



## Immediate Release

### **Great Lakes Exploration Group Wins Appeal for Arrest of Historic Shipwreck Vessel.**

#### *Landmark Court of Appeals Ruling Protects Federal Admiralty Jurisdiction*

**MCLEAN, VA – June 17, 2008** - A landmark decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit has cleared the way for further exploration of what may be the site of a 300-year old shipwreck at the bottom of Lake Michigan.

In a decision dated April 21, 2008, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled unanimously in favor of Great Lakes Exploration Group, LLC, the discoverer of the potential shipwreck site, agreeing to protect federal admiralty jurisdiction over historic shipwrecks in the Great Lakes. "The Court's decision is an historic victory not just for Great Lakes Exploration but for the future exploration of the Great Lakes," said Steve Libert, president of Great Lakes Exploration Group.

In 1679, the Griffon (English: Griffin) was the first European-built ship to sail the upper Great Lakes — and on its maiden voyage also became the first shipwreck in those waters. In 2001, while diving in Lake Michigan off the coast of Wisconsin, explorer Steve Libert discovered what he believes may be the remains of the vessel. Libert formed Great Lakes Exploration group which, in the summer of 2004, filed an admiralty arrest in the U. S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan. The State of Michigan opposed Great Lakes Exploration, arguing that the State had a monopoly over shipwrecks within the State.

During nearly four years of litigation, Great Lakes Exploration declined to provide the State of Michigan with the location of the vessel until after the arrest of the vessel required to create federal admiralty jurisdiction. In a decision dated \_\_, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan agreed with the State of Michigan, ordering Great Lakes Exploration to disclose the exact location of the shipwreck prior to the arrest of the vessel.

If it had been allowed to stand, the District Court's ruling would have meant that the State could have taken possession of the shipwreck, thereby defeating federal jurisdiction. Great Lakes Exploration appealed.

The Court of Appeals' recent decision reversed the District Court and agreed with Great Lakes Exploration that federal admiralty jurisdiction should prevail. It directed the District Court to proceed with the arrest of the shipwreck, as Great Lakes Exploration had originally requested.

In compliance with the directive of the Court of Appeals, the District Court recently issued an order for arrest of the shipwreck. The District Court has also appointed Great Lakes Exploration as the Substitute Custodian for the shipwreck.

Following the Court of Appeals ruling, Great Lakes continues to strive to create one of the first truly public/private cooperative endeavors since passage of the Abandoned Shipwreck Act in 1987. Great Lakes Exploration has again invited the State of Michigan to participate in a cooperative investigation of the shipwreck, along with expert scientists and archaeologists from France, Canada and the company's own team of experts. Steve Libert and his partners are currently in intense discussions with the state of Michigan to build the framework for cooperation in exploring the wreck. "We are hopeful that the State will take a new direction and will work cooperatively with all involved," says Libert.

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