



# COLUMBIA RIVER SHORELINE RECONVEYANCE

FROM THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS TO THE TRI-CITIES COMMUNITY



## **COLUMBIA RIVER SHORELINE RECONVEYANCE**

For the past 70 years, the U.S. Corps of Engineers has owned most of the Columbia River shoreline throughout the Tri-Cities, including the parks, levees, and other infrastructure. The proposed reconveyance would transfer ownership of the land back to local governments through federal legislation.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**CONTACT (509) 735-1000 OR VISIT [WWW.TRIDEC.ORG](http://WWW.TRIDEC.ORG)**

## STATUS REPORT ON COLUMBIA RIVER SHORELINE RECONVEYANCE

To view the current state of the Columbia River Shoreline, please view the 6-minute video on [www.TRIDEC.org](http://www.TRIDEC.org).

It has been nearly four years since the three of us teamed-up to inform and build broad community support for reconveyance of roughly 34 miles of Columbia River Shoreline back to the Tri-Cities.

After 70 years under Corps of Engineers control, we recognized that the primary purpose and Congressional authority for the Corps continued ownership—that of flood control—is no longer valid.

A legal review, funded by the community, was conducted by K&L Gates. K&L Gates legal analysis provided the conclusion that the original Congressional authorities, granted to the Corps in 1945 for flood control, no longer have a valid purpose with the additional nine dams that have been built upstream of McNary Dam since 1948.

The possibility of a Columbia River flood, like the flood of 1948, when there were only two dams upstream of the Tri-Cities, is extremely remote.

K&L Gates recommended that the Tri-City community consider new legislation authorizing the reconveyance of the rivershore running through the three cities along the McNary reservoir, back to local governments.

“Specific direction from Congress is needed to break the bureaucratic hold of the Army Corps so that after sixty years the Tri-Cities can be reconnected with the Columbia River.”

Representative Dan Newhouse introduced language into the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), for FY2017, requiring the Corps to provide a complete description and cost of acquisition of the rivershore properties running through the Tri-Cities under Corps control (both owned and easements).

The Corps did provide extensive documentation to the community just a few months ago; and these property descriptions are in the hands of the three cities.

Reconveyance would place these properties back under community control. It will then be up to the cities themselves to go through the public process of zoning and identifying future uses.

Since 1988, there have been at least four extensive and costly Tri-City rivershore studies conducted. These studies contain extensive recommendations and details; all with a singular recommendation—that the Columbia Rivershore is the most underutilized and undermaintained property in the Tri-Cities; and improvements cannot be accomplished under Corps ownership.

In addition, under the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) our

community has worked diligently with the Corps through several attempts to get even small parcels of the rivershore returned to the community.

To date these attempts have been unsuccessful at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars to the community

We believe that we have the support of every publicly elected body in the Tri-Cities—cities, counties, and ports—as well as major organizations such as Rotary and Chambers.

As you can see in the video, the Columbia River shoreline has been in a deteriorating condition for so long. Wild vegetation growth has been slow over 70 years, that residents seem to have simply gone blind to how unattractive, and inaccessible, the actual rivershore property has become.

To us, the answer is very simple:

1. Do nothing and continue to let the shoreline to deteriorate.
2. Obtain Congressional authority to reconvey these properties back to our community.

When successful, the community itself then can take time to determine:

- Future enhancements to our parks for recreational purposes;
- Slowly lowering the levees to allow more visibility of the beautiful, blue, Columbia River;
- Where along the river limited commercial activities might be developed to offset annual maintenance operating costs to the three cities (which are in excess of \$2 million a year; with no return to cover those investments).

These steps, under local community control and decision-making, will not happen overnight; and most will likely take several decades to bring to fruition. But these cannot be accomplished under continuing Corps ownership.

Federal law is fairly clear relative to its control of properties owned by the Federal Government. When there is no further federal mission for the property, it should be returned for public use. The primary use of the levees and property along the McNary Pool was for flood control; which is no longer necessary.

“Excess personal property” means any personal property under the control of any Federal agency that is no longer required for that agency’s needs, as determined by the agency head or designee.” GSA regulations Part 102-36.

For a great example, look at what Boise, Idaho recently did to some of their riverfront:

<https://www.idahostatesman.com/living/treasure/article155443754.html>



**Brad Fisher**

SVP, RBC Wealth  
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Former Kennewick Mayor



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**Gary Petersen**

CEO, Petersen Consulting  
Former VP Federal  
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## TRI-CITIES RIVERSHORE ENHANCEMENT AND THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS

### SINCE 1948 THE CORPS CONTROLS:

18

Miles of shoreline on the Benton County side of the River

16

Miles of shoreline on the Franklin County side of the River

12

Miles of Columbia River shoreline that contain levees

3

Cities that have been paying for maintenance of parks and trails for decades.

