



**Western Great Lakes  
Pilots Association**

# ***GREAT LAKES***

## ***SHIP PILOTS OF DISTRICT # 3***

### ***LAKE SUPERIOR – LAKE HURON – LAKE MICHIGAN***

Ship pilots are utilized by oceangoing (foreign) vessels to provide safe passage through the environmentally sensitive waters of the Great Lakes. Pilots are specialists who are intimately familiar with local waterway configurations, traffic/trade patterns, and prevailing weather characteristics. They are expert navigators and shiphandlers. Pilot services are so critical, in fact, that the Great Lakes Pilotage Act of 1960 mandates the use of ship pilots aboard vessels engaged in foreign trade.



# *WOULD YOU TRUST THESE WATERS TO JUST ANYONE?*



## *Pollution Prevention*

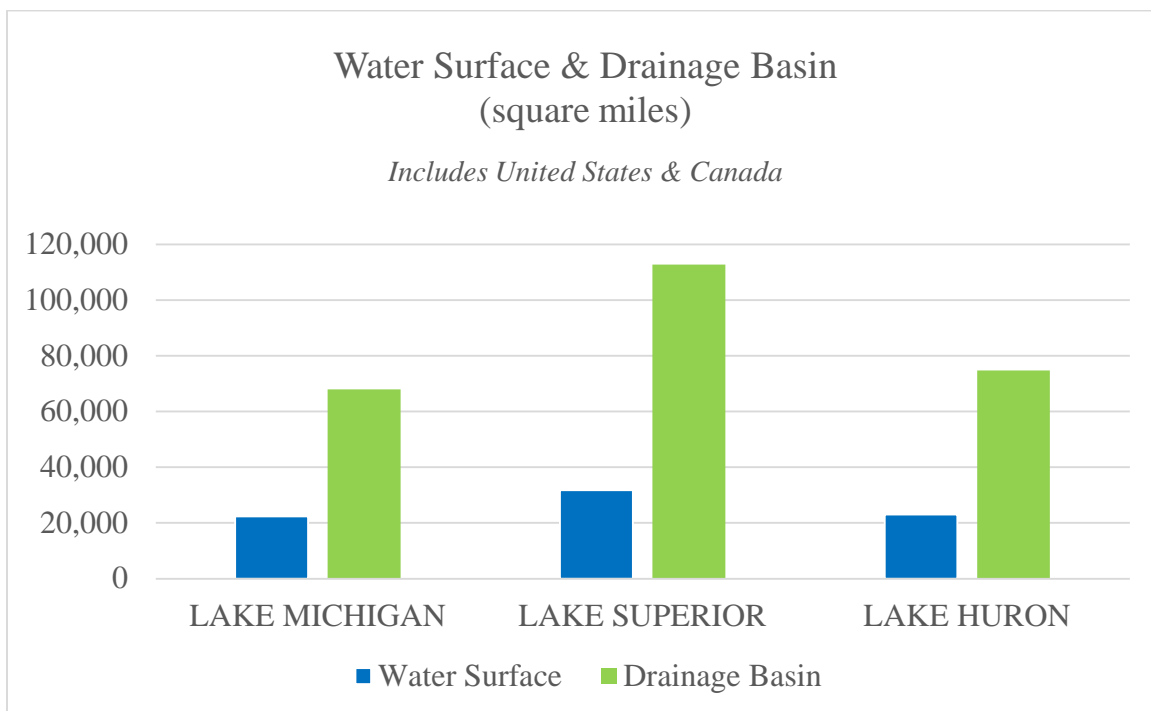


Foreign vessel operators have no vested interest in protecting the sensitive waters of our Great Lakes. Although required to carry copies of U.S. regulations, foreign vessel officers and crew speak English as a second, third, or even fourth, language. Furthermore, such vessel personnel have no time to absorb thousands of pages of regulatory guidance. Federally Registered Great Lakes ship pilots fortunately have the knowledge and experience to ensure foreign vessels remain in strict compliance with environmental regs. In the event of a pollution violation (intentional or unintentional), the Great Lakes ship pilot is the public's first line of defense.

