

## **SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #2011-01**

The following Navigation Interests have participated in the preparation and support this SOR: Columbia River Towboat Association,

TO:

Brigadier General John McMahon	COE-NWD
James D. Barton	COE-Water Management
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE-RCC
Witt Anderson	COE-PDD
LTC David Caldwell	COE-Walla Walla District
J. William McDonald	USBR-Boise Regional Director
Stephen J. Wright	BPA-Administrator
Steve Oliver	BPA-PG

FROM: John Pigott, Columbia River Towboat Association, Wanda Keefer, Port of Clarkston; David Doeringsfeld, Port of Lewiston; Arvid Lyons, Lewis and Clark Terminal; Doug Matoon, Valley Vision, Inc.

DATE: March 23, 2011

SUBJECT: Lower Granite Pool held at MOP plus 2 feet April through August

### **Navigation Objectives**

The objective of this SOR is to provide for safe navigation and marine facility access in the Lower Granite pool during the fish migration season.

### **Specifications**

This SOR requests that the seasonal special operation of the Lower Granite pool at Minimum Operating Pool (MOP), to accommodate out-migrating salmonids, be modified to allow for two feet of water above MOP for the period of time when MOP operations are normally in place. Typically, this is from April through August.

### **Justification**

We find ourselves once again, in the absence of dredging since 2006, facing a problematic set of challenges triggered by mandated MOP operations in the Lower Granite pool and shoaling in the federal navigation channel. This has created an unacceptably high safety risk for river system navigators. In past years we have requested an additional foot above MOP in the Granite pool. We now are asking for an additional foot of water (MOP+2) to offset the increase in shoaling. We would much rather have the system dredged and avoid these requests but that seems unlikely to occur as federal funding for dredging is scarce and environmental challenges will be as determined as ever. All this being said the customers of the Columbia-Snake River System have now returned to work, after a month's long system maintenance closure, moving the goods and commodities that provide family sustaining jobs while creating wealth in our state, regional and national economies. It is critical for all waterway stakeholders that this

system, especially as it works to recover from a prolonged shut down, to have a system that can support safe and efficient freight mobility.

Presently the approaches to the Ports of Lewiston and Clarkston have shoaling issues that reduce safe transit options and cause groundings and delays. Boats working in these areas are pushing mud, experiencing unexpected sheers (course diversions) from bank and bottom encroachment and generally have fewer places to run when traffic, especially recreational vessel traffic is heavy. The channel from the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers is problematic as shoaling is shifting and therefore hard to avoid. The area close to the Camas Prairie Railroad Bridge has lost about a quarter of its designated width. The area off the Lewis and Clark Terminal in Lewiston has also shoaled to a point where maneuvering tows is so restricted that you can no longer turn a barge in that area. Even the water along the dolphin line at the terminal is shoaling causing barge groundings while loading. The Port of Clarkston is similarly afflicted with shallow water that now threatens to foreclose cruise ship, operations at that port.

With today's siltation in the Granite pool grounding is an ever present threat once the pool drops to MOP. These groundings while in transit create an unacceptable safety risk for deck crews exposed to unexpected rigging failures and falls overboard. The possibility of holing a boat or barge hull is also an ever present danger along with the possibility of a pollution event. The challenges continue at some loading facilities where grounded barges create a pivot for strong currents to break them away. For other facilities, such as the Port of Clarkston, the larger cruise vessels simply cannot reach their facility. All of these threats are magnified when adverse weather is brought into the equation. Restricted visibility and high gusty winds can increase the difficulty of keeping to the channel when needed room to maneuver simply isn't there.

The economic loss resulting from all these events is significant as boat crews spend more time doing less work as maneuvering in mud and dealing with groundings consumes more of their time. Grain facilities in Lewiston are forced to load more slowly and coordinate with fluctuations in pool levels to complete a barge. This adds time and labor costs. The Port of Clarkston and the city of Clarkston are denied the economic activity that the port and city typically would benefit from when cruise ship business cannot be accommodated due to insufficient water depths.

In consideration of all the above, the supporters of this SOR respectfully request an change in operations to allow the Lower Granite pool to be held at MOP +2 from the beginning of April through the end of August.

Respectfully,

John Pigott  
Chairman  
Columbia River Towboat Association

