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Ice Harbor navigation lock repairs complete, returns to normal service for commercial, recreational vessels

Walla Walla, Wash., -- Navigation lock repairs at Ice Harbor Dam have been finished and the lock is now back in service, according to a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operations official for the Walla Walla District.

“Commercial and recreational users can use the lock normally as of 5 p.m. today, December 1st. Our contractors and a variety of Corps staffers from the dam and here at the headquarters worked together as a team, starting just after midnight on November 28th, to restore the upstream gate here at Ice Harbor’s navigation lock,” said Scott Sutliff, operations and maintenance superintendent at the dam. “We’re happy that we’re ready and able to resume this part of our mission and routinely pass commercial and recreational traffic along the Snake River again.”

The repairs were needed to fix damage to the upstream gate at the lock that happened Oct. 22 when the Empress of the North, a tour boat owned by the American West Steamboat Company of Seattle, Wash., struck the gate. The incident remains under investigation. Corps experts quickly set up a special system using a temporary barrier called a floating bulkhead, and were allowing commercial river traffic to pass upstream and downstream with cargo within 24 hours of the incident. The lock was closed indefinitely, however, to all recreational waterway traffic until repairs could be done by Corps and contractor staffers.

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Corps officials issued a contract soon after the accident for approximately \$63,000 to get the work done. The work was done by Corps members and contractor crews from Dix Corporation, based in Spokane, Wash. Early completion incentives were written into the contract.

“The contractor finished their work before 5 a.m., December 2nd, and so it appears now they’ll get the full \$15,000 incentive,” said Dave Opbroek, construction division chief at Walla Walla.

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