

Section 106 Success Story

Saint Mary's Falls Canal (Soo Locks) Historic District Consultation

SAULT SAINTE MARIE | CHIPPEWA COUNTY

The Soo Locks is an iconic historic district, known statewide for its significance in engineering, transportation, and commerce. The district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Landmark (NHL). Although designated with these honors, the Locks are not static. The dynamic facility is ever-changing as it is a critical juncture for trade on the Great Lakes, particularly for our nation's iron and steel industries. For decades, USACE has worked closely with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the National Park Service (NPS), and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) to ensure changes made within the district are sensitive to historic properties; and when adverse effects occur, the mitigation is beneficial to all parties. This multi-agency relationship exemplifies the spirit of consultation in which the National Historic Preservation Act was established. A few recent successes of note include:

- ***New Lock Construction Landscape Design***. A new lock to accommodate large modern vessels is currently under construction. Planning for this lock began in the 1980s. The SHPO, NPS and USACE entered a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for this undertaking wherein the SHPO and NPS would consult on subsequent changes to the landscape resulting from this new lock. Bimonthly meetings between the SHPO, NPS, and USACE have established a consistent rhythm to consultation and enabled the USACE to make informed decisions regarding such aspects of landscape design as lighting, security fencing, and circulation patterns.

LOCATION

Soo Locks, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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FEDERAL AGENCY

United States Army Corps of Engineers

PROJECT DATE

Ongoing

- *Historic Building Maintenance and Rehabilitation*. These bimonthly meetings also address the built environment. The Soo Locks includes numerous architecturally significant buildings that face challenges from aging materials, a harsh environment, limited funding, and a limited work season. Regular communication ensures good decision-making and prevents delays in formal consultation.

- *Brady Park Monument Removal*. Brady Park includes a cemetery significant to the Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Sainte Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. USACE granted the Tribes management of the cemetery space, however a component of the Historic District remained; a stone marker atop the burial mound that commemorated the semi-centennial of the locks. In consultation with the Tribes, SHPO, and NPS, USACE worked on a multi-year plan to sensitively and carefully remove this marker that although contributing to the historic district, was causing damage to the cemetery. The project was completed in 2025.

