipelines and valves remained open, allowing water to flood the machine shop and several other areas.

Once inspectors boarded the vessel 11 days later, they concluded the source of the fire was in the machinery space, and was likely ignited by one of numerous heaters that were left on and unattended after welding work was done.

It is still unknown what the *St. Clair*’s owners, American Steamship Company, have in mind for the vessel. Only time will tell what her final fate is.

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### Issue Citations:

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