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Corps releases FY12 Allegheny River Service Reduction Plan

PITTSBURGH - The US Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District has released a Fiscal Year 2012 Allegheny River service reduction plan that will keep six of eight locks open to recreational traffic while eliminating service for pleasure boaters at the two uppermost locks. Commercial traffic will have access to all locks, some by appointment, and hours at the first three locks will drop from 24-hour service to two 8-hour shifts.

The reduction in service anticipates passage of the President's Fiscal Year 2012 budget which would cut funding for operation and maintenance of the Allegheny River navigation system in half, from the President's FY11 budget of \$8.4 million to \$4 million in FY12. The impending budget reduction required a decision this spring so that managers of the system could begin re-assigning up to 18 people from the Allegheny River to other navigation facilities on the Ohio and Monongahela rivers or to Corps reservoirs.

The formation of the plan considered more than 60 written comments and suggestions as well as ideas presented at several meetings with business owners, community and local officials, and the public. The schedule, which takes effect Oct. 1, 2011, is as follows:

Locks 2-5 - Two eight-hour shifts (8:15 a.m. – 11:45 p.m.), seven days per week for commercial and recreational traffic.

- Commercial multiple lockages provided at Locks 2-3 by appointment.
- Commercial double lockages will be provided at Lock 4 (no appointment necessary).
- No triple lockages will be available at Lock 4.
- Commercial double lockages will be provided at Lock 5 by appointment.
- Recreational boaters will have access.

Locks 6 and 7 - One shift on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays from May 1-Sept. 30 for commercial and recreational traffic. (Actual dates may vary and will be provided to public through a Navigation Notice).

- The Saturday, Sunday and holiday shift will be from 12:30 to 8:10 p.m.
- Commercial tow lockages will be provided by appointment.
- Recreational boaters will only be permitted to lock through during the Saturday, Sunday and holiday shift.

Locks 8 and 9 - Closed to recreational boaters. Commercial lockages provided by appointment.

Additional lockage hours for special events will be considered on a case by case basis.

For the 2011 recreational season, the hours of operation will remain as they have in past years. To view the schedule, visit: <http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/or/or-f/Documents/Navs2011/nav11-04.pdf>

The President's fiscal year 2012 (FY12) budget focuses on directing funds to programs that provide the highest return on investment. To accomplish this, federal agencies were required to identify low-priority programs for either elimination or a 50 percent reduction in budget.

Nationally, the President's FY12 budget provides \$76 million for the Corps' low use navigation projects compared to FY11's \$140 million.

For its navigation program, the Corps of Engineers identified projects with low commercial use. Locally, the Pittsburgh District's Allegheny River system was identified as a low commercial use project, and subsequently received \$4 million in the FY12 President's budget. When compared to \$8.4 million in the FY11 President's budget, this reduction is significant.

The FY12 funding is \$1.9 million less than what's needed to maintain the current level of service and requires the elimination of significant maintenance of the system. This reduction in funding will greatly impact the service provided to Allegheny River users, especially recreational boaters. Commercial vessels will have priority access to all locks.

For media inquiries, contact the Public Affairs Office at 412-395-7500 or email: celrp-pa@usace.army.mil. To view comments submitted, lock statistics and other information on the Allegheny River Service Reduction, please visit: www.lrp.usace.army.mil