4

Major studies that have been completed highlighting the advantages of the Riverfront.

9

Dams added to the Columbia River since the 1948 Flood: Chief Joseph Dam (1955), Rocky Reach Dam (1961), Priest Rapids Dam (1961), Wanapum Dam (1963), Wells Dam (1967), Keenleyside Dam-British Columbia (1968), Mica Dam-British Columbia (1973), Libby Dam-Montana (1975), and Revelstoke Dam-British Columbia (1984).

### 1948

- Columbia River Flood: Caused extensive damage from Trail, British Columbia to Astoria, Oregon; and completely destroyed Oregon's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city Vanport.
- Corps of Engineers built some of the existing levees (dikes) along the Columbia River through Kennewick, Pasco and Richland during this flood.

### 1952

- Corps of Engineers began building McNary Dam.
- Corps purchased some land along McNary Pool in Kennewick, Pasco and Richland on both sides of the river to protect against the coming McNary Pool.
- Corps built additional levees for the McNary Dam and Pool based on the "unregulated flood of record" that occurred in 1894.

#### Note:

The flood of 1894 was classified as larger than the 1948 flood and occurred when no dams existed along the river. This flood became the Standard Project Flood (SPF) of record for the Columbia River.

The 1894 flood was used by the Corps for building levees behind what was to become McNary Pool.

Urban levees built by the Corps in 1952 were designed to a height of 8 feet above the SPF of 1894.

### 1988

- Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau (now known as Visit Tri-Cities) and Benton Franklin Council of Governments identified Rivershore Enhancement as a community goal.
- Through two State grants totaling \$70k, a contract was let to Naramore-Baine-Brady and Johanson (NBBJ) of Seattle to develop a Rivershore Master Plan.

#### Master Plan Summary:

"Columbia River shoreline is a treasured resource that could greatly benefit the Tri-Cities."

Parks, trails, beaches, and boating would enhance economic development as would some commercial and residential development.

"Minimum" option recommended would be to lower all the levees by 3 or 4 feet.

"Maximum" option would be to lower levees by 8 to 10 feet.

- Corps notified the City of Kennewick that if they didn't maintain Columbia Park, the Corps would close the park.

**For additional information about Columbia River Shoreline Reconveyance, visit [www.TRIDEC.org](http://www.TRIDEC.org) or follow TRIDEC on social media @TCDevCouncil**



## TRI-CITIES RIVERSHORE ENHANCEMENT AND THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS CONTINUED

### 1992

- Corps of Engineers completed a Reconnaissance Report on the McNary Dam Levee System (Tri-Cities Levees). The report was designed to see if there was federal interest in lowering and/or beautifying the levees.

Report showed:

The levees were constructed with as much as “10 to 12 feet of freeboard (extra height).”

There was “no federal interest in lowering or beautifying the levees.”

### 1996

- Local governments were successful in getting some Columbia River shoreline-specific provisions included in the Congressional action on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).
- Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau (now known as Visit Tri-Cities) secured DOE 3161 funding from TRIDEC and established the Tri-Cities Rivershore Enhancement Council (TREC).
- TCVCB funded second major rivershore enhancement study.
- Bones of “Kennewick Man” were found during the Water Follies.

### 2004-2008

- After WRDA bill passage, local governments formally signed a “Non-Standard Parks and Recreation Lease” with the Corps in 2004—8 years after the WRDA bill, which authorized this type of lease, was signed.
- In 2005, Pasco was allowed to lower 1¼ miles of levee (levee 12-1) by ~6feet—at a cost of \$1.4 million. Included new pumps, a paved trail, benches and landscaping.
- In 2004/2005 Kennewick was allowed to lower 1½ miles of levee (levee 5D) at a cost of \$1.7 million. Included drainage pumps, paved trail, benches, covered picnic tables and landscaping improvements.
- In 2008 Richland lowered ~½ mile of levee north of Howard Amon Park by ~10 feet.
- Kennewick, Pasco, Richland, Port of Kennewick, Port of Pasco, and Port of Benton celebrated completion of the Sacagawea Heritage Trail, in part located along levees.

COLUMBIA RIVER SHORELINE 2016



LEVEE AT CLOVER ISLAND



COLUMBIA RIVER SHORELINE 2016



CORPS SIDE OF LEVEE SHOWING NO ACCESS TO COLUMBIA RIVER



COLUMBIA RIVER SHORELINE 2016



DISCARDED CHUNKS OF CONCRETE BEHIND HOMEWOOD SUITES



COLUMBIA RIVER SHORELINE 2016



OSPREY POINT VIEW

