



**Clackamas County Board of Commissioners
Policy Position**

SB 131: Relating to the Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks

Clackamas County supports SB 131: The Board of County Commissioners unanimously supports SB 131, which establishes a State Task Force on the Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks and directs the Task Force to work toward repair, reopening, and operation of the canal and locks.

The Willamette Falls Locks opened in 1873, bridging the upper and lower Willamette River. It was the first multi-lift navigational locks in the United States, and remained the oldest continuously operating multi-locks system in the nation until its closure in 2011. The repair and reopening of the Willamette Falls Locks will ensure the upper and lower Willamette River remain united as a navigable waterway, bridge commercial and recreational watercraft past the 30 foot high Willamette Falls, increase in use as Oregon City's former Blue Heron paper mill site is redeveloped, and retain its value as a historical site for both the nation and the State of Oregon.

The establishment of a State Task Force reinforces the importance of this historical landmark and validates the resolutions passed by Clackamas County, Metro, and partnering cities in support of repairing and reopening the Willamette Falls Locks. A copy of Clackamas County's resolution is attached. We urge a "yes" vote for SB 131.

Please contact Chris Lyons at clyons@clackamas.us for more information.

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF CLACKAMAS COUNTY, STATE OF OREGON**

A Resolution in the Matter
of Reopening the Willamette Falls Locks



Resolution No. 2014 - 124
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WHEREAS, closure has placed a severe hardship on commercial, recreational, and tribal river users, including businesses which have used the Willamette Falls Locks for 127 years for transporting aggregate, logs, and other goods and conducting dredging and towing operations; and

WHEREAS, in March 2012, the National Trust for Historic Preservation declared the Willamette Falls 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 Willamette Falls Locks as one of its 10 "Most Endangered Places"; and

WHEREAS, the Locks are a primary historic asset under applications being prepared for designation of the area at the Willamette Falls as State and National Heritage Areas; and

WHEREAS, on September 23, 2013, the Corps of Engineers gave notice of their intent to initiate a public consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to determine whether the closure action had adverse effects 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 Corps of Engineers released their finding of historic adverse effects under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act and announced their intent to proceed with development of an agreement to establish how to best "avoid, minimize or mitigate" the identified adverse effect to the historic character of the Locks; and

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2014, the economics consulting firm ECONorthwest, under contract to the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation, published the *Willamette Locks Potential Report*, providing information on potential operating costs and community benefits of reopening the Locks; and

WHEREAS, Clackamas County has supported funding for the Locks through its federal legislative agenda and has also contributed funding toward the *Willamette Locks Economic Potential Report* conducted by ECONorthwest.

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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A Resolution in the Matter
of Reopening the Willamette Falls Locks



Resolution No. 2014-124
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WHEREAS, On January 1, 1873, the Willamette Falls Locks opened to allow passage around the waterfall at Oregon City 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 Willamette Falls 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 the most important through 1939; and

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

WHEREAS, in 2006, Governor Kulongoski designated the Willamette Falls Locks as an Oregon Solutions project and formed the Willamette Falls Locks Oregon Solutions Task Force, which continues today as the One Willamette River Coalition, coordinated by the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation, to preserve the Locks and support its continued operation; and

WHEREAS, Clackamas County is an active member of the One Willamette River Coalition, which represents a partnership of businesses, local governments, and nonprofit organizations working to ensure the Locks remain functional as a connector for the otherwise separate waterways of the Upper and Lower Willamette River; and

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

WHEREAS, from 2006 through 2010, funding provided to the Corps from the Oregon Department of Transportation, Clackamas County, and the U.S. 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 Willamette Falls 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

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF CLACKAMAS COUNTY, STATE OF OREGON**

A Resolution in the Matter
of Reopening the Willamette Falls Locks



Resolution No. 2014- 124
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**NOW THEREFORE, the Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners do hereby
resolve as follows:**

1. Clackamas County urges the Corps of Engineers to reopen the Willamette Falls Locks to general public commercial, recreational, and cultural marine traffic.
2. Clackamas County thanks the Corps of Engineers for working with local stakeholders to assess and mitigate the adverse effects of the closure and urges the Corps of Engineers to expedite the needed repairs and craft a plan for sustainable operations of the Locks.
3. Clackamas County supports recognition of the Willamette Falls Locks in the Regional Transportation Plan and inclusion of the Willamette Falls Locks as a Metro Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) federal priority.
4. Clackamas County supports creation of a State Task Force to work with the Corps of Engineers to develop a plan for sustainable operations of the Willamette Falls Locks.
5. Clackamas County urges the Oregon Congressional delegation to support the expedited repair and reopening of the Willamette Falls Locks.

DATED this 18th day of December, 2014

CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Chair

Recording Secretary