JETTIES AT THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER

Background

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains three rubble-mound jetties at the Mouth of the Columbia River. The south jetty (6.6 miles long) is on the Oregon side, while the north jetty (2.5 miles long) and "Jetty A" (0.9 miles) are on the Washington side. These structures help maintain the depth and orientation of the federal navigation channel and protect ships of all sizes entering and leaving the estuary, ensuring safe passage for commercial and recreational mariners.

Intense and frequent storms degraded the jetties and the sand spits upon which the jetties are built receded, undermining their outer portions necessitating an emergency patch on the North Jetty. Beaches on the ocean sides, formed initially as a direct result of jetty construction, have also receded, exposing previously protected sections of the jetties to wave impact. If the jetties are compromised during a large storm event, sand will accrete in the federal navigation channel. Such an event could shut down commercial navigation at the entrance to the river system, requiring expensive emergency jetty repairs and dredging to restore channel depth.

The Columbia River jetties protect the Northwest and national economy

The Columbia River 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 the second largest for soy. 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 2023, approximately 38.6 million metric tons of international cargo moved through the deep draft Lower Columbia River, valued at over $25.3 billion. The jetties are vital to ensuring our system can handle current volumes and continue to grow. The U.S. Coast Guard Station Cape Disappointment also benefits from the jetties, which help 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 front door to the rest of the river system, protecting the investments already made in the Northwest. In 2010, the 20-year Columbia River channel deepening project, paid for in part by federal investment, was completed. It 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 render all these efforts for naught, and exports headed to destinations around the globe would come to a halt. Maintaining the jetties is key to preserving these past investments and our future economic well-being.

Current Status

In June 2012, the Corps completed its Major Rehabilitation Report (MRR) for the jetties. An aggressive funding scheme was identified. In the meantime, an emergency patch of a portion of the North Jetty was performed. The project received critical "new start" status in FY2014 and received a total of $85.5M to complete construction on Jetty A and the rest of the North Jetty, and $36M in FY2020 to initiate and $93.4M in FY2021 to continue construction on the South Jetty. The project secured $25.6M in FY2022 and $13.592M in FY2024 to continue South Jetty construction with anticipated completion in 2026. Construction inspections revealed the previous emergency patch and surrounding area of the North Jetty sustained damage from intense storms and ocean waves. **In FY2026, an additional $46.878M for the North Jetty repair was included in the work plan for the Columbia River at the Mouth to complete the jetty rehabilitation project.** The additional funding for the North Jetty will ensure safe and efficient transportation across the Columbia River Bar.