

Senate Committee On Business and Transportation

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 02/18/15

Action: Do Pass And Refer To Ways And Means By Prior Reference.

Meeting Dates: 02/18

Senate

Yeas: 5 - Beyer, Girod, Thomsen, Riley, Monroe

Prepared By: James LaBar, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes Task Force on Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks to study issues relating to repair, reopening and operation of canal and locks. Requires Task Force to make quarterly reports to Legislative Assembly. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Historical significance of Willamette Falls Locks and surrounding area
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers process
- Portland General Electric relationship with site

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In response to dwindling commercial tonnage passing through the Willamette Falls Locks (WFL), and increasing costs for deferred maintenance and repairs, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACoE) changed the operational status of the WFL from “caretaker status” to “non-operational status” in December 2011. Commercial and recreational users upstream from Oregon City and Willamette Falls can no longer access markets, customers, or recreation sites downstream via the river. Likewise, downstream business and recreational river users can no longer access sites upstream from the falls.

In September 2013, the ACoE gave notice of its 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 WFL. In May 2014, the ACoE released its finding of historic adverse effects and announced its intent to proceed with development of an agreement to determine how to best “avoid, minimize or mitigate” the identified adverse effect to the historic character of the WFL. In September 2014, the 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 WFL. Senate Bill 131 provides for the formation of an intergovernmental work group to identify federal and other sources of funding for the repair, reopening and operation of the WFL.