

## Ship Report Transcript

Monday, August 12, 2024

By Joanne Rideout

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It's time for the Ship Report the show about all things maritime. I'm Joanne Rideout. It's Monday, August 12th, 2024.

Well, let's take a look at marine weather, then we'll talk about ships a bit. And then I'm going to talk a little bit about upper river challenges for vessels and a recent news story about that, about how hard it can be to control a vessel even on what might look like the less turbulent portions of the river way inland.

Because, after all, the Columbia is a really powerful river all along the length of the river, not just here in Astoria, where we have the Columbia River Bar and places like that. So we'll talk about that in a minute.

First Marine weather. Yesterday we had high pressure offshore which brought us north to northwest winds and choppy seas on Sunday. Today, weak low pressure develops near the Washington coast, which will bring more southwesterly winds to our coastal waters in the early part of this week. Today, we can expect southwest winds 5 to 10 knots, seas 3 to 5 feet. Wave detail waves from the southwest, two feet high at 4 seconds apart and northwest swells four feet high at 8 seconds apart. And a chance of showers in the foot is in the forecast. In our ship schedule, we have the Lian Xi Hu, arriving from Sacramento headed to Portland apologize to Chinese speakers, if I'm butchering that, it's a ship that is bringing refined petroleum into Portland. She will deliver it there, passing Astoria around 2:30 a.m. in Portland by about 8:30 a.m..

The Themistocles is arriving from Mexico, headed for Kalama. She's a dry bulk carrier, picking up wheat upriver at Kalama, passing Astoria around 4 a.m. and in Kalama by about 9 a.m.. The Bold Horizon is arriving from San Diego, headed to the Port of Astoria. She is classified as a research vessel, but she is also a survey and cable vessel, for hire. So she may be assisting with fiber optic cable projects out there in the ocean, or she may be doing some sort of a research project with scientists on board. So she will be at the Port of Astoria around 6:30 a.m..

It's not uncommon for research vessels of all kinds to come into the Columbia River because we are only 17 miles from the ocean. That's pretty easy access to a dock where you can get fuel here, you can dock, you can get repairs if you need it. You can get access to you can take on crew members, change crew members, get supplies, things like that. So we are very convenient and we often see research vessels coming into the Columbia River.

Next inbound is the Green Wave arriving from Tacoma, headed for Vancouver, Washington. Subaru's on board. She's one of those high sided car carriers. She'll pass Astoria around 11 a.m. and be in Vancouver by about 5 p.m..

The Power Globe is arriving from South Korea, headed for the Astoria Anchorage. She's a dry bulk carrier, picking up wheat upriver. Eventually she will be in Astoria and Anchorage by about 4:30 p.m.. And the Kitakami River is arriving from South Korea, headed for Portland. She's a tanker with refined petroleum onboard, delivering that to Portland, passing Astoria around 7:30 p.m. in Portland by about 1:30 a.m. on Tuesday.

And the *Taho America* is arriving from Vancouver, British Columbia, headed for the Astoria Anchorage. Corn, soy or wheat there, which she'll be picking up eventually upriver at Kalama. And she will pass Astoria, will arrive in Astoria's Anchorage around 11 p.m.

And the *Saic Anji Eternity* is arriving from South Korea, headed for Portland. A car carrier with brand new Hondas on board, delivering those to the Port of Portland. She could be exporting some Fords back to Asia. She'll pass Astoria around 1 a.m. Tuesday morning and be in Portland by about 7 a.m. on Tuesday.

Well, today, I'd like to talk with you a little bit more about the challenges of taking vessels on the Columbia. Something that I talk about quite a bit because down river here where we live near Astoria, it is pretty challenging out there. But today I'd like to talk in a slightly different way from the usual down river stuff that I talk about, about the challenges posed by tides and current and wind and the Columbia River Bar.

Today I want to talk about challenges on the Columbia in its upriver stretches that can pose issues for vessels and swimmers there in places where we might assume the river might be less risky. But there are risks nonetheless. I posted something about this on my ship report Facebook page this weekend in response to a listener who shared a post about one of our Astoria based cruise ships, the ones that you see docking by the Maritime Museum, the ones that do river cruises, and how this ship was way upriver on a cruise in the general vicinity of a place called Boardman, somewhere in that area.

And it had to dock in a place where it usually does not dock in order to get an ailing passenger to shore so they could get medical assistance. And the story was about all the local emergency resources that pulled together in an unusual situation so that that could happen. And it all went well. The Post, made originally by the Gilliam County Sheriff's Office, also alluded to the "great captaining," that happened aboard the ship to get it to the dock, but didn't really mention what that meant. So I thought this would be a great opportunity to expand on that a little bit and talk about what that might have been about.

So the river and its upriver stretches might look generally kind of calm, at least compared to here. Perhaps to people who are not familiar with it because you don't have like the breaking surf that happens at the Columbia River Bar and also the heavy dynamic of visible tide changes. But there are heavy and not always visible issues upriver that are formidable. Two that I know of are current, and wind.

Currents can be very strong and treacherous anywhere on the Columbia, and the river can have strong winds howling along its length in some places inland. Mariners who work routinely upriver could probably tell you stories about this, I'm sure. But here are a couple of stories that I know about. I spoke with a mariner a few years ago who had served as a crew member aboard one of the Upriver cruise ships. And while they were upriver from Portland along a stretch there, the helmsman temporarily lost control of the ship in a heavy current, and the ship spun off course briefly until he could finally get control of it again. And this was apparently in the course of just traveling upriver on their way from one port to another. So the river current was very strong and winds may have been an issue, too.

We all know that The Dalles in particular, for instance, is certainly known for the winds that howl through that area of the river. That makes it ideal for things like windsurfing, other parts of the upriver part of the Columbia compared to here in Astoria, have issues. Two years ago, I spoke to a ship captain whose ship was docked at Rainier, Oregon, opposite Longview, and he told me that the first time he

docked there at the U.S. Gypsum plant, his ship was almost torn away from the dock by strong river currents that were scouring along that side of the riverbank. He had to add multiple dock lines on each cleat or bollard to keep the ship in place at the dock. Now, the river in that area and inland from there as well is also well known for currents that can pull you under the surface of the water. So people have been pulled under and disappeared while swimming. This is one reason why the Coast Guard urges people swimming in the river in those areas to wear lifejackets.

So the captain of this cruise ship in the earlier story near Boardman, may have had to do some very skillful ship handling to get that ship to the dock to get that passenger off safely.

So, once again, hats off to the skilled and expert mariners who handle vessels all along the Columbia. We count on their expertise. And we don't even really understand what that means. But they do it every day and they make it look easy when it is definitely not.

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