

Mineral Industry Surveys

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IRON ORE IN JANUARY 2015

U.S. mine production and shipments of iron ore in January 2015 were 4.21 million metric tons (Mt) and 2.61 Mt, respectively. Average daily production was 136,000 metric tons (t), 12% less than that of December 2014 and 7% more than that of January 2014. Average daily shipments were 84,300 t, 54% less than those of December 2014 and 9% more than those of January 2014. Mine stocks at the end of January 2015 were 22% more than those held in December 2014 and slightly more than those in January 2014 (table 1).

U.S. imports of iron ore were 253,000 t in January 2015, 25% less than those in December 2014 and 45% less than those of January 2014. U.S. exports of iron ore were 690,000 t in January 2015, 23% less than those in December 2014 and 11% less than those of January 2014.

Industry News

The Bloom Lake Group, a collection of affiliates managing operations at Cliffs Natural Resources Inc.'s Bloom Lake Mine in Quebec, Canada, began restructuring proceedings under the Government of Canada's Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. Operations at the mine were suspended in late 2014. Cliffs was considering equity investors and sale options (Cliffs Natural Resources Inc., 2015). Cliffs planned to idle the mine indefinitely, terminating all the company's operations in Canada.

Lake Carriers' Association called for the construction of a second heavy icebreaker to work with the U.S. Coast Guard's Mackinaw, to keep Great Lakes shipping lanes open as much during the winter season as possible. Despite the Soo Locks seasonal closure, some iron ore is shipped from Escanaba, MI,

to basin steelmaking industries later into the winter. When the locks reopen, lingering ice cover requires icebreaking ships and tugs to re-establish regular shipping lanes. Record levels of ice cover on the Great Lakes reportedly cost the economy \$705 million and 3,800 jobs during the 2013–14 winter season. Ice cover reduced iron ore shipments from January through April. Frequent maintenance and modernization of ships during the winter make them unavailable and affects shipping rates (Lake Carriers' Association, 2015). Early estimates indicated that the 2014–15 winter season was likely to see similar conditions and ice cover on the Great Lakes as those in 2013–14.

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References Cited

- Cliffs Natural Resources Inc., 2015, Cliffs Natural Resources Inc. announces decision on Bloom Lake Mine: Cleveland, OH, Cliffs Natural Resources Inc. press release, January 27, 2 p. (Accessed April 22, 2015, at http://ir.cliffsnaturalresources.com/files/doc_news/2015/CLF_20150127_CC_AA_v001_h1mj3x.pdf.)
- Lake Carriers' Association, 2015, Lakes deep freeze cost economy \$705 million and 3,800 jobs: Rocky River, OH, Lake Carriers' Association news release, January 6. (Accessed April 22, 2015, at <http://www.lcaships.com/2015/01/06/lakes-deep-freeze-cost-economy-705-million-and-3800-jobs/>.)

TABLE 1
U.S. PRODUCTION, SHIPMENTS, AND STOCKS OF IRON ORE^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 5% or more of manganese)

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Production		Shipments ³		Stocks
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date	End of Month
2014:					
January	3,930	3,930	2,410	2,410	6,530
February	3,370	7,300	724	3,130	9,240
March	4,440	11,700	1,310	4,440	12,400
April	3,930	15,700	2,690	7,130	13,600
May	4,740	20,400	5,880	13,000	12,500
June	4,690	25,100	5,940	19,000	11,300
July	4,930	30,000	6,490	25,400	9,770
August	4,790	34,800	6,370	31,800	8,190
September	4,860	39,700	5,780	37,600	7,320
October	5,050	44,700	5,770	43,400	6,600
November	4,810	49,500	5,130	48,500	6,290
December	4,770	54,300	5,630	54,100	5,430
2015, January	4,210	4,210	2,610	2,610	6,640

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

²Excludes byproduct ores iron metallics.

³Includes rail and vessel.

TABLE 2
CANADA: SHIPMENTS OF IRON ORE^{1,2}

(Thousand dry metric tons)

Period	Newfoundland and Labrador	Quebec	Total
2014:			
January	1,010	1,570	2,580
February	919	2,380	3,300
March	821	1,680	2,510
April	1,250	2,560	3,810
May	1,250	2,680	3,930
June	1,250	2,550	3,800
July	1,400	2,780	4,180
August	1,400	2,330	3,720
September	1,400	2,430	3,830
October	1,290	2,500	3,790
November	1,290	2,370	3,660
December	1,290	2,350	3,640
January–December	14,600	28,200	42,700
2015, January	1,080	1,820	2,900

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²Includes production from steel plant waste oxides.

Source: Natural Resources Canada.

TABLE 3
U.S. PRODUCTION OF PIG IRON AND RAW STEEL, BY TYPE OF FURNACE¹

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Pig iron production, blast furnace		Raw steel production			
	Monthly	Year to date	Basic oxygen furnace		Electric furnace	
			Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date
2014:						
January	2,430	2,430	2,680	2,680	4,650	4,650
February	2,450	4,880	2,580	5,250	4,230	8,880
March	2,820	7,700	2,490	7,740	4,690	13,600
April	2,580	10,300	2,120	9,860	4,580	18,100
May	2,710	13,000	2,380	12,200	4,740	22,900
June	2,760	15,800	2,500	14,700	4,590	27,500
July	2,930	18,700	2,630	17,400	4,760	32,200
August	2,920	21,600	2,600	20,000	4,840	37,100
September	2,740	24,300	2,550	22,500	4,560	41,600
October	2,690	27,000	2,340	24,900	4,700	46,300
November	2,740	29,800	2,400	27,300	4,480	50,800
December	2,860	32,600	2,490	29,700	4,350	55,200
2015, January	2,760	2,760	2,380	2,380	4,500	4,500

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: American Iron and Steel Institute.

TABLE 4
U.S. EXPORTS OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY AND TYPE^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country and type of product	2014	2015	
	January	January	
	Thousand metric tons	Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)
Canada	446	648	\$74,900
Mexico	102	42	3,130
Other	229	(4)	45
Total	778	690	78,000
Concentrates	251	6	651
Fine ores	27	(4)	1,820
Pellets	446	652	75,500
Other	53	33	31
Total	778	690	78,000

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²All countries with less than 5,000 metric tons of exports per month included in "Other."

³Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 5
 U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY AND TYPE^{1,2}
 (Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country of origin and type of product	2014	2015	
	January	January	
	Thousand metric tons	Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)
Canada	306	201	\$25,600
Other	149	52	4,180
Total	456	253	29,700
Concentrates	(4)	30	2,990
Fine ores	--	22	1,220
Pellets	456	201	25,500
Other	--	--	--
Total	456	253	29,700

--Zero.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²All countries with less than 5,000 metric tons of imports per month included in "Other."

³Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 6
 U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE IN JANUARY
 BY CUSTOMS DISTRICT^{1,2}
 (Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

(Thousand metric tons)

Customs district (code no.)	Pellets		Total, all products	
	2014	2015	2014	2015
Baltimore, MD (13)	128	128	128	128
New Orleans, LA (20)	300	73	300	124
Other	28	--	28	(3)
Total	456	201	456	253

--Zero.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²Customs Districts with less than 5,000 metric tons included in "Other."

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.