

COLUMBIA RIVER PORTS

LONGVIEW | KALAMA | WOODLAND | VANCOUVER | PORTLAND

January 2026

Lower Columbia River Channel Maintenance

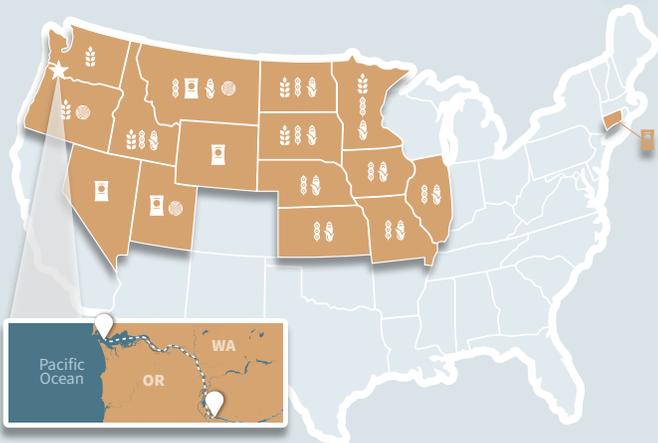
Critical Trade Gateway of National Significance

The Lower Columbia River is a federally authorized navigation channel that supports the U.S. economy by moving goods to and from communities along the 102-mile stretch between Vancouver, Washington and the Pacific Ocean. It is an integrated part of the 465-mile Columbia Snake River System and facilitates nearly **50 million metric tons of cargo valued at over \$31 billion** in annual trade.

At least 40 states use this waterway each year, making it one of the most critical commercial waterways in the nation and the world. The Lower Columbia River is:

- **The #1 largest wheat** export gateway in the U.S.
- **The #2 largest corn and soy** export gateway in the U.S.
- **The #3 largest grain** export gateway in the world

2023 Major Exports through Columbia River Ports



2024 Autos Imports/Exports

The Lower Columbia River is a national leader in both auto imports and exports. After final testing and assembly at the ports, these vehicles are distributed across the U.S. for retail sale.

459,524
UNITS

Source: Waterborne Commerce of United States, Department of the Army Corps of Engineers, Institute for Water Resources 2023

WRDA 2026 Policy Fix Needed to Fund Channel Maintenance

To maintain the Lower Columbia River navigation channel over the next 20 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and non-federal sponsor ports—Portland, Vancouver, Kalama, Longview, and Woodland—are finalizing a Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP). As part of DMMP, the USACE intends to strategically utilize confined aquatic structures for efficient in-water disposal. While maintenance of the federal waterway is a federal responsibility, internal USACE policy currently classifies these structures as “construction” rather than “maintenance,” triggering an unfair cost-share burden for non-federal sponsors.

Given the river’s status as a nationally significant waterway, a policy change in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2026 is essential to eliminate this non-federal cost-share requirement. Without this legislative adjustment, the region could see draft restrictions preventing vessels from reaching their full -43-foot capacity. Such restrictions would be economically devastating: every lost foot of draft leaves over \$1 million of cargo per ship on the dock, jeopardizing millions in trade, stunting national growth, and putting years of public and private investment at risk.

PROPOSED WRDA 2026 LANGUAGE TO RESOLVE COST-SHARING BARRIER

Sec. ____ Lower Columbia River.

“(a) Notwithstanding the June 23, 2004, project cooperation agreement regarding this project, the Federal share of the cost of construction of dredged material stabilization and retaining structures required under such agreement and any future project cooperation agreements related to the project for navigation, Lower Willamette and Columbia Rivers, from Portland, Oregon, to the sea, authorized by the first section of the Act of June 18, 1878 (chapter 267, 20 Stat. 157, chapter 264) shall be 100 percent; and”

(b) Section 1139(c)(15) of the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (Public Law 118-272) is repealed.

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