

Intro : Senator Alan Olsen from Senate District 20 The heart of Clackamas County

The Willamette Falls area has a long a prestigious history for the State of Oregon.

Willamette Falls is a 42ft high and 1500 feet wide.

Willamette Falls itself is the second largest waterfall in America, behind Niagara Falls, for the volume of water that goes over the falls.

The Willamette Falls Canal and Locks Company (later renamed [Portland General Electric](#)) was formed in 1868 to build a navigation route around the falls.^[1] Construction then began on building a canal and lock system around the west end of the falls.^[1] The locks opened on January 1, 1873, as the first multi-lift navigation locks in the United States at a cost of \$560,000, and had been in continuous use until 2008. *Maria Wilkins*, a steamship, was the first vessel to use the locks.^[1] The Army Corps of Engineers purchased the lock system from Portland General Electric in 1915 for \$375,000.^{[1][2]} The locks were added to the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1974.

It is the oldest continuously operating multi-lift lock and canal system in the US

The locks are operated by the [United States Army Corps of Engineers](#) and served primarily pleasure boats. These locks were added to the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1974

Repairs and closure^[edit]

With no funding available to perform needed inspections and repairs, the locks were closed in January 2008.^[3] In April 2009, as part of the [federal government's economic stimulus plan](#), \$1.8 million was allocated to repair and inspect the locks, with an additional \$900,000 allocated in October 2009 for additional repairs and operational costs.^[4] The locks reopened in January 2010 with the *Willamette Queen* the first vessel to pass.^[5] The locks were open through the summer of 2010, and then due to a lack of federal funding for operations, were not scheduled to reopen for 2011.^[6]

In December 2011, the locks were again closed, this time owing to the excessive corrosion of the locks' gate anchors. The further deterioration of the locks resulted in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reclassifying the locks as being in a "non-operational status," out of concern that any further operation of the locks could lead to a failure of the locks, posing a safety risk. The locks are expected to remain permanently closed, as the lack of traffic through the locks makes funding for any repairs a low priority.^[7] However, some interest groups are urging the Army Corps of Engineers to reopen the locks, at least seasonally, and the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners added its support to that effort in December 2014

Until closure, the locks were used for hauling logs rafts, barges moving sand and gravel, moving the Spruce Goose to McMinnville, allowing the Canby Ferry to go to Drydock in Portland, and most importantly, allowing me to launch my boat near my home and go down the Willamette to the Columbia river and the Multnomah Channel to fish.

I wanted to speak to the history of the falls to show how important this area, including the locks, to our heritage.

With this legislation, we will be able to eventually restore the locks to the greatness it once enjoyed.

Thank you