

Columbia River traffic to resume Monday

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

PORTLAND, Ore. — River traffic on the Columbia River at the John Day Dam might reopen as early as Monday, March 3, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced today. The upstream navigation lock gate at the facility was extensively damaged late February 28 when barges came into contact with the upstream gate while the lock chamber was filling. This incident immediately halted all river traffic through the lock. The Corps continues its investigation and is working to develop a timeline for completing permanent repairs. Over the weekend, the Corps plans to remove the damaged gate and install a temporary floating bulkhead to be used in place of a normal lock gate during repairs or inspections. The Corps used this auxiliary system in 2002 and it is already at the facility.

"We are making every effort to safely remove the damaged gate over the weekend. We will then install, test and ensure the safe operation of our auxiliary system so we can open the lock to river traffic for a few days prior to our previously scheduled closure," said Col. Thomas O'Donovan, Portland District Commander. "This system will take longer to operate than a fully functional gate system but reducing the economic and logistical impacts of this incident on river users and our stakeholders is our priority right now. Instead of a 30-minute lock-through, it can take more than 90 minutes," added O'Donovan. This incident occurred one week before the annual two-week closure scheduled between March 8 and March 22, 2008. The Corps had already announced plans for closure of the navigation locks at Bonneville, The Dalles, John Day and McNary on the Columbia River, as well as the four locks on the lower Snake River, for inspection, maintenance and repairs. "Investigating an incident of this nature will take time and careful consideration," stated O'Donovan. "Our assessment and engineering analysis to determine a timeline for permanent repairs is already underway but we do not know when we will be back to business as usual." The Portland District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides a variety of services to the citizens of the Pacific Northwest, including safe river navigation, hydropower production and recreation. John Day Dam, completed in 1971, supports this mission through its 76-mile navigation lake, 2.5 million-kilowatt powerhouse and many campgrounds, parks and other facilities along Lake Umatilla and the John Day River. About 10 million tons of commodities and finished products pass through the John Day Navigation Lock each year.

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