

YAQUINA RIVER, OREGON.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT OF
EXAMINATION OF YAQUINA RIVER, OREGON, FROM YAQUINA
TO ELK CITY.

DECEMBER 15, 1909.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and
ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, December 11, 1909.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from the Chief
of Engineers, U. S. Army, dated 5th ultimo, together with copy of
a report from Maj. J. F. McIndoe, Corps of Engineers, dated July
31, 1909, of a preliminary examination of Yaquina River, Oregon, from
Yaquina to Elk City, made by him in compliance with the provisions
of the river and harbor act of March 3, 1909.

Very respectfully,

J. M. DICKINSON,
Secretary of War.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, November 5, 1909.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith for transmission to
Congress report of July 31, 1909, by Maj. J. F. McIndoe, Corps of
Engineers, on preliminary examination authorized by the river and
harbor act approved March 3, 1909, of Yaquina River, Oregon, from
Yaquina to Elk City.

No work of improvement has ever been done on this river, but over \$700,000 has been expended in providing a suitable entrance to Yaquina Bay into which the Yaquina River flows. However, the commerce using this entrance became so small and insignificant that the improvement was abandoned pursuant to provisions of section 7 of the river and harbor act of March 3, 1905.

I concur in the opinion of the district officer, the division engineer, and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors that the locality in question is not now worthy of improvement by the General Government.

Very respectfully,

W. L. MARSHALL,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army.

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF YAQUINA RIVER, OREGON, FROM
YAQUINA TO ELK CITY.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Portland, Oreg., July 31, 1909.

SIR: In compliance with department letter of March 8, 1909, I have the honor to submit the following report on the preliminary examination of Yaquina River, from Yaquina to Elk City, Oreg., provided for in the river and harbor act approved March 3, 1909.

The Yaquina River has previously been examined under the provisions of the river and harbor acts of 1896 and 1902, and the reports thereon will be found in Documents No. 112, Fifty-fifth Congress, second session, and No. 240, Fifty-eighth Congress, second session.

The following general description of the river is quoted from the last report:

The Yaquina River is a small stream which takes its rise in the Coast Range of mountains in Lincoln County, Oreg., about 30 miles in a direct line from the Pacific Ocean. Twenty-one miles from its mouth it is joined by its principal tributary, Big Elk, at the small settlement of Elk City. The amount of fresh water carried by both streams is insignificant. The tidal influence extends about 5 miles above Elk City, which is as far as the streams may be considered navigable, and then only for skiffs and light-draft scows.

At Elk City the river is about 160 feet wide; between that point and the mouth of Depot Slough, a distance of 9 miles, it gradually widens to about 800 feet. The controlling depth throughout this part of the river is about 3 feet at mean low tide, although many long stretches have depths of from 5 to 10 feet and even more at the same stage.

There is a silt shoal or bar about 1 mile above the mouth of Depot Slough on which the prevailing depth is 3 feet at mean low tide. Rocky bar, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles below Elk City, caused by a bowlder slide, is also an obstruction, but can be passed with plenty of water by hugging the north bank. There are also a few snags between Elk City and the mouth of Depot Slough.

There is a mud bar at the mouth of Depot Slough on which the depth is but 2 feet at mean low tide and which interferes with navigation between deep water in the Yaquina River proper and Toledo.

The average range of the tide at Elk City is about $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet, which is but slightly less than at the mouth of the river.

From Toledo downstream to Oysterville, about 6 miles, the river varies in width from 800 to 1,800 feet, except at the first bend below Depot Slough, where it is but 400 feet wide. The channel depths vary from 4 to 20 feet throughout this distance, and two silt bars occur, one at the "Chinamans," about 2 miles below the mouth of Depot Slough, on which the least depth is about 4 feet, and one just above Oysterville, with about 6 feet on it at mean low tide.

From Oysterville to Yaquina, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and thence across Yaquina Bay and bar to the ocean, the channel has a least depth of 12 feet at low tide. From the above description it will be seen that for the $17\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Yaquina to Elk City the Yaquina River is a tidal estuary with an average range of tide of $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet to 6 feet, and that, except for a mud bar at the mouth of Depot Slough, where the depth is only 2 feet, the least depth in the channel is about 3 feet at mean low tide.

