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News Release

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Contact:	Diana J. Fredlund , 503-808-4510

Corps changes status of Willamette Falls Locks

PORTLAND, Ore. -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has changed the status of the Willamette Falls Locks from a "caretaker status" to a "non-operational status." The locks were operated previously at least once per month for maintenance, but now will not operate them at all.

The locks are made up of seven gates, with gate 1 being the farthest downstream. The gate anchors are about 50 years old and experiencing excessive corrosion, which increases the potential for failure. An evaluation report reviewing the entire Willamette Falls Locks system highlighted the distressed condition of the anchors for gates 2, 3 and 4.

After Corps engineers inspected the locks to validate the identified problems, the Portland District Engineer moved the 138-year old lock into a non-operational status.

"We had honored an informal agreement to allow commercial customers to lock through during our monthly maintenance cycles," said Col. John W. Eisenhower, Portland District Engineer. "In light of this report we cannot operate the locks at all, even for maintenance."

"Public safety is our number one priority," Eisenhower said. "With the condition of the gate anchors, we do not believe the locks can operate without increasing the risk to the public."

A gate failure could cause damage to the infrastructure or to boats in the lock, Eisenhower added.

The Corps will continue to evaluate how to repair and restore the Willamette Falls Locks to an operational status, under current funding constraints. Funding for navigation locks nationwide is based on tonnage of cargo passing through the locks, with higher-volume locks receiving funding priority. The Willamette Falls Locks has been primarily a recreational lock since the 1970s, meaning a low funding priority.

"We understand the importance of Willamette Falls Locks to the local community, and continue to meet

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regularly with federal, state, county and city officials, industry representatives and other interested parties to identify potential solutions for both operations and long-term reliability," said Jerry Carroll, operations manager for Bonneville Lock and Dam Project, which maintains the locks.

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Portland District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' old website | *Replaced: May 17, 2012*

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