

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 21, 2008

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and
Water Development
186 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Pete V. Domenici
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and
Water Development
118 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Dorgan and Ranking Member Domenici:

We are writing to request your support for appropriating \$36 million for the Columbia River Channel Improvements Project in the FY2009 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act. This amount of funding, which is included in the President's budget request, would enable the Corps of Engineers to substantially complete the project.

The Columbia-Snake River system is one of the most important trade gateways in the United States. Each year about 2,000 ocean-going ships carry \$16 billion of exports and imports to and from ports on the Columbia River. This maritime commerce generates over 40,000 American jobs and influences another 59,000 jobs.

Given that ocean-going cargo ships have grown larger, deepening the Columbia River navigation channel from 40 to 43 feet has become necessary to more fully load these ships. When those ships are able to carry more cargo, thousands of Northwest and Midwest farms and businesses exporting their products through the Columbia-Snake River system will realize transportation cost savings that will help them compete in the global marketplace.

Using federal funds already appropriated by Congress, along with \$55.4 million in Oregon and Washington state matching funds, the Corps of Engineers has made significant progress on this project. By the end of CY2008, approximately 65% of the navigation channel will have been deepened and most of the environmental features completed.

If Congress were to appropriate \$36 million for the project in FY2009, the Corps of Engineers would be able to finish all the environmental features and all the dredging work, except for one stretch of rock in the navigation channel near St. Helens, Oregon. The Corps is now evaluating the best method of removing this rock. Even before the rock is removed, however, the dredging work funded by a \$36 million appropriation would complete a fully-functioning 43 foot channel between the Washington Ports of Kalama and Longview and the ocean. These ports export a substantial amount of bulk cargo that would immediately benefit from the deeper channel. The Ports of Portland and

Vancouver, which are upriver of the rock to be removed, would also benefit immediately as carriers there could take advantage of the tides and all the dredging work downriver to load more bulk and container cargo.

We would greatly appreciate your assistance in completing this project. Finishing it as soon as possible is crucial, as each additional year of dredging increases the project cost by \$2-5 million plus inflation, as a private dredge must be repeatedly "mobilized" from as far away as the Gulf of Mexico for each year of construction. Thank you very much for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senator