The town of Yaquina is about half a mile above the head of Yaquina Bay, which is about 3 miles long and about 1 mile wide. It is a small settlement and the terminus of the Corvallis and Eastern Railroad, which parallels the river to Elk City and crosses the mountains, connecting with the Southern Pacific lines at Corvallis and at Albany. Elk City is a small village at the head of navigation. Toledo, the county seat of Lincoln county, with a population of about 1,000, is situated on Depot Slough, near its junction with the river. Newport, with a population of about 600, is situated near the entrance to Yaquina Bay, and during the summer months is said to be visited by several thousand people. A narrow strip of bottom land borders the river and its tributary sloughs, but it is not extensive or highly cultivated, and the neighboring country is hilly and covered with brush. The valley is therefore sparsely populated.

There is one small sawmill at Elk City, with a capacity of 12,000 feet of lumber per day, and two sawmills at Toledo with a total capacity of about 125,000 feet per day, which are operated to supply the local demand for lumber. There is a creamery at Toledo and a small salmon cannery at Oysterville, which ship their product by the railroad. No steamboats are operated on the river between Yaquina and Elk City, and no commercial statistics were obtainable.

The river and its tributary sloughs are used as a public highway by farmers and others who own gasoline launches and small barges, on which they transport wood, hay, and other products to market and bring back supplies. No record of this traffic is kept but, on account of the small population, its amount and value can not be very great.

The improvement desired by the local commercial interests is the dredging of the shoals, so that vessels which can cross the bar at the entrance can proceed to Toledo, and perhaps even to Elk City, and load to a draft of about 14 feet, otherwise it is claimed they are unable to use ocean transportation without a rehandling of the cargo. Without ocean transportation the freight rates to outside markets, on dairy and farm products and lumber, are considered prohibitive, and for this reason the present commerce is small.

There is said to be a very large body of yellow fir and spruce timber, estimated at 8,000,000,000 feet, in the valley of the Siletz River, from 10 to 20 miles north of the Yaquina River, which may find an outlet to market by way of Depot Slough and the Yaquina. In fact a logging railroad is now under construction in order to bring out some of this timber. Commerce may, in the future, demand that the shoals between Yaquina and Toledo be deepened, but at the present time the prospective increase in commerce, either local or from the Siletz Valley, is too uncertain to warrant any improvement by the General Government.

At Toledo there is a public wharf with a frontage of 64 feet, in addition to two large private wharves at the sawmills. At this and other points on the river wharf facilities are ample for all needs. No valuable water power is available for development, as the section of the river under consideration is tidal.

It is my opinion that neither the present nor prospective demands of commerce in this locality warrant any expenditure by the General Government, and that the Yaquina River, from Yaquina to Elk City, is not worthy of improvement at the present time.

Very respectfully,

J. F. McINDOE,
Major, Corps of Engineers.

The CHIEF of ENGINEERS, U. S. ARMY,
(Through the Division Engineer.)

[First indorsement.]

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
NORTHERN PACIFIC DIVISION,
San Francisco, Cal., August 4, 1909.

Respectfully forwarded to the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army, agreeing with the opinion expressed within.

JOHN BIDDLE,
Lieut. Col., Corps of Engineers,
Division Engineer.

[Third indorsement.]

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,
Washington, D. C., September 4, 1909.

Respectfully returned to the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army.

It is stated in the within report that no steamboats now operate on the Yaquina River between Yaquina and Elk City. The adjacent country is thinly populated and the amount of commerce now offering for shipment or in immediate prospect is quite small.

The General Government expended nearly \$700,000 in providing a suitable entrance to Yaquina Harbor, but no advantage was taken of this improvement. On the contrary the commerce, which was never large, dwindled away to a few hundred tons, and the improvement was abandoned about 1905. Under these conditions it is not probable that the stretch of river under consideration would be extensively used if improved.

Interested parties were notified by the district officer of his adverse report and given an opportunity to submit their views to the Board. One communication has been received from a firm interested in business in Toledo, in which it is recommended that the river be improved to that point.

From the facts before it the Board is forced to concur in the opinion expressed by the district officer and the division engineer that Yaquina River is not at this time worthy of improvement.

For the Board:

D. W. LOCKWOOD,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Senior Member of the Board.