

**Register.** This final rule is not a “major rule” as defined by 5 U.S.C. 804(2).

**List of Subjects in 33 CFR Part 334**

Classified information, Marine safety, Navigation (water), Security measures, Transportation, Waterways.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, the Corps amends 33 CFR Part 334 as follows:

**PART 334—DANGER ZONE AND RESTRICTED AREA REGULATIONS**

■ 1. The authority citation for 33 CFR part 334 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 40 Stat. 266 (33 U.S.C. 1) and 40 Stat. 892 (33 U.S.C. 3).

■ 2. Amend § 334.1110 by revising paragraph (a) to read as follows:

**§ 334.1110 Military Ocean Terminal Concord; restricted area.**

(a) *The area.* (1) Beginning at point A on the shore west of the mouth of a small slough (known as Hastings Slough) and passing east of buoy R “6” bearing 60°30’ for 2,860 yards, through Point B on the eastern end of the two Seal Islands, to point C on the southern edge of the Roe Island Channel near buoy R “16A”; thence in a generally easterly direction running along the southern edge of the Roe Island Channel, Port Chicago Reach and Middle Ground West Reach (points D and E) to point F directly north of the eastern shore boundary (point G); thence 180° to point G on the shore line; thence following the high water shore line in a general westerly direction to the point of beginning. The coordinates for the points in paragraph (a)(1) of this section are provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1 TO PARAGRAPH (a)(1)

	Latitude	Longitude
Point A (shoreline)	38.0513	– 122.0576
Point B .....	38.0579	– 122.0430
Point C .....	38.0630	– 122.0307
Point D .....	38.0611	– 122.0205
Point E .....	38.0593	– 122.0010
Point F .....	38.0594	– 121.9882
Point G (shoreline)	38.0521	– 121.9882

(2) The datum for these coordinates is NAD–83.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Thomas P. Smith,**  
Chief, Operations and Regulatory Division,  
Directorate of Civil Works.

[FR Doc. 2024–05890 Filed 3–21–24; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3720–58–P**

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation**

**33 CFR Part 402**

**RIN 2135–AA56**

**Tariff of Tolls**

**AGENCY:** Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, DOT.

**ACTION:** Final rule.

**SUMMARY:** The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (GLS) and the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC) of Canada, under international agreement, jointly publish and presently administer the St. Lawrence Seaway Tariff of Tolls in their respective jurisdictions. The Tariff sets forth the level of tolls assessed on all commodities and vessels transiting the facilities operated by the GLS and the SLSMC. The GLS is revising its regulations to reflect the fees and charges levied by the SLSMC in Canada starting in the 2024 navigation season, which are effective only in Canada.

**DATES:** This rule is effective on March 22, 2024.

**ADDRESSES:** *Docket:* For access to the docket to read background documents or comments received, go to <https://www.Regulations.gov>; or in person at the Docket Management Facility; U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12–140, Washington, DC 20590–001, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Carrie Mann Lavigne, Chief Counsel, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, 180 Andrews Street, Massena, New York 13662; (315) 764–3200.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (GLS) and the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC) of Canada, under international agreement, jointly publish and presently administer the St. Lawrence Seaway Tariff of Tolls (Schedule of Fees and Charges in Canada) in their respective jurisdictions.

The Tariff sets forth the level of tolls assessed on all commodities and vessels transiting the facilities operated by the GLS and the SLSMC. The GLS is revising 33 CFR 402.12, “Schedule of tolls”, to reflect the fees and charges levied by the SLSMC in Canada

beginning in the 2024 navigation season.

*Regulatory Notices: Privacy Act:* Anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT’s complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (Volume 65, Number 70; Pages 19477–78) or you may visit <https://www.Regulations.gov>.

**Regulatory Evaluation**

This regulation involves a foreign affairs function of the United States and therefore, Executive Order 12866 does not apply and evaluation under the Department of Transportation’s Regulatory Policies and Procedures is not required.

**Regulatory Flexibility Act Determination**

I certify that this regulation will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The St. Lawrence Seaway Regulations and Rules primarily relate to commercial users of the Seaway, the vast majority of whom are foreign vessel operators. Therefore, any resulting costs will be borne mostly by foreign vessels.

**Environmental Impact**

This regulation does not require an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act (49 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*) because it is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

**Federalism**

The Corporation has analyzed this rule under the principles and criteria in Executive Order 13132, dated August 4, 1999, and has determined that this proposal does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant a Federalism Assessment.

**Unfunded Mandates**

The Corporation has analyzed this rule under Title II of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104–4, 109 Stat. 48) and determined that it does not impose unfunded mandates on State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector requiring a written statement of economic and regulatory alternatives.

