

House Committee On Rural Communities, Land Use, and Water

Fiscal: No Fiscal Impact
Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 04/30/15
Action: Be Adopted.
Meeting Dates: 04/28, 04/30

Vote:
Yeas: 5 - Clem, Gilliam, Helm, Post, Witt
Exc: 2 - Gomberg, McLane

Prepared By: Ian Davidson, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Urges Congress to designate Willamette Falls and surrounding communities as National Heritage Area.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Recent conferral of State Heritage Area status
- Historical importance of Willamette Falls and surrounding area
- Potential increase of tourism because of National Heritage Area designation

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The proposed Willamette Falls National Heritage Area includes Willamette Falls, historic areas of Lake Oswego, West Linn and Oregon City and the Willamette River communities extending upstream to Willamette Mission State Park. Willamette Falls and the Willamette River have been and continue to be important hubs for trade, transportation, commerce and recreation. The proposed area is an important nexus of geologic phenomena resulting from the Missoula Floods and was a significant gathering place for fishing and trade among numerous peoples for centuries prior to white settlement. The power of the Willamette Falls served as a catalyst for industry in the American West, powering early sawmills and eventually generating hydropower for the world-famous Oregon City Woolen Mills, two paper mills and the oldest extant multi-lift bypass navigation locks for commercial traffic in the United States.

The 2,000-mile journey of the Oregon Trail ended at Oregon City, which was the first capital of the Oregon Territory and the first United States city west of the Rocky Mountains to be incorporated. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. NHAs are a grassroots, community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development. Through public-private partnerships, NHA entities support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects. Forty-nine NHAs have been designated by Congress since 1984. Each NHA is created through individual federal law. Currently Oregon is one of 16 states that does not have a designated NHA.

Senate Joint Memorial 10 would urge Congress to pass legislation to create the Willamette Falls National Heritage Area, appropriate funds to restore and open Willamette Falls Locks, and facilitate revitalization of the proposed area.