



PACIFIC NORTHWEST WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

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Contact: Scott Clemans, PNWA Communications Director
360-980-2650 or scott.clemans@pnwa.net

Members of Congress join Corps, Coast Guard, PNWA to celebrate Columbia jetty rehab

FORT STEVENS STATE PARK, Ore. – Three members of Congress and lots of heavy equipment joined Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Coast Guard leaders here Monday to celebrate the completion of the Mouth of the Columbia River North Jetty and Jetty A rehabilitation projects, and the start of work on the South Jetty rehabilitation project.

As heavy cranes, trucks and excavators moved and placed massive 40-ton stones on the 6.6-mile South Jetty in the background, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (OR), Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (OR-1) and Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (WA-3) joined PNWA President David Harlan and Executive Director Kristin Meira, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Portland District Commander Col. Michael Helton, and U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River Commander Capt. Jeremy Smith in emphasizing the importance of jetties to ensure navigation at the mouth of the Columbia River is safe and efficient.

The jetties [support the economy of our region and the entire country](#). Over 56 million tons of cargo valued at roughly \$21 billion move through the Lower Columbia River annually, and thousands of Pacific Northwest jobs are dependent on this trade. The Columbia Snake River System is the nation's largest wheat export gateway, second in the nation for corn and soy exports, and tops on the West Coast for wood and mineral exports.

"Products on this river system can travel from as far away as the Midwest and Canada, bound for Asia and other points around the world," Harlan said. "The jetties are especially important now as our region recovers from the economic impacts of COVID-19; we need to keep U.S. supply chains strong."

The [Mouth of the Columbia River's jetty system](#) was constructed between 1885 and 1939. Constructed on massive tidal shoals and totaling 9.7 miles in length, the three rubble-mound jetties minimize navigation channel maintenance and make passage safer for vessels transiting between the Pacific Ocean and the Columbia River.

"These jetties keep the (Columbia River) bar intact," Smith said. "They are crucial to safe and efficient commerce. Our merchant mariners and fishing fleet are out of business without them."

The jetties are regularly pounded by Pacific Ocean waves 10-20 feet high, with winter storms bringing extreme waves in excess of 30 feet. Storm activity and the loss of the shoaling sand upon which the jetties are built have taken a toll on the structural integrity of the jetties.

If a critical section of the jetties were breached during a large storm, sand could be deposited into the federal navigation channel, potentially shutting down commercial shipping. Restoring the channel entrance would require expensive emergency jetty repairs and channel dredging.

Under the Corps' Mouth of the Columbia River Jetty System Major Rehabilitation Project, rehabilitation of the 0.9-mile Jetty A was completed in 2017, and the 2.5-mile North Jetty earlier in 2020.

"It takes a great Team of Teams to make a project like this happen. Everyone involved has showed tremendous commitment to delivering this important jetty rehabilitation to the people we serve. The Portland District is proud to be part of it," Helton said.

The members of Congress in attendance discussed their legislative efforts to keep the jetties funded and maintained, and their importance to the region:

"I want to give a special shout-out to PNWA," said Wyden. "You have made this (the jetties) the Number One request of our Congressional delegation for years ... you all have zeroed in on them and have mobilized Democrats and Republicans to make it happen."

"Without those jetties," he continued, "we cannot have big league quality of life and job creation. It just simply does not happen. In our part of the world, one out of four jobs revolve around international trade."

"Improving the jetties on the mouth of the Columbia River is vital in protecting and securing our region's most important waterway. I'm pleased to have worked over the years to secure critical funding in Congress to shore up our jetties so they can continue to protect against storms, and prevent erosion and buildup of sediment that impacts the livelihoods of our ports and coastal communities," said Herrera Beutler.

"The jetties at the mouth of the Columbia River are a marvel of engineering that sustains the shipping, navigation, and fishing industries throughout the region. I have consistently called for full funding for the needed rehabilitation of this critical infrastructure. It's exciting to see the work beginning where the mighty Columbia meets the Pacific," Bonamici said.

Several members of Congress were not able to attend the event, but contributed written statements:

Senator Patty Murray (WA): "Our jetties are essential to keeping our waterways flowing and mariners safe, and I am glad to see this vital maintenance project moving forward with the help of federal funding. As a voice for Washington state in the Senate, I will keep fighting for the necessary federal investments that will help keep our Columbia River System, and all of our waterways and ports, strong."

Senator Maria Cantwell (WA): "The Columbia River is a key gateway to the Pacific and billions of dollars of economic opportunity for United States workers and businesses. The completion of Jetty A and the North Jetty ensures ships can safely enter our ports. I will continue to support the completion of the South Jetty so that our ports and businesses in Southwest Washington will grow and thrive."

Senator Jeff Merkley (OR): "Strong and thriving ports are the lifeblood of Oregon's coastal economy. At a time when COVID-19 has brought extraordinary challenges to our economy and our way of life, it's all the more important that we build the foundation for a strong future and ensure that our ports have the up-to-date infrastructure and maintenance they need ... These jetties will help ensure that Astoria has a safe and prosperous port for many years to come, and I'm proud to have used my seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee to secure federal support for these vital projects."

PNWA and our partners will continue to advocate for the funding needed to keep the heavy cranes, trucks and excavators doing their heavy rehabilitation work on this key to Pacific Northwest commerce until the project is completed in 2023.

PNWA images and video clips of Monday's event are available on the PNWA Flickr account at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/187371434@N02/albums/72157715802650493>.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers images and video clips of Monday's event and earlier jetty rehabilitation work in progress are available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/USACE-NWP>.

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The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association is a non-profit, non-partisan trade association of ports, businesses, public agencies and individuals who support navigation, energy, trade and economic development throughout the region. Learn more at www.pnwa.net.