



WILSONVILLE CONCRETE PRODUCTS

Ready Mix – Sand – Gravel

Wilsonville Phone 503.682.2525 Fax 503.682.1922

Salem Phone 503-588-1800 Fax 503-566-2826

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May 21st, 2019

Joint Committee on Transportation
Co-Chair Senator Lee Beyer
Co-Chair Representative Caddy McKeown
Public Hearing
May 22nd, 2019, 5:00 pm
Hearing Room F
Oregon State Capitol

Dear Senators and Representative,

My name is Joe Bernert and I am currently the Vice President of Wilsonville Concrete Products and also the current appointment to the Willamette Falls Locks Commission representing Oregon private businesses. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2304 supporting the acquisition and repairs to the Willamette Falls Locks. The Corp of Engineers is disposing of the Locks over the next two years. They are removing this from federal ownership and the state of Oregon stands at a critical crossroads to see the potential of continued operations of the locks for another 150 years into the future for private business, public activities, resiliency planning, tourism, cultural, and historical purposes. I strongly support all the efforts to find a transferee for the Locks to continue to keep this resource available to the people of Oregon.

The Corp of Engineers closed the locks in 2011, and the upper river communities and our family business were immediately impacted. Businesses in the upper Willamette were cut off from opportunities in the lower river, transport between the upper and lower river was moved to trucks which increased transport costs. The Locks open the upper river and its communities to the Port of Portland and a larger market. For 5 generations my family has used the Locks to commercially move commodities between the upper and lower Willamette River. This began in the 1880's when my great grandfather moved logs from the upper Willamette River through the Locks and into local mills for processing.

From the 1950s until the Corp of Engineers closure of the Locks in 2011, Wilsonville Concrete routinely used the river and Locks to move millions of tons of sand and gravel on barges. The commodities that were historically moved on the water are now primarily moved by trucks on our congested highways and local roads.

The major economic advantage of moving logs, and related wood products, wood chips, paper products, sand and gravel and other large bulky commodities is that barging





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requires significantly lower fuel costs and less labor to move the same materials. It is basically more efficient.

An independent economic analysis prepared for the Willamette Falls Locks Commission has identified major economic benefits to the State of Oregon from marine transport between the lower and upper Willamette:

- Marine transport lower cost – The infrastructure for transporting, loading and unloading logs, wood chips, and sand and gravel allows major cost savings over trucking. The reduced costs are directly related to lower: labor costs, fuel costs, number of equipment needed and environmental costs.
- Reduced impacts to road and highway infrastructure- a barge can carry over 30 truckloads of material. By barging materials, there is a reduction in congestion, and less likelihood of collisions, accidents and impacts to schedules due to traffic.
- Marine transport is an environmentally friendly approach which has a major reduction in Carbon and Nitrogen emissions. As fuel costs increase this becomes more significant.
- Lower Moorage costs – The upper Willamette River has port access allowing equipment moorage and access to local markets. EcoNW has identified that there is currently a shortage of moorage space in the lower Willamette River, and demand has pushed moorage costs higher. The upper Willamette provides affordable moorages to commercial and recreational vessels.
- Increase recreation, tourism, development and local uses for cultural and historic activities.

I will speak to the direct economic impacts on our business which currently provides full time employment to over 100 families in the Salem, the Mid-Willamette valley and Portland metropolitan area. Historically, we would barge materials and now primarily transport materials to our operations by truck. Currently trucking materials requires:

- More trucks and equipment: a small barge can easily transport over 1,000 tons whereas a dump truck carries a little over 20 tons and a truck with a trailer carries 34 tons. Using one barge to transport 1000 tons in a day is equal to a dump trucks with a trailer leaving a facility every 10 to 15 minutes.
- Barging provides a major reduction in the amount of fuel used. Less equipment and the marine equipment is operated at lower engine speeds and more efficiently.
- Trucking requires 4 times more crew and about 5 times the amount of equipment used to transport. A tugboat on a one day tow requires a boat operator and a mate/deckhand. Whereas this activity in trucks will require at least 6 truck drivers and additional support





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staff. This results in a significant increase in pollution emissions by using more equipment.

- Barging puts no wear on our transportation infrastructure systems. Currently, we operate a fleet of dump trucks and trailers that move gravel from Salem and the mid-Willamette valley to the Portland Metropolitan area on I-5 and local county roads. Each year the trip takes longer as the congestion gets heavier, and more trucks are required to deliver the same amounts to meet daily production needs. Congestion on our roads adds to increased costs and these increased costs are passed on to our customers and the people of Oregon.

The Locks are also a historical, cultural and recreational treasure for the state of Oregon. The Locks continue to show the importance of the interactions of man and water and they are an engineering marvel. This is an extremely important resource to the state of Oregon and should be available to the people of Oregon. The river is a navigable waterway supporting the cost effective transport of materials with tugboats and barges.

One of the options the Corp of Engineers has proposed, if no transferee can be identified, is to fill the Locks in with concrete, which would close this resource forever. I believe this would be tragic to my community and Oregon. I strongly support the passage of HB 2304 to the Joint Transportation Committee.

Thank You,

Joe Bernert
Wilsonville Concrete Products

