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**DIANA SHIPPING INC. ANNOUNCES TIME CHARTER CONTRACT
FOR M/V MELIA**

ATHENS, GREECE, April 5, 2012 – Diana Shipping Inc. (NYSE: DSX), a global shipping company specializing in the ownership and operation of dry bulk vessels, today announced that it has entered into a time charter contract with STX Panocean Co., Ltd., Seoul, through a separate wholly-owned subsidiary, for one of its Panamax dry bulk carriers, the m/v “Mining Star” (to be renamed “Melia”), at a gross charter rate of US\$10,900 per day, minus a 5% commission paid to third parties, for a period of minimum eleven (11) months to maximum fourteen (14) months. The charter is expected to commence upon delivery of the vessel to the Company.

As previously announced on March 30, 2012, the above mentioned vessel is a 2005 built Panamax dry bulk carrier of 76,225 dwt that the Company entered into an agreement to purchase in March 2012. The vessel is expected to be delivered to the Company by the sellers in mid-April 2012.

This employment is anticipated to generate approximately US\$3.6 million of gross revenue for the minimum scheduled period of the charter.

Excluding the aforementioned vessel our fleet currently consists of 26 dry bulk carriers (16 Panamax vessels, 8 Capesize vessels, 1 Post-Panamax vessel and 1 Newcastlemax vessel), as well as 1 new building Newcastlemax vessel expected to be delivered to the Company during the second quarter of 2012 and 2 new building Ice Class Panamax vessels expected to be delivered to the Company during the fourth quarter of 2013. As of today, the combined carrying capacity of our current fleet, excluding the four vessels not yet delivered, is 2.9 million dwt with a weighted average age of 6 years. A table describing the current Diana Shipping Inc. fleet can be found on the Company’s website, www.dianashippinginc.com. Information contained on the Company’s website does not constitute a part of this press release.

About the Company

Diana Shipping Inc. is a leading global provider of shipping transportation services through the ownership and operation of dry bulk vessels. The Company's vessels are employed primarily on medium to long-term time charters and transport a range of dry bulk cargoes, including such commodities as iron ore, coal, grain and other materials along worldwide shipping routes.

Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Statements

Matters discussed in this press release may constitute forward-looking statements. The Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 provides safe harbor protections for forward-looking statements in order to encourage companies to provide prospective information about their business. Forward-looking statements include statements concerning plans, objectives, goals, strategies, future events or performance, and underlying assumptions and other statements, which are other than statements of historical facts.

The Company desires to take advantage of the safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 and is including this cautionary statement in connection with this safe harbor legislation. The words "believe," "anticipate," "intends," "estimate," "forecast," "project," "plan," "potential," "may," "should," "expect," "pending" and similar expressions identify forward-looking statements.

The forward-looking statements in this press release are based upon various assumptions, many of which are based, in turn, upon further assumptions, including without limitation, our management's examination of historical operating trends, data contained in our records and other data available from third parties. Although we believe that these assumptions were reasonable when made, because these assumptions are inherently subject to significant uncertainties and contingencies which are difficult or impossible to predict and are beyond our control, we cannot assure you that we will achieve or accomplish these expectations, beliefs or projections.

In addition to these important factors, other important factors that, in our view, could cause actual results to differ materially from those discussed in the forward-looking statements include the strength of world economies and currencies, general market conditions, including fluctuations in charter rates and vessel values, changes in demand for dry bulk shipping capacity, changes in our operating expenses, including bunker prices, drydocking and insurance costs, the market for our vessels, availability of financing and refinancing, changes in governmental rules and regulations or actions taken by regulatory authorities, potential liability from pending or future litigation, general domestic and international political conditions, potential disruption of shipping routes due to accidents or political events, vessels breakdowns and instances of off-hires and other factors. Please see our filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission for a more complete discussion of these and other risks and uncertainties.