



**OREGON**  
HISTORY MUSEUM  
AT THE OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Come Navigate Part of Portland's Maritime History in New Oregon History Museum Exhibition: "Working on the River"**

**Portland, OR – April 30, 2014** – Back in 1891, the average depth of the Columbia River was only 17-feet, and the Portland Harbor was rife with sand bars, shoaling, and navigation problems. World trade, a key part of the region's economic vitality since before it was first settled by pioneers, was starting to move away from Portland's doorstep. Concerned about the state's lifeline to global trade, the Oregon State Legislature created the Port of Portland for the express purpose of improving and maintaining the navigation channels of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers from Portland to the Pacific Ocean.

A fascinating new exhibition titled "Working on the River: A History of Dredging" opens tomorrow, May 1, at the Oregon History Museum and is on display through October 30, 2014. This original exhibition traces the history of the dredging of our rivers for maritime trade, and brings to life the people and machines whose work on the river has molded our region's geography, trade routes, and economic vitality.

"The ability of ships to get to and from the Portland region has shaped our city—both geographically and economically—helping it become a manufacturing center and transportation hub for products into and out of our region." said Port of Portland Executive Director Bill Wyatt. "As a trade-dependent state, our marine highways are critical to our region's continued success."

The creation of the Port of Portland over a century ago inspired community investment in channel development and funded publicly-owned dredges to accomplish the needed maintenance dredging. The Port was given the initial directive to dredge and maintain the Columbia and Willamette River channel at a depth of 25-feet.

Today, to accommodate modern ships, the Port, in cooperation with the Army Corps of Engineers, still carries out this mission maintaining a 40-foot channel in the Willamette and a 43-foot channel in the Columbia River. Much of this work is performed by the Port's crew on the Dredge *Oregon*. This 1965-era vessel was recently over-hauled with new engines and generators that will reduce carbon emissions by 88 percent.

A brief history of the Port as well as the importance of Portland as a national and international trade center and seaport is also examined in the exhibit within the context of the necessity of dredging to uphold access to the city and the Pacific Ocean.

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### **About the Oregon Historical Society**

Since 1898, the Society has served as Oregon's primary research collection and museum about Oregon history. OHS has an extensive collection of historical pieces, including over 85,000 artifacts and 3 million photographs and films. It safeguards and presents Oregon's history through a museum, research library, academic journal, school programs, and website content.

The Oregon History Museum is located at 1200 SW Park Avenue in downtown Portland. Museum hours are Monday – Saturday from 10 AM – 5 PM and Sunday from Noon – 5 PM. Museum admission is free for OHS members and Multnomah County residents. Visitor information and a list of current exhibits can be found at [WWW.OHS.ORG](http://WWW.OHS.ORG).

### **About the Port of Portland**

Established in 1891 by the Oregon legislature, the Port today owns four marine terminals, three airports (Portland International, Hillsboro, and Troutdale) and six business parks. The mission of the Port is to enhance the region's economy and quality of life by providing efficient cargo and air passenger access to national and global markets. The most recent economic impact study shows that the Port generated 27,000 jobs, \$4.6 billion in business revenue and nearly \$164 million in state and local taxes.

[www.portofportland.com](http://www.portofportland.com)