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Walla Walla District

News Release

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Phone: (509) 527-7020

Shippers notified to expect delays as Lower Granite NavLock replaces gate cables

POMEROY, Wash. – Commercial vessels can expect delays when locking past Lower Granite Lock and Dam, located at Snake River mile 107.5, while workers replace damaged lock gate cables, according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers navigation officials at the Walla Walla District.

The gate-hoisting cables on the north side of the upstream lock gate broke yesterday afternoon while the gate was being lowered into an open position. The gate successfully completed its controlled-descent opening operation with the remaining functional cables on the south side. Dam personnel immediately deployed the floating bulkhead to allow workers to assess the situation. Lock operations resumed at 2 a.m. Tuesday using the bulkhead.

The navigation lock is closed to recreational traffic until the replacement cables can be installed. During the interim, Lower Granite personnel will continue using the floating bulkhead to pass commercial vessels through the locks, but delays can be expected.

Structural engineers are on site today to inspect the gate and hoist equipment. Pending the outcome of the structural inspection, operations officials anticipate it will take about four days for maintenance workers at the dam to complete the cable-replacement job.

Five plastic-sheathed Kevlar cables on each side of the lock's upstream submersible tainter gate are used to open and close the gate for lockages. The cables sustain wear and load-bearing stress as they are used to raise and lower the 80-ton steel gate. Maintenance officials at the dam regularly inspect the cables and had planned to replace any worn gate cables during the upcoming annual lock maintenance period in March. New cables had already been stocked, facilitating a shorter period of time in which the floating bulkhead will need to be used to lock vessels past the dam while workers make the unplanned repairs.

“Our floating bulkhead allows us to continue commercial lockages while our maintenance team replaces the cables,” said Marty Mendiola, operations manager at Lower Granite Lock and Dam. “We want to fix things as quickly as possible so that we can continue providing safe, efficient passage up and down the river. This facility is a key part of an infrastructure system that aids the region's economy.”

Between 800-900 lockages are performed at Lower Granite each year, according to District navigation officials.

Lower Granite's navigation lock on the lower Snake River is part of the federal inland channel system that provides navigation from the mouth of the Columbia River near Astoria, Ore., to port facilities on the rivers in Lewiston-Clarkston. Transporters shipped 17.5 million tons of products through the Columbia-Snake rivers channel system in 2006.

Vehicle crossings at the dam have not been impacted by the navigation lock gate repair.

Public Notices and other navigation lock information are available on the Walla Walla District Web site at www.nww.usace.army.mil/html/offices/op/t/navdata/default.html.

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Public Affairs Office, Walla Walla District Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 201 N. Third Ave, Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876

Phone (509) 527-7020 FAX (509) 527-7824

Website: www.nww.usace.army.mil

E-mail: cenww-pa@usace.army.mil