# A CLOSER LOOK AT EXACTLY WHAT IS AT STAKE

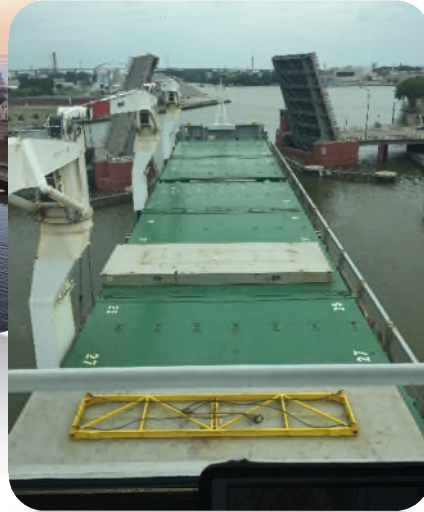
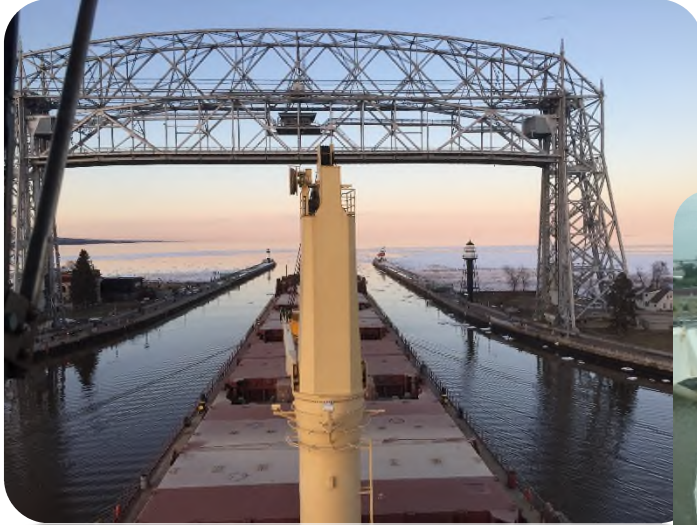
Any largescale environmental incident such as an oil spill or hazardous materials mishap would be devastating. When calculating the sheer mileage of District # 3 Great Lakes coastline, water surface, and draining basin, and considering the number of people residing in these areas and depending upon these natural resources for their livelihood, industry, and recreation, the tremendous importance of environmental responsibility truly comes into focus.

If you've never heard of a "ship pilot", this may be a good thing. If pilots are doing their job by safety moving vessels while protecting the environment and serving the interests of the public, then they will remain "under the radar" and out of the public eye.



Source: U.S. Coast Pilot (published by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Agency)

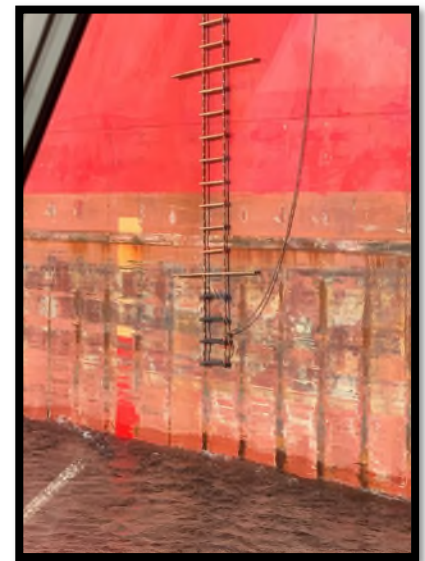
# *A PILOT IS A SPECIALIST HIRED FOR HIS/HER LOCAL KNOWLEDGE*



Ship pilots are often considered the elite tier of all U.S. Merchant Mariners. Years of experience and training are a prerequisite to becoming a pilot. Initial backgrounds of individual pilots may vary, such as graduating from a maritime academy, being a “hawsepipe” officer (working up the ranks from entry-level), or having military experience (USN or USCG). Upon achieving a license credential, many more years of experience are gained while serving as Mate (Deck Officer) and Master (Captain) in the U.S.-flagged merchant fleet. Once accepted into the rigorous District # 3 (Western Great Lakes Pilots Association) pilot training program, an additional 2-3 years of training is mandatory. During this period, apprentice pilots are mentored, monitored, and evaluated by senior pilots.



