



***Willamette Falls
Heritage Foundation***

P.O. Box 635, West Linn, OR 97068
www.willamettefalls.org

February 17, 2015

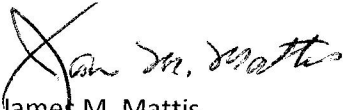
Committee Administrator
Senate Committee on Business and Transportation
Salem Capitol Building

Re: S.B. 131; Creation of Task Force for the Willamette Falls Navigation Canal & Locks

Dear Committee Members:

The Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation enthusiastically supports S.B. 131 and its Board of Directors passed the accompanying Resolution that outlines the reasons why the Bill is so important to the Willamette Falls Region and the State.

Sincerely,



James M. Mattis
President, WFHF

Cc West Linn City Council

BEFORE THE WILLAMETTE FALLS HERITAGE FOUNDATION (WFHF)

FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUPPORTING THE) RESOLUTION NO. 1-2015
REOPENING OF THE WILLAMETTE FALLS)
LOCKS)

WHEREAS, On January 1, 1873, the Willamette Falls Locks and Navigational Canal (Locks) opened to allow passage around the great falls of the Willamette, thereby providing access to a one river system; and

WHEREAS, in 1915, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers purchased the Locks from the private operator, thereby ensuring free public passage through the Locks; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, the Locks were listed on the National Register of Historic Places; it was the first significant facility built to improve navigation on the Columbia-Snake River Inland Waterway system and through 1939, the most important; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, the Locks were designated as a State Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, Governor Kulongoski designated the Locks as an Oregon Solutions project, and the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation (WFHF) joined in the formation of the Willamette Falls Locks Oregon Solutions Task Force, which continues to the present as the One Willamette River Coalition coordinated by the WFHF to preserve the Locks and support its continued operation; and

WHEREAS, on October 23, 2008, the Center for Economic Development Education and Research released a report under contract to the WFHF, titled "*The Willamette Falls Locks: A Case Study Analysis of Potential Transfer Issues;*" and

WHEREAS, from 2006 through 2010, funding provided to the Army Corps of Engineers from the Oregon Department of Transportation, Clackamas County and the US Congress allowed for seasonal operations and selected structural upgrades, including \$2.2 million in funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (PL 111-5); and

WHEREAS, in November 2011, the Locks were placed into "non-operational" status and on short notice were closed to vessel passage based upon an engineering assessment that identified safety concerns of potential failure; and

WHEREAS, closure has placed a severe hardship on commercial, recreational, and tribal river users; and

WHEREAS, in March 2012, the National Trust for Historic Preservation declared the Locks as one of the most threatened National Treasures, thereby providing added technical assistance; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the Historic Preservation League of Oregon (now Restore Oregon) named the Locks as one of its 10 "Most Endangered Places;" and

WHEREAS, The Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition (WFHAC) is preparing an application for designation of the area surrounding the Locks as a National Heritage Area by the U.S. Congress; and

WHEREAS, on September 23, 2013, WFHF received notice from the Army Corps of Engineers of its intent to initiate a public consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to determine whether the closure action has an adverse effect on the historic integrity of the Locks based upon the defining qualities and features that made the Locks eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, on May 15, 2014, the Army Corps of Engineers released its finding of historic adverse effect under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act and announced its intent to develop an agreement to establish how to best “avoid, minimize or mitigate” the identified adverse effect to the historic character of the Locks; and

WHEREAS, in September 2014, ECO Northwest, under contract with the WFHF, published the “*Willamette Locks Economic Potential Report*,” providing information on potential operating costs and community benefits of re-opening the Locks; and

WHEREAS, the non-operational status of the Locks has rendered the Willamette River non-navigable at Willamette Falls;

WHEREAS, the Locks are a primary historic asset under an application approved by the Oregon State Heritage Commission on February 2, 2015 for designation of the area at the Willamette Falls as Oregon’s first State Heritage Area;

WHEREAS, the WFHF, as part of its mission to promote, advocate and provide education about the industrial heritage of the Willamette Falls area, has held 9 Lock Fests events since 2004, provided education material about the locks, advocated for their maintenance and operations budgets and made numerous appeals to public agencies and the public in general to keep the Locks open and preserved; and therefore:

BE IT RESOLVED

1. The Board of Directors of the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation (WFHF Board) urges the Corps of Engineers to expedite the needed rehabilitation of the Locks and re-open the Locks to general public commercial, recreational and cultural marine traffic.
2. The WFHF Board thanks the Corps of Engineers for working with local stakeholders to assess and determine how to mitigate the adverse effects of the closure and urges the Corps of Engineers to craft a plan for sustainable operations of the Locks.
3. The WFHF Board supports recognition of the Locks rehabilitation and re-opening in the Regional Transportation Plan and inclusion of the Locks project as a Metro/JPACT priority for federal funding.
4. The WFHF Board supports creation of a State Task Force to work with the Corps of Engineers to develop a plan for sustainable operations of the Locks.
5. The WFHF Board urges the Oregon Congressional delegation to support the expedited repair and reopening of the Locks.
6. The WFHA Board will support the formation of an intergovernmental workgroup to identify federal and other sources of funding for the repair, reopening and operation of the Locks, develop a plan for the sustainable operation of the Locks, and recommend governance models for the transfer, lease, partnership or management of the Locks to a local, regional, state or other entity.

7. The WFHF Board may make recommendations to the United States Army Corps of Engineers relating to its responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, including the Section 106 process, assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Corps DSAC-1 expedited investigation and other applicable studies.

8. The WFHF Board fully and enthusiastically supports the rehabilitation of the Locks as an integral working heritage part of the recent State Heritage Area designation given the Willamette Falls area and as an integral icon in the application for the Willamette Area to be designated as a National Heritage Area.

ADOPTED by the Board of the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation this 17th day of February, 2015.