**Paperwork Reduction Act**

This regulation has been analyzed under the Paperwork Reduction Act of

1995 and does not contain new or modified information collection requirements subject to the Office of Management and Budget review.

List of Subjects in 33 CFR Part 402

Vessels, Waterways.

Accordingly, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation is amending 33 CFR part 402 as follows:

PART 402—TARIFF OF TOLLS

■ 1. The authority citation for part 402 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 33 U.S.C. 983(a), 984(a)(4), and 988, as amended; 49 CFR 1.101.

■ 2. Revise § 402.12 to read as follows:

§ 402.12 Schedule of tolls.

TABLE 1 TO § 402.12

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Item	Description of charges	Rate (\$) Montreal to or from Lake Ontario (5 locks)	Rate (\$) Welland Canal—Lake Ontario to or from Lake Erie (8 locks)
1	Subject to item 3, for complete transit of the Seaway, a composite toll, comprising: (1) a charge per gross registered ton of the ship, applicable whether the ship is wholly or partially laden, or is in ballast, and the gross registered tonnage being calculated according to prescribed rules for measurement or under the International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships, 1969, as amended from time to time: <sup>1</sup> (a) all vessels excluding passenger vessels ..... (b) passenger vessels ..... (2) a charge per metric ton of cargo as certified on the ship's manifest or other document, as follows: (a) bulk cargo ..... (b) general cargo ..... (c) steel slab ..... (d) containerized cargo ..... (e) government aid cargo ..... (f) grain ..... (g) coal ..... (3) a charge per passenger per lock ..... (4) a lockage charge per Gross Registered Ton of the vessel, as defined in item 1(1), applicable whether the ship is wholly or partially laden, or is in ballast, for transit of the Welland Canal in either direction by cargo ships. Up to a maximum charge per vessel .....	0.1267 ..... 0.3801 .....  1.3133 ..... 3.1645 ..... 2.8641 ..... 1.3133 ..... n/a ..... 0.8069 ..... 0.8069 ..... 0.0000 ..... n/a .....  n/a .....	0.2027. 0.6080.  0.8964. 1.4347. 1.0271. 0.8964. n/a. 0.8964. 0.8964. 0.0000. 0.3377.  4,724.00.
2	Subject to item 3, for partial transit of the Seaway .....	20 per cent per lock of the applicable charge under items 1(1), 1(2) and 1(4) plus the applicable charge under items 1(3).	13 per cent per lock of the applicable charge under items 1(1), 1(2) and 1(4) plus the applicable charge under items 1(3).
3	Minimum charge per vessel per lock transited for full or partial transit of the Seaway.	32.78 <sup>2</sup> .....	32.78.
4	A charge per pleasure craft per lock transited for full or partial transit of the Seaway, including applicable federal taxes <sup>3</sup> .	25.00 <sup>4</sup> .....	25.00.
5	Under the New Business Initiative Program, for cargo accepted as New Business, a percentage rebate on the applicable cargo charges for the approved period.	20% .....	20%.
6	Under the Volume Rebate Incentive program, a retroactive percentage rebate on cargo tolls on the incremental volume calculated based on the pre-approved maximum volume.	10% .....	10%.
7	Under the New Service Incentive Program, for New Business cargo moving under an approved new service, an additional percentage refund on applicable cargo tolls above the New Business rebate.	20% .....	20%.

<sup>1</sup> Or under the US GRT for vessels prescribed prior to 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The applicable charged under item 3 at the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation's locks (Eisenhower, Snell) will be collected in U.S. dollars. The collection of the U.S. portion of tolls for commercial vessels is waived by law (33 U.S.C. 988a(a)). The other charges are in Canadian dollars and are for the Canadian share of tolls.

<sup>3</sup> Includes a \$5.00 discount per lock with use of online reservation and payment system for Canadian locks.

<sup>4</sup> The applicable charge at the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation's locks (Eisenhower, Snell) for pleasure craft is \$30 USD or \$30 CAD per lock.

Issued at Washington, DC, under authority delegated at 49 CFR part 1.101. Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.

**Carrie Lavigne,**  
*Chief Counsel.*

[FR Doc. 2024-06084 Filed 3-21-24; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4910-61-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Patent and Trademark Office

#### 37 CFR Part 1

[Docket No. PTO-P-2023-0054]

RIN 0651-AD73

#### Signature Requirements Related to Acceptance of Electronic Signatures for Patent Correspondence

**AGENCY:** United States Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce.

**ACTION:** Final rule.

**SUMMARY:** The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO or Office) is revising the rules of practice in patent cases to update the signature rule to provide for the broader permissibility of electronic signatures using third-party document-signing software, such as DocuSign® and Acrobat® Sign, and more closely align signature requirements with the rules of practice in trademark cases. The revised rules will provide additional flexibility and convenience to patent applicants and owners, practitioners, and other parties who sign patent-related correspondence, and promote consistency by establishing signature requirements which are common to both patent and trademark matters.

