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Senate Committee on Business and Transportation
Testifying February 18, 2015, in Support of Senate Bill 131:
Sandy Carter, Project Coordinator
One Willamette River Coalition

Dear Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon. My name is Sandy Carter, Coordinator for the One Willamette River Coalition—so named because while the Willamette Falls Locks are closed we have two Willamette Rivers, and never the twain shall meet. I've been telling people about Willamette Falls Locks for a dozen years, but this is perhaps the most important moment in that time. I'm honored to be testifying on this historic day, before the Business and Transportation Committee of the Oregon Legislature in support of Senate Bill 131.

As a founding board member of the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation—a small West Linn non-profit that has led Locks advocacy since 2002—I work in the heritage and tourism communities around Willamette Falls and beyond, pushing to keep our state's oldest existing navigational resource, Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks, open and available to all. I have led dozens of tours to introduce people to the locks and have been allowed to photograph some of their biggest moments. I know and love the locks.

From 2005-2009 I was proud to work with Steve Greenwood and the Locks Oregon Solutions project, and for the past three years I've had the extreme good fortune of working with Peggy Sigler, Oregon Field Officer for National Trust for Historic Preservation. 2012 saw the Trust name our Lock as a 'National Treasure' and Restore Oregon select it as one of Oregon's 'Most Endangered Places'. Peggy and I have been successful in engaging the Corps of Engineers and bringing more key players into the effort to get the West Linn canal reopened, and find the Locks a new home.

You have in your materials a digital version of the centerpiece of my message today: the ECONorthwest Locks Economic Potential report, paid for by members and friends of the One Willamette River Coalition, so I'm just going to give you a bit of my vision. I'd love to be describing the locks to you—huge basalt blocks, water cascading

through the wicket gates, etc., etc.,--but instead of extolling their key role in Oregon's history, I'd like to tell the story of their present and our future.

When the locks went into non-operational status in December, 2011, river businesses and communities were abruptly denied access around the falls. Barges and tugs were stranded away from their home base. The Corvallis to Portland Regatta and Paddle Oregon were forced to make a complex portage around the falls. The Portland Spirit fleet, Willamette Jet Boats, E-energy kayaks and recreational yachters and paddlers alike were forced to abandon plans for experiencing Oregon's water gateway to the upper river. Transportation plans and economic development possibilities based on turning back to the river were shut down. But with your help, the future can look very different.

I want to see the day when river excursions will leave Portland for two-day trips past the historic industry at the falls, past the glorious geology of the Narrows and Rock Island, through the slow, calm beauty of the Newberg Reach and on to Salem and beyond in shallow draft vessels like the luxury barges you see on Downtown Abby commercials. I want to see the Locks once again alive with kayaks and canoes and sculls during exciting events on the Willamette River Water Trail. And I want to again see barges, plying the river and serving riverfront businesses and docks, making a multi-user river once again a highway through our fertile valley. Imagine cruising upriver and then stepping off to join bike or kayak adventures, exploring antique districts in Albany or Dahlia farms in Canby. Imagine wine country loops with a river ride on each end.

The nature of traffic on the Willamette has changed in our lifetime. So the giant log rafts are gone. Today, the locks are a tourism magnet waiting to happen, poised to resume their long service to Oregon. On behalf of the One Willamette River Coalition, the National Trust and all of the many users of our clean Willamette, I thank you for entertaining this bill. Together, I hope we can persuade the Corps to repair and transfer Willamette Falls Locks into new stewardship, so that they may operate, play some new, exciting roles, and embody our history for another 100 years.