



May 15, 2016

Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

CC: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Co-Chairs, Senator Devlin and Representative Nathanson

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey, and members of the Subcommittee on Capital Construction,

We are writing to request your support for Regional Solutions funding and for \$10 million in lottery backed bonding for the local levee assistance program of the Infrastructure Finance Authority's Special Public Works Fund contained in SB 5530 for the 2017-2019 biennium. This funding, and the support of Regional Solutions, is critical to meet federal requirements, promote economic development around the state, and reduce the risks posed by flooding.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) require local communities to prove that their levee systems will continue to meet modern needs for flood risk reduction. Local resources alone are inadequate to fully evaluate the current state of levee systems, much less finance their rehabilitation to meet federal standards updated in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. If these communities fail to meet federal standards, property owners could become subject to expensive insurance mandates and onerous land-use restrictions under the National Flood Insurance Program, and could lose access to federal disaster relief.

The levees throughout Oregon contribute to the state's revenue, economic development objectives and land-use goals, while protecting lives, property and economic security. In the Portland area alone, 27 miles of levees make possible the largest economic corridor in the state, which is home to nearly 48,000 jobs, sustaining middle class and economically distressed communities nearby. This protected area alone accounts for 17 percent of the industrial growth capacity in the metropolitan region and includes several assets of statewide importance, such as the Portland International Airport and an Air National Guard base, as well as two inter-state bridges.

Without state assistance to certify and accredit these systems, communities across the state – including Scappoose, Warrenton, Reedsport, Springfield, Pendleton, Rainier, Sauvie Island, and Milton-Freewater – could face a serious risk of loss of life, damage to property and economic dislocation during future flood events. The risk around Oregon is of special urgency this year, after the state received record-setting rain and snow. Absent the levees, Portland international Airport would have been inundated with several feet of water this spring.



Ensuring that our existing levee systems meet current federal standards should continue to be a state priority. Doing so strengthens our state's economy in the present and prevents disastrous flood damage in the future.

We urge your strong support for the Infrastructure Finance Authority's \$10 million budget request for levee funding and for funding of Regional Solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jules Bailey", written in a cursive style.

Jules Bailey

Levee Ready Columbia Convener

On behalf of the Levee Ready Columbia Project Team:

East Columbia Neighborhood Association
Bridgeton Neighborhood Association
Columbia Corridor Association
Columbia Slough Watershed Council
Audubon Society
Peninsula Drainage District #1
Peninsula Drainage District #2
Multnomah County Drainage District #1
Sandy Drainage Improvement Company
Sauvie Island Drainage Improvement Company
Multnomah County
Metro
Port of Portland

City of Portland:
Mayor's Office Bureau of Environmental Services
Bureau of Parks and Recreation Water Bureau
Bureau of Transportation
City of Gresham
City of Fairview
City of Troutdale
State of Oregon:
Governor's Regional Solutions Team
Department of Environmental Quality
Department of Land Conservation and
Development
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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