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Columbia Snake River locks reopen

Inland commercial navigation on the Columbia Snake River System (CSRS) officially resumed on Saturday, March 26 at 11:00pm, following a planned closure that began on December 10, 2010. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), who maintain the eight CSRS locks and dams, successfully replaced three downstream gates at The Dalles, John Day and Lower Monumental navigation locks and performed maintenance on the five others during the outage.

“River system stakeholders, who have closely followed this historic lock maintenance outage, applaud the team effort, led by the Corps of Engineers and its contractors,” stated John Pigott, President of the Columbia River Towboat Association. “They successfully delivered the Columbia-Snake River navigation system back to its users and customers. We are thrilled today to have the river system intact and resuming its role as a reliable, major marine transportation corridor connecting our region, and nation to the world.”

The CSRS is a vital transportation link for the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. The economies of these four states rely heavily on the commerce that flows up and down this system. The CSRS is the #1 U.S. wheat export gateway, #1 U.S. barley export gateway, #1 West Coast wood export gateway, #1 in West Coast mineral bulk exports, and #2 on the West Coast for auto imports. The deep draft channel supports 40 million tons of cargo each year and 40,000 local jobs. The inland system supports 10 million tons of cargo, valued at \$2 billion annually.

“Overall trade on the system is expected to increase significantly over the next 15 years,” said Glenn Vanselow, PNWA Executive Director. “The infrastructure investments, maintenance, and repairs made during the closure have long-term benefits for the Northwest and those who depend on goods that travel by river. With the success of this closure, the river system will remain a tremendous asset to handle the expected upsurge in waterborne commerce in the future.”

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About PNWA: The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) is a non-profit organization that advocates for federal policies and funding in support of regional economic and environmental sustainability. PNWA represents multiple industries in the public and private sectors in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California. Members include public ports, navigation, transportation, international trade, tourism, agriculture, forest products, energy and local government interests. Since its founding in 1934, PNWA led the way for development of economic infrastructure for navigation, electric power and irrigated agriculture on the Columbia and Snake River System. In 1971, PNWA expanded, adding Puget Sound and coastal port members to provide a comprehensive regional perspective. Today, PNWA works with the U.S. Congress, federal agencies and regional decision leaders on transportation, trade, tourism, energy and environmental policy to enhance economic vitality in the Pacific Northwest. You can learn more about PNWA at www.pnwa.net.