

River Transportation Supports Billions in Commerce

Maritime trade has defined the Northwest for more than 150 years. Since the first load of wheat left the Columbia River in 1869 on an ocean-going vessel bound for Liverpool, England, the role of the river in commerce has grown exponentially. Today, the Columbia and Snake rivers provide a transportation corridor that moves nearly \$19 billion in waterborne cargo annually. River transportation and activity at ports is the source of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars for local economies in the Northwest.

International Trade

The Columbia and Snake River system is a vital link between inland producers and international export markets.

- Every year, over 40 million tons of commercial cargo is sent overseas from the ports of Portland, OR and Vancouver, WA.
- Every year, over 10 million tons of commercial cargo moves up and down the Columbia and Snake Rivers between Portland/Vancouver and Lewiston, Idaho.
- The Columbia and Snake river system is ranked as the nation's #1 U.S. export gateway for wheat and barley and #1 on the West Coast for paper exports, and auto imports.
- The Columbia Snake river system is also the first and most successful container-on-barge system in the country. Nearly 20 percent of the river's container exports arrive by barge.



Economic Value

The commerce provided by the Columbia and Snake Rivers fuels the Northwest's economy.

- A study by the Columbia River ports identified 40,000 port-related Northwest jobs. Firms that ship cargo via the Columbia River employ an additional 59,000 workers.

- Barging is the least-costly mode of inland transportation and saves shippers 25 percent or more over other modes of transportation.
- Cruise ships carry 15,000 passengers a year on five to seven-day tours on the river, bringing an estimated \$15 million to \$20 million in revenue to local economies.

It's Clean and Green

River transportation keeps our air clean and saves fossil fuel.

- Every year, barging keeps 700,000 trucks off highways that run through the sensitive airshed of the scenic Columbia River Gorge.
- A four-barge tow can move 14,000 tons of cargo at a time. By comparison, a rail car can handle 100 tons and a truck can carry 29 tons.
- Fuel efficiency by barge is also impressive at 576 ton-miles per gallon. By comparison, a truck gets 155 ton-miles per gallon and rail gets 413.

Northwest RiverPartners is a partnership of farmers, electric utilities, ports, and large and small businesses in the Pacific Northwest. We are dedicated to ensuring the Columbia and Snake remain living, working rivers to benefit families and businesses in the region.

www.nwriverpartners.org

March 2010