

# COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY



The Columbia River Treaty was ratified by the United States and Canada in 1964 to govern Columbia River flows for flood control and power generation. Both nations are now evaluating potential changes to this long-standing agreement.

In December 2013, the Regional Recommendation called for the Treaty to be modernized to reflect the current value of power and flood control operations, and support healthy ecosystems. The document also included important statements regarding the current and future importance of navigation on the river system. The document was transmitted to the State Department, which represents our country in international treaty talks.

From 2014-2017, both countries worked to solidify their positions on the Treaty. Numerous rounds of formal negotiations between the United States and Canada have been held since May 2018.

## Navigation on the Columbia Snake River System delivers value to the nation

The economic vitality of many communities in the Pacific Northwest depends on safe and efficient commercial navigation on the Columbia Snake River System. Over 56 million tons of international trade moved on this waterway in 2018, valued at over \$24 billion. A conservative estimate shows 40,000 jobs directly tied to just the deep draft channel. Substantial federal investments have been made in the Lower Columbia River and the inland barging channel and locks, in addition to private and local government investments. This waterway is a significant national transportation asset, and any potential changes which may impact its efficiency should be thoroughly evaluated.

Navigation stakeholders are most concerned with the timing, volume, and duration of river flows. Higher spring/summer flows lead to increased sedimentation and shoaling, swift currents and challenges to ship handling, degradation of marine infrastructure, and increased debris collisions and scouring at bridge piers. Lower fall/winter flows lead to reduced river height, which can result in restrictions on cargo loading as well as further exacerbating shoaling issues. Changes to the current approach to water management could produce increased federal and port dredging costs, higher costs to U.S. farmers and manufacturers, impacts to safety, reduced reliability and efficiency, and slowing of supply chains that reach to the Midwest.

## PNWA supports comprehensive review of potential river system impacts

Throughout the development of the 2013 Regional Recommendation, PNWA's members participated in meetings with the U.S. Entity. PNWA staff and leadership also testified twice before Congress to ensure that navigation perspectives were considered. PNWA continues to advocate for a U.S. negotiating position that:

- Recognizes that changes to flows may impact the ability to safely navigate on the inland and deep draft portions of the river system
- Quantifies how changes to water flows may increase the costs of existing federal navigation programs as well as local infrastructure
- Acknowledges significant existing U.S. programs that support healthy ecosystem function
- Recognizes irrigated agriculture for the value it brings to the regional and national economy, and its reliance on the Columbia River for its viability
- Ensures equitable distribution of power benefits between the two nations
- PNWA also strongly supports funding to continue the Corps' existing flood risk analysis and modeling. PNWA opposes authorization of costly and redundant new studies of flood operations or flood risk.

