

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-

Supporting the Repair and Reopening of the Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:**

- a. On January 1, 1873, the Willamette Falls Locks opened to allow passage around the waterfall at Oregon City, thereby providing access to a one river system.
- b. In 1915, the Army Corps of Engineers purchased the Willamette Falls Locks from the private operator, thereby ensuring free public passage through the Locks.
- c. In 1974, the Willamette Falls Locks were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was the first significant facility built to improve navigation on the Columbia-Snake River Inland Waterway system and, through 1939, the most important.
- d. In 1991, the Willamette Falls Locks were designated as a State Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers.
- e. In 2006, Governor Kulongoski designated the Willamette Falls Locks as an Oregon Solutions project, and the Willamette Falls Locks Oregon Solutions Task Force was formed, which continues to the present as the One Willamette River Coalition coordinated by the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation to preserve the Locks and support its continued operation.
- f. From 2006 through 2010, funding provided to the Army Corps of Engineers from the Oregon Department of Transportation, Clackamas County and the U.S. Congress allowed for seasonal operations and selected structural upgrades, including \$2.2 million in funds from the American Recover and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (PL 111-5).
- g. In November 2011, the Willamette Falls Locks were placed into "non-operational" status and on short notice were closed to vessel passage based upon an engineering assessment that identified safety concerns of potential failure. Closure of the Willamette Falls Locks has placed a severe hardship on commercial, recreational and tribal river users.
- h. In May 2012, the National Trust for Historic Preservation declared the Willamette Falls Locks as one of the most threatened National Treasures, thereby providing technical assistance.

- i. The Historic Preservation League of Oregon (now Restore Oregon) named the Willamette Falls Locks as one of its "Most Endangered Places."
- j. In September 2014, ECO Northwest, under contract with the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation, published the *"Willamette Locks Economic Potential Report"*, providing information on potential operating costs and community benefits of reopening the Locks.
- k. The Locks are a primary historic asset under application for designation by the National Park Service of the area surrounding the Locks as a National Heritage Area.
- l. The Locks are a primary historic asset in the Willamette Falls State Heritage Area, designated in April 2015.
- m. The Willamette Falls Legacy Project includes a public Riverwalk providing access to the Falls in perpetuity.
- n. The Willamette Falls Legacy Project, the designation of the National Heritage Area, and the repair of the Locks, will create vitally important jobs, economic opportunities, housing, and historic, cultural and environmental enhancements of regional and statewide significance.
- o. The non-operational status of the Locks has rendered the Willamette River non-navigable around Willamette Falls.
- p. The Locks could serve as an invaluable alternative transportation resource in