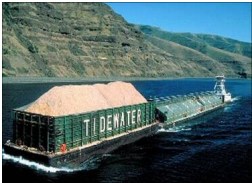




PNWA's goal:
support safe
and efficient
navigation on the
Snake River



Snake River Dredging

The PSMP

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Walla Walla District issued two Records of Decision (RODs) on November 14, 2014. The first was for the Lower Snake River Final Programmatic Sediment Management Plan (PSMP). The PSMP is a 20-year plan outlining how the Corps will manage sediment on the Lower Snake River. The second ROD was for an "immediate need" action (dredging), to re-establish the Congressionally authorized dimensions of the Lower Snake River federal navigation channel.

A History of Litigation

Unlike most other navigation channels around the country, dredging is needed fairly infrequently on the Lower Snake River, and the quantities removed are a fraction of what is dredged in other river systems across the nation. Despite how little dredging is required, groups regularly sue the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in an effort to impede this basic maintenance effort on the Lower Snake. The Inland Ports & Navigation Group, a subset of PNWA's membership, has been an intervenor in each of these cases.

Dredging Success in 2015

In late 2014, groups once again sued the Corps in an attempt to thwart basic maintenance dredging, which had not occurred on the Snake since 2006.

In January 2015, Judge James Robart of the U.S. District Court's Western District of Washington denied the plaintiffs' request for injunction, allowing the Corps to perform routine dredging in the Lower Granite pool near Lewiston, ID and Clarkston, WA. The dredging, which concluded in February 2015, allowed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore the navigation channel to its authorized depth. This project was good for both the economy and the environment, as the Corps used the material removed from the channel to create shallow water "resting and rearing" habitat for migrating juvenile salmon downstream near Knoxway Canyon.

Definitive Court Ruling Delivered in 2016

Despite the completion of the dredging, the plaintiffs pushed ahead with the merits portion of their lawsuit and both sides argued again before Judge Robart on February 2, 2016.

On February 9, 2016, Judge Robart ruled overwhelmingly in favor of the federal government and dismissed the merits portion of the case as well. This ruling was welcomed by those who value a balanced approach to maintaining this vital trade corridor in an environmentally responsible manner. In his ruling, the Judge noted that the plaintiffs' arguments were moot, nor were they ripe. The Judge then proceeded to rule on the merits as well. The Judge ruled unanimously for the Corps of Engineers.

The Lower Snake River an Important Trade Corridor

The Snake River dams provide significant benefits to the Northwest. In 2018, nearly 10% of all U.S. wheat exports moved through the locks on the Snake River, and the commerce that takes place on this inland barge system helps to feed the Lower Columbia River export gateway.