

JETTIES AT THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER



Background

The Corps maintains three rubble-mound jetties at the Mouth of the Columbia River (MCR). The north jetty (2.5 miles) is on the Washington side, the south jetty (6.6 miles) on the Oregon side, and “Jetty A” (0.9 miles long) is just inland on the Washington side. These structures not only help maintain the depth and orientation of the navigation channel, they protect ships of all sizes entering and leaving the estuary, ensuring safe passage for commercial and recreational mariners.

Intense and frequent storms have accelerated degradation of the jetties. In addition, the sand spits upon which the jetties are built have receded, undermining their outer portions. Beaches on the ocean sides, formed initially as a direct result of jetty construction, have also been receding, thus exposing previously protected sections of the jetties to wave impact. Primary areas of concern are critical portions of the north and south jetties, which could breach during a large storm event, allowing sand to be deposited directly into the federal navigation channel. Such an event could shut down commercial navigation at the entrance to the river system, require expensive emergency repairs to the jetty, and dredging to restore channel depth.



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MCR jetties add value to the Northwest and the Nation

The MCR jetties help support the economy of our region and the entire country. The Columbia Snake River System is the nation’s largest wheat export gateway and second for soy. When combined with corn, pulses and other grains, it is the third largest grain export gateway in the world. It is number one on the west coast for forest products, mineral bulk exports, and auto exports. In 2016, over 50 million tons of cargo moved through the deep draft Lower Columbia River, valued at roughly \$21 billion. Over 40,000 local jobs are dependent on this trade. The jetties are a vital part of ensuring our system is able to handle current volumes and continue to grow. The U.S. Coast Guard Station Cape Disappointment also benefits from the jetties which help to minimize the dangerous conditions at the mouth. In 2018, the station launched 138 search and rescue cases, which saved 235 lives in the station’s Area of Responsibility around the jetties. Without the jetties, there would be an increased need for a more active search and rescue presence.

These jetty structures act as the cork in the bottle for the rest of the river system. They are key to protecting and preserving the investments that have already been made in the Northwest. In November 2010, the 20-year Columbia River channel deepening project, paid for in part by the federal government, was completed and has already generated nearly \$1 billion in new investments on the Lower River. In addition, the federal government continues to invest millions of dollars in the long-term viability of the inland portion of the system, which feeds the lower river. A breach at the entrance to the system would make all of these efforts for naught and exports headed to nations around the globe would come to a halt. Maintaining the jetties is key to protecting past investments and to our economic well being going forward.

Current Status

In June 2012, the Corps completed their Major Rehabilitation Report (MRR) for the MCR jetties. An aggressive funding scheme was identified and is now estimated at just under \$240M if completed by FY2023. The project received critical “new start” status in FY2014 and has received a total of \$85.5M over the last five years, including funding to complete construction on Jetty A and the North Jetty, and to initiate construction on the South Jetty. PNWA is currently advocating for continued support of this project going forward, to ensure safe and efficient transportation across the Columbia River Bar. For more information, please contact heather.stebbing@pnwa.net or visit www.nwp.usace.army.mil.

