



Daily transits at the Panama Canal to increase next month

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December 18, 2023



Panama Canal Authority

The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) will increase daily transits to 24 starting in January following solid amounts of rain over the past six weeks.

The measure replaces the previous announcement that forecasted daily transits at 20 slots for January and 18 slots for February.

Currently, 22 vessels transit are allowed daily, divided into six neopanamax and 16 panamaxes. This restriction is in response to the challenges posed by the current state of Gatun Lake in the middle of the canal, which is experiencing unusually low water levels for this time of the year due to the drought induced by the El Niño phenomenon.

Persistent drought has seen the ACP slash the maximum draft on its larger locks as well as cut daily transit numbers by nearly 50% sparking an exodus of traffic with many ships opting for longer routes either via the capes or via the Suez Canal, a waterway that has run into its own trouble in the past month with the Houthis in Yemen targeting commercial sea traffic in the southern Red Sea.

Transits of the Panama Canal fell to 783 in November, according to official figures, equivalent to 26 crossings per day. That was down from 32.4 in October, from a year-to-date average of 33.9 and from 2022's 35.5.