

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 4, 2009**Contact: Anne Burns**
(703) 841-9300**SHUTDOWN OF REGIONAL WATERBORNE TRANSPORTATION
THREATENS BARGE DELIVERY OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES AS
WINTER APPROACHES*****Lock Closure Would Impact Shipments of Home Heating Oil, Road Salt and
Coal to Area***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The shutdown of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and O’Brien Lock on the Calumet River threatens the delivery of commodities essential to the Chicago region in winter, warned the American Waterways Operators (AWO), the national trade association of the American tugboat, towboat and barge industry. The closure will occur while U.S. government agencies conduct a planned fish kill of Asian carp suspected to be in the vicinity of Lake Michigan. The closure for a minimum of 10 days, and done without proper advance notice to the towing industry, shows a lack of understanding and consideration by the agencies of the economic impact of the shutdown.

The closure of O’Brien Lock will greatly increase shipping costs and in some cases, stop shipments altogether. Much of the Chicago region’s oil, cement, iron and coal travels through this lock; approximately 14.6 million tons of these and other commodities transit through Calumet River and Harbor per year. Without an alternate route that can accommodate the high levels of traffic that traverse the O’Brien Lock and the Calumet-Sag Channel, delivery of key industrial building blocks and exports could be delayed, subject to significant increases in shipping costs, or stopped altogether just as winter approaches. The majority of the region’s road salt and home heating oil is delivered by barge.

Since barge transportation is the most environmentally benign mode of cargo transportation, the closures could also result in more pollution in the region. With waterborne commerce shut down, shippers companies will need to find alternative modes of transportation, including rail and truck transport, resulting in unhealthier air quality and increased congestion on the region’s already crowded highways. AWO members have, for many years, partnered with the Coast

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Guard and the Army Corps of Engineers concerning the operation of the fish barrier to protect the Great Lakes and the Western Rivers from invasive species, while ensuring the safe and continued operation of this major transportation route. The Canal and lock closure upsets this balance and threatens the economy and environment of the region.

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