

# Our River System Sustains Agriculture



## River navigation supports Whitman County farmers

Thanks to the 465-mile “river highway” known as the Columbia Snake River System, our Whitman County farmers have access to the safest, cleanest and lowest cost mode of transportation for trade.

Moving crops and goods up and down the rivers—or barging—keeps more than 700,000 trucks off our Northwest highways. Barges also use significantly less fuel than trucks or trains and have fewer accidental spills or collisions than any other mode.

**Here in Whitman County, where we produce more wheat than any other county in the nation, river navigation means something more.**

It’s our competitive edge. About 80-90 percent of the grain grown in our region ships to overseas markets. Growers can compete internationally because of their high product quality and low price point, made possible by barging—the least expensive means of transport.

If the 14 federal dams along the lower Columbia and Snake Rivers were ever decommissioned and breached, the loss of barging would place many family farms at risk.

More than 1,100 farms could face bankruptcy if farm subsidies are not increased, according to a 2020 study commissioned for Pacific Northwest Waterways Association. With wheat prices already down near the break-even point, the study finds that the federal government would need to increase annual direct payments to farmers by up to \$38.8 million to maintain current income levels.

**The continued vitality of our agriculture relies on a strong and balanced river system.** Learn more and take action at [www.portwhitman.com](http://www.portwhitman.com).

### KNOW THE FACTS

The Columbia Snake River System is the nation’s **top wheat export gateway**.

More than **10% of all U.S. wheat exports** move through the 465-mile system each year.

Barging is nearly **40% more fuel-efficient** than freight trains, and **270% more fuel-efficient** than semi-trucks.

One four-barge tow can ship the equivalent goods of **1.4 100-unit freight trains, or 538 semi-trucks**.

