



Date: May 20, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

From: Audubon Society of Portland

Re: Senate Bill 431-A

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Hass and Members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue,

I am writing on behalf of Audubon Society of Portland and our 17,000 members in support of Senate Bill 431- A which would create a new Flood Safety and Water Quality District extending from Portland to Troutdale along the Columbia River. We respectfully urge you to forward this bill to the full Senate with a "Do Pass" recommendation.

Audubon previously wrote expressing significant concerns about this bill when it was up for a hearing in February (see Bob Sallinger et al. 2-14-18). We are pleased to report that all of our outstanding issues have been satisfactorily resolved. We appreciate the remarkable effort that went into working through a large number of issues over the last month and a half and the outstanding facilitation of Oregon Solutions. We would particularly commend the work of Jules Bailey, Stephanie Hallock, Evyn Mitchell and Julia Babcock

The language in the SB 431-A now makes it clear that that the mission of this new district includes watershed health, climate resilience and environmental justice. It sets the stage for a 21st Century approach to flood management that moves beyond a narrow focus on structural barriers and towards an approach that integrates the natural hydrology of the landscape through the use of green infrastructure, prioritizes remediating historic inequities associated with the way we have managed our landscapes, and proactively builds resilience into the landscape to allow for adaptation to this century's biggest challenge, climate change. We look forward to working with the new district on developing a plan for "watershed and habitat improvement and landscape resilience" which is provided for in the legislation. The ultimate test of the new district's commitment to these principles will come with implementation, but the legislation creates a clear mandate.

There are elements of the legislation, specifically the composition of the initial and permanent board structures with which we have disagreement. However we believe that these concerns are adequately mitigated by a series of compromises including the inclusion of seats reserved for conservation and environmental justice interests and additional publicly elected positions. We also have assurances that Levee Ready Columbia is reaching out to Tribes with an interest in the Columbia River---it is essential that this commitment is honored.

We strongly urge passage of this legislation in the 2019 legislative session. There is a long and challenging road ahead on the Levee Ready process and completing this important step will allow partners to fully focus on advancing into the next phase. We have heard of no additional significant concerns with this legislation and see no benefit in further delay. The project has growing momentum and passage of SB 431-A will allow us to maintain that momentum.

Again, we appreciate the substantial work that has occurred over the last month and a half to address significant concerns. It has moved us from strongly opposing to strongly supporting.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Sallinger". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bob Sallinger
Conservation Director
Audubon Society of Portland