

Date: 24 March 2021

To: Oregon Senate

From: Steve Pegram

Subj: Letter of Support: **SB826** Repairs and upgrades to **M/V Salvage Chief**

I am the recently retired Director of the Columbia County Office of Emergency Management. I am an enthusiastic supporter of funding the repairs and upgrades required to return the M/V Salvage Chief to operations. The capability provided by this unique vessel for river, ashore, and near coastal response and recovery operations is unique and cannot be duplicated by any other vessel extant in our waters.

Specifically, the M/V Salvage Chief provides the following mission critical functions:

- Flexible support for marine response and recovery from Astoria OR to Lewiston ID.
- Uniquely suited to its concurrent mission of training future mariners and marine responders. The US military makes extensive use of the vessel for training. This activity brings ~\$500,000 annually into our economy for hotels, meals, etc. for the trainees.
- Highly capable mobile Emergency Operations Center including a helo-pad and a significant communications suite.
- Afloat regional trauma center capable. This is particularly critical in Columbia County since we do not have a hospital.
- Shallow draft (7' 9") allows significant flexibility when responding to shore side incidents.
- Five 250 kW generators capable of providing significant emergency power both to vessels afloat and shore side installations such as the riverside Columbia County and City of Saint Helens courthouses.
- Response to a riverside rail incident. The rail line parallels the river for much of its length. The M/V Salvage Chief has been used successfully in the past to recovery derailed engines and cars from the river. The shallow draft and heavy crane capability make the M/V Salvage Chief unique in this respect.
- Ability to move downed bridges during a Cascadia Subduction Zone event to speed the opening of the Columbia River to both response and recovery traffic as well as economically critical commercial traffic.

This capability cannot be otherwise duplicated in any reasonable timeframe due to the significant lead times to launch a vessel of this type. Designing and building a vessel with similar capability will cost many millions of dollars more than the upgrades requested to **Ready the Chief**. I encourage your support for this critically needed response and recovery capability along the Columbia River.

Semper Paratus,

Steve Pegram

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