

Duluth Ship Canal Concerns Work Group Recommendations



**HTAC Meeting
September 3, 2025**

Mike Wenholz



General Purpose

Reasons the Work Group was formed:

- 3 topics/concerns have been brought up many times over many years in Navigation & Safety Subcommittee and HTAC meetings
 - The concerns have obviously not been addressed (at least not fully)
 - To bring these topics/concerns to finality within the Navigation & Safety Subcommittee and HTAC
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- Overall: Consider & improve safety for all users

Work Group Participants

Steve Brossart (US Army Corps of Engineers)

Chris Edyvean (Western Great Lakes Pilots Association)

Matti Erpestad (Day Trippers)

Zach Fedak (US Coast Guard MSU Duluth)

Gary Glass (Izaak Walton League)

Tim Haak (Western Great Lakes Pilots Association)

Joel Johnson (Lakehead Boat)

Kris Laman (US Army Corps of Engineers)

Richard Laskey (Key Lakes)

Melody David McKnight (University of Minnesota Duluth)

Matt Miller (Minnesota DNR)

Amanda Rosebrock (Fond du Lac Band)

Jeff Udd (Duluth Seaway Port Authority)

Mike Wenholz (Metropolitan Interstate Council)

Specific Purpose

The Work Group is to address the following concerns and bring finality to each as a Subcommittee:

1. Improve current flow lights for commercial & recreational use of the Duluth Ship Canal
2. Duluth Ship Canal Velocity Sensor Improvements
3. Duluth Ship Canal Portage on Park Point (8th Street at Lake Avenue & Minnesota Avenue)

Context

- The Navigation & Safety Subcommittee (nor HTAC) has no authority over these topics/concerns

Timeline

The following actions were proposed for the Work Group to complete within 3 meetings:

1. Define the exact issue for each of the 3 topics/concerns (Mtg 1, 1/8/25)
2. Identify the desired resolution for each of the 3 topics/concerns (Mtg 1, 1/8/25)
3. Identify who has the authority to bring each of the 3 topics/concerns to resolution (Mtg 2, 3/11/25)
4. Determine the specific final action(s) the Work Group will take to attempt to resolve each of the 3 topics/concerns. If applicable, identify the steps of each action (Mtg 3, 5/1/2025)



Recommendations

The Work Group developed 10 specific recommendations

HTAC voting members will vote on each of the 10 recommendations independently

Any recommendations approved will be carried out through a letter written by the MIC on behalf of the HTAC (signed by both the MIC and HTAC Chair) that is sent to the appropriate identified authority regarding the recommendation.

A “Yes” vote supports the recommendation.

Recommendations

Recommendations Regarding Signs & Outreach

Recommendation 1

Ask US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to place a sign explaining the current flow light functions on the outbound canal wall.

Recommendations

Recommendations Regarding Signs & Outreach

Recommendation 2

Ask UM Sea Grant to include an explanation of the current flow light functions on the Paddle Safe Twin Ports (PSTP) website. The messaging could be the same or very similar to that on the sign to be placed on the canal wall (see Recommendation 1).

Recommendations

Recommendations Regarding Signs & Outreach

Recommendation 3

Ask UM Sea Grant to ensure real-time current flow and flow rate information is provided on the Paddle Safe Twin Ports (PSTP) website, and that the QR code on the PSTP launch site signs is linking to this information. Perhaps the QR code would be a sticker that is affixed to the PSTP signs, rather than making new signs which seems unlikely.

Recommendations

Recommendations Regarding Signs & Outreach

Recommendation 4

Ask US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to install street lights on both sides of the out-bound (harbor end) canal walls to provide better sight for boaters.

Recommendations

Recommendations Regarding Signs & Outreach

Recommendation 5

Ask US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to place a “Dangerous Current” sign on each end of the canal wall.

Recommendations

Recommendations Regarding Signs & Outreach

Recommendation 6

Recommend grouping at least some of the messaging of Recommendations 1-5 onto one sign.



Recommendations

Recommendation that Directly Addresses both the Duluth Ship Canal Current Flow Lights & Velocity Sensor

Recommendation 7

Recommend one entity be the authority for and own, operate, pay for, and maintain the entire system: current flow meter, current lights, and the cables that connect them.



Recommendations

Recommendation Regarding Consistent Flow rate Standards for the Duluth Ship Canal

Recommendation 8

Recommend one flow rate standard should be used for the current flow lights. This needs coordination with the City of Duluth. The Work Group encourages Zach Fedak to work with the City of Duluth to standardize one set of the flow rate standards for current flow lights for the Duluth Ship Canal.



Recommendations

Recommendation to Establish a Duluth Ship Canal Portage on Park Point (8th Street at S. Lake Avenue & Minnesota Avenue)

Recommendation 9 (either of the following)

- A. The City of Duluth establish and/or designate a portage between the harbor and Lake Superior within reasonable distance of the ship canal. The specific location and safety details are to be determined.
- B. The City of Duluth establish a designated takeout on the harbor side. One is not needed on the lakeside as beach is public and public access to S Lake Avenue is already established. The specific location and safety details are to be determined.

Recommendations

Recommendation to Establish a Duluth Ship Canal Portage on Park Point (8th Street at S. Lake Avenue & Minnesota Avenue)

Recommendation 10

If a portage is established: Ask US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to place a sign on the east wall at each end of the canal noting a portage exists.

Comments?

Questions?

Mike Wenholz

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