**DATES:** This final rule is effective on March 22, 2024.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mark Polutta, Senior Legal Advisor, at 571-272-7709; or Terry J. Dey, Legal Administrative Specialist, at 571-272-7730, both of the Office of Patent Legal Administration; or to *PatentPractice@uspto.gov*.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Background

The regulation at 37 CFR 1.4(d) sets forth the signature requirements for patent correspondence. Section 1.4(d)(1) and (2) set forth the requirements for handwritten signatures and S-signatures, respectively. An S-signature is a signature that is inserted between forward slash marks by the signer and is not a handwritten signature. An S-

signature must consist only of letters, or Arabic numerals, or both, with appropriate spaces and commas, periods, apostrophes, or hyphens for punctuation, and the signer's name must be printed or typed, preferably immediately below or adjacent to the S-signature. Section 1.4(d)(3) provides for a graphic representation of a handwritten signature or an S-signature for correspondence submitted electronically via the USPTO patent electronic filing system. The USPTO has been accepting certain electronic signatures as graphic representations pursuant to § 1.4(d)(3), if the correspondence was submitted via the USPTO patent electronic filing system. The signer must personally make their own signature, regardless of what type of signature is used.

Prior to the effective date of this final rule, the USPTO did not permit patent correspondence to be electronically signed by methods other than the electronic entry of S-signatures under § 1.4(d)(2) and the graphic representation method of § 1.4(d)(3). Furthermore, it only permitted the graphic representation method of § 1.4(d)(3) if the correspondence was being submitted via the USPTO patent electronic filing system. In recent years, however, other methods of electronic signature, such as methods using third-party software, have become more prevalent, reliable, and secure. For example, some software platforms include document-signing features with digital certificates or authenticity trails for the electronic signatures, resulting in the increased reliability and security of electronically generated signatures.

To simplify and streamline the USPTO's processes for patent applicants and owners, practitioners, and other parties who sign patent-related correspondence and to more closely align the signature requirements for patent and trademark correspondence, the USPTO is adding § 1.4(d)(4) as a new rule to provide an additional option for electronic signatures in patent correspondence. In addition, this new rule is aimed at addressing stakeholder input received, including during multilateral forums such as IP5 and Trilateral, and is directed towards increasing harmonization of practices and procedures amongst intellectual property offices globally. More information about the IP5 and Trilateral forums is available at [www.uspto.gov/ip-policy/patent-policy/ip5](http://www.uspto.gov/ip-policy/patent-policy/ip5) and [www.uspto.gov/ip-policy/patent-policy/patent-trilateral-activities](http://www.uspto.gov/ip-policy/patent-policy/patent-trilateral-activities).

Under this new rule, "the person named as the signer" may sign patent correspondence electronically using any

form of electronic signature specified by the Director. Moreover, the electronic signature under newly added § 1.4(d)(4) may be used whether the correspondence is being submitted via the USPTO patent electronic filing system, mailed, faxed, or hand delivered. At this time, the electronic signatures specified by the Director in newly added § 1.4(d)(4) consist of electronic signatures generated via third-party document-signing software that meet the requirements outlined in section II of this preamble. Signatures created using other types of software, such as graphic editing software, are not acceptable under newly added § 1.4(d)(4).

##### II. Requirements for Additional Electronic Signatures

Subsection II(A) provides the requirements for third-party document-signing software, and subsection II(B) provides the USPTO procedures for determining whether electronically signed patent correspondence complies with newly added § 1.4(d)(4). Taken together, the subsections set out when patent correspondence signed using third-party document-signing software may be accepted under newly added § 1.4(d)(4). The final rule does not change any other requirements for signatures on patent correspondence, including that a signature must be personally inserted or generated by the named signer. Another person may not use document-signing software to create or generate the electronic signature of the named signer. The final rule also does not change which USPTO personnel have the responsibility for reviewing signatures on patent correspondence. This final rule is effective on publication and supersedes any previous USPTO guidance on this topic to the extent there are any conflicts.

###### A. Requirements for Third-Party Document-Signing Software

Parties using third-party document-signing software must ensure that the underlying software meets the following requirements:

(1) The software must be specifically designed to generate an electronic signature and preserve signature data for later inspection in the form of a digital certificate, token, or audit trail. USPTO personnel may presume that the document-signing software preserves signature data for later inspection in the required form, unless the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Patents (Legal) notifies USPTO personnel otherwise.