

Columbia River jetties are critical to maintaining international trade and protecting human life



Jetties at the Mouth of the Columbia River

PNWA strongly supports funding in FY2013 to move the jetty project forward

The Corps maintains three rubble-mound jetties at the Mouth of the Columbia River (MCR). The north jetty (2.5 miles long) is on the Washington side of the Mouth, the south jetty on the Oregon side (6.6 miles long), and “Jetty A” is just inland of the Mouth (1/2 mile long), on the Washington side. These structures not only help maintain the depth and orientation of the navigation channel, they also provide protection for ships of all sizes (both commercial and recreational) entering and leaving the estuary.

Abnormally intense and frequent storms have accelerated degradation of the jetties. In addition, the sand spits upon which the jetties are founded have been receding, thus undermining the outer portions of the jetties. Beaches on the ocean sides of the jetties, formed initially as a direct result of jetty construction, have also been receding gradually over the years, thus exposing previously protected sections of the jetties to wave impact.

Of primary concern are critical portions of the north and south jetties, which could breach during a large storm event, allowing sand to be transported and deposited directly into the federal navigation channel. Such an event could shut down commercial navigation at the entrance to the river system, and require expensive emergency repairs to the jetty, and dredging to restore channel depth.

Current status

A three-year series of interim repairs were completed at the north and south jetties in 2007 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Portland District.

Long term major rehabilitation study

The Corps continues work on a detailed study to plan for major repairs to the MCR jetties. The study is expected to be complete in 2012. When the study is finalized, PNWA will be advocating for funding to support the long-term needs of the jetty structures.

Short term maintenance work

While work continues on their long-term study, the Corps is also focusing on three primary repairs. There is a need for placement of cobble-stone at the root of the south jetty to stabilize the structure, and the north jetty is in need of critical repairs in two key areas.

FY2013 funding request

PNWA was encouraged to see President Obama’s FY2013 budget requested \$19.28M for the “Columbia River at the Mouth” project. Over \$13M of that funding is for annual maintenance dredging, which is necessary to keep the shipping channel open. We are very pleased to report that this \$19.28M also included \$5.5 million for repairs at the South Jetty, to place material at the root of the South Jetty and head off the possibility of a breach. PNWA will strongly advocate for this funding to remain in the Corp’s budget during the Congressional appropriations process. We are also aware of additional repair needs, specifically at the North Jetty (lagoon fill and critical repairs). These additional repair needs are estimated to be over \$26M, such that PNWA’s total FY2013 request for this project is \$45.3M.

PNWA staff contact: Page Phillips, 503-234-8550, page.phillips@pnwa.net