# *THE USCG OVERSEES ALL ASPECTS OF GREAT LAKES PILOTAGE*



As per 46 CFR 401, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) regulates and oversees all aspects of Great Lakes Pilotage. A ratemaking process is performed annually by the USCG to: (1) ensure that Great Lakes pilot groups earn sufficient income in exchange for their valuable services, and to ensure that experienced, qualified applicants are attracted in the pilot recruiting process; (2) account for wages and benefits for pilots engaged in the lengthy 2-3 year training/mentoring program; (3) ensure that pilot groups are able to maintain adequate infrastructure to support their unique logistical needs; (4) provide funds to cover the many necessary expenses such as travel, lodging, and meals while performing services; (5) permit ship pilots to participate in recommended continuing education/training programs.

In addition to establishing an annual rate, the Office of the USCG Director of Great Lakes Pilotage: (1) establishes hiring eligibility by vetting prospective applicant pilots; (2) monitors the training program of apprentice pilots; (3) administers written exams to apprentice pilots; (4) approves/issues original and renewal Certificates of Registration to seasoned pilots.

# *INFRASTRUCTURE: THE HEART OF PROVIDING SAFE, EFFICIENT & RELIABLE PILOTAGE SERVICE*



## *Infrastructure for Pilots*

- (1) Pilot boat services: Pilots often embark at mandatory Federal “change points” while the vessel is underway. Specialized pilot transport vessels and trained boat operators/crew are required for this purpose. Documented pilot transfer vessels require routine maintenance, upkeep, and repair detail.
- (2) Automobile fleet: District # 3 Great Lakes pilots frequently “overland travel”, or travel lengthy distances between Chicago, IL, Port Huron, MI, and Duluth, MN to reach assignment destinations. Company vehicles are maintained to meet this need.
- (3) Pilots utilize personal safety gear and portable navigation equipment to work safely and efficiently.

# *TRAINING IS CONTINUOUS THROUGHOUT THE CAREER OF A GREAT LAKES PILOT*



The American Pilots Association (APA) recommends an ongoing training matrix to which WGLPA rigidly complies by sending our pilots to the top maritime training facilities in the country. Training areas include (but are not limited to) shiphanding simulator exercises, manned-model training, Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS), Automatic Radar Plotting Aids (ARPA), sleep & fatigue management, pilot specific electronic gear (PPU), legal aspects of pilotage seminars, and Bridge Resource Management (BRM).

# MARITIME SECURITY



The prospect of a foreign vessel being involved in a security breach or terrorist attack cannot be overlooked. Great Lakes ship pilots are often the only U.S. citizen on board the vessel while in transit. Pilots are the “eyes and ears” of the public, and the first line of defense should any type of illegal activity be detected.

U.S. ship pilots themselves undergo government background checks and are required to hold a Transportation Worker’s Identity Card (TWIC).

## IN SUMMARY

Great Lakes District # 3 ship pilots navigate foreign vessels through the waters of Lake Superior, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, and the included ports of Chicago, Milwaukee, Green Bay, Duluth, and many others; but especially including the sensitive waterways of St. Mary’s River and “Soo” Locks, and the Straits of Mackinac. Such pilotage is compulsory; ship pilots are U.S. citizens who serve the interests of the public – not the ship owner or representative. The United States Coast Guard oversees Great Lakes pilotage, issuing an annual rate to determine charges for the service. This rate is critical as it provides for adequate pay, benefits, expenses, and infrastructure. Pilots are the first line of defense in an environmental incident, and they are “watchdogs” for illegal activity aboard these foreign vessels. Pilots are U.S. Merchant Mariners who have ascended the ranks, with years of experience and training under their belt. Professional training is ongoing.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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