

Snake River Programmatic Sediment Management Plan (PSMP)



PNWA's goal:
Maintain safe
and efficient
navigation on the
Snake River



Background

The Snake River dredging lawsuit was settled late in 2005 with the following provisions:

- An agreement allowed the Snake River navigation channel and adjacent ports to be dredged to 14 feet. That dredging was completed in March of 2006.
- The Corps will complete a Programmatic Sediment Management Plan (PSMP). The PSMP will result in an Environmental Impact Statement that will consider a variety of options for reducing the amount of dredging required while maintaining the federally authorized navigation channel.
- The Corps may dredge again if the channel is less than 14 feet at MOP (Minimum Operating Pool) and barge traffic is impaired. Ports will have the ability to dredge their facilities if needed in the future. The normal NEPA process must be followed in either case.

PNWA and Stoel Rives LLP attorneys Beth Ginsberg and Eric Laschever represented the Inland Ports and Navigation Group (IPNG) in the negotiations. Navigation was restored to a full 14 feet on the Snake River in March of 2006 for the first time since 1999. With this dredging, the full economic efficiency of navigation on the Columbia and Snake River system was restored. Barges are fully loading to 14 feet with containers, grain, forest and agricultural products headed downriver for export and petroleum products and other commodities heading upriver for inland distribution.

The PSMP

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District held scoping meetings in early 2007.

The objective of the PSMP is to produce an Environmental Impact Statement for alternative actions to reduce sedimentation entering the Snake River, and to reduce the need for dredging while maintaining navigation in the Lower Snake River. Among the alternatives to be examined are sediment management and removal, modifying system operations and structural changes.

Structural options include: modify navigation infrastructure, maintain the navigation channel at less than 14 feet, and relocate port, marina and water intake facilities.

System operations options include: raise pool levels to increase water depth, modify flows to flush sediment, and drawdown of the Lower Granite reservoir to below MOP to flush sediment downriver.

Many of the alternatives under consideration would eliminate or impair navigation. Other authorized project purposes, including hydropower production, water supply and recreational boating would also be affected.

Next Steps

Scoping meetings were held in February 2007 to define the goals of the plan, key alternatives, and methods for evaluating the alternatives. The scope has not been published as yet.

PNWA and IPNG will engage in the public process to ensure that navigation and other authorized purposes are represented in the planning process.

To fulfill its commitment in the settlement agreement, PNWA and IPNG are working with the Corps and Congress to ensure that there is sufficient funding to complete the plan in a timely fashion. The PSMP is expected to be completed in 2010.

FY2010 Funding

The FY2010 Appropriations bill included \$5.33M for the PSMP, spread over the operations & maintenance (O&M) funding for the four Lower Snake River dams. PNWA will be seeking \$3.5M for the PSMP in FY2011. For more information, see PNWA's website at www.pnwa.net.