



31 August 2015

PUBLIC NOTICE D8 DWB-864

VERTICAL CLEARANCE GUIDELINES

FOR BRIDGES ACROSS THE

MONONGAHELA RIVER

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND:

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) is reviewing vertical clearance requirements for bridges across the Monongahela River. The existing guidelines require all bridges built across the Monongahela River to provide a minimum vertical clearance of 42.5 feet above normal pool.

The USCG received a request from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) dated January 24, 1990 to allow the minimum vertical clearance guidelines on the waterway be reduced from 47 feet to 42.5 feet above pool, in order to support the USACE's Lower Monongahela River Improvement (Lower Mon) Project. The USACE specified in its 1990 request that a reduction to 42.5 feet would result in only the Conrail, now Norfolk Southern, Port Perry Railroad Bridge, at river mile 11.7 to require alteration (vertical raising) in association with the Lower Mon Project (which would raise the USACE's normal pool by 5 feet at the bridge site). The USCG issued a public notice (#2-559) on August 17, 1990, and coordinated with waterway users regarding the proposed vertical clearance change. On November 15, 1990, the USCG approved 42.5 feet as the new minimum vertical clearance requirement on the Monongahela River.

Implementation of the USACE Lower Mon Project is proceeding forward. Currently, the clearance maintained under the bridge is 42.5 feet above the interim pool elevation of 721.8 feet. Prior to the USCG approval in 1990, the Lower Mon Project would have required a total of five bridges to be raised to meet the vertical clearance requirements. Upon completion of the project, without adjustment to the subject bridge, the bridge will be 1.9 feet below the current minimum vertical clearance requirement, 40.6 feet vice 42.5 feet.

Historical data collected by the USACE over the past seven years suggests that reducing the minimum vertical clearance from 42.5 feet to 40.6 feet will have little to no impact to the vessels that typically navigate the Monongahela River. The data shows that over 90% of the vessel trips under this bridge are by vessels with a reported air draft below 40.6 feet and therefore will have no adverse impacts when river is at or below pool stage at the bridge site. Approximately 5% of the vessel trips transiting under this bridge have a reported air draft between 40.6 feet and 42.5 feet. Approximately 5% of the vessel trips have reported air draft over 42.5 feet.

With the support of the data discussed above, the USACE has requested that the USCG revisit the vertical clearance requirements on the Monongahela River to determine if 40.6 feet of vertical clearance would be an unreasonable obstruction to navigation. If a reduced clearance is accepted, this action would eliminate the need to raise the subject bridge and save a significant amount of money for both the Inland Waterways Trust Fund and the Federal Government.

SOLICITATION OF COMMENTS:

Interested parties are requested to express their views, in writing, on the proposed change to the vertical clearance guidelines. Give sufficient details to establish a clear understanding of the reasons for support or opposition to the proposal. Comments will be received for the record at the office of the Commander (dwb), Eighth Coast Guard District Bridge Branch, Room 2.102D, 1222 Spruce Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63103-2832 through November 30, 2015. Any comments received will be made part of the case record.

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ERIC A. WASHBURN

Bridge Administrator, Western Rivers

By direction of the District Commander

NOTE: This is a web-searchable copy and is not the official, signed version; however, other than the signature being omitted, it is a duplicate of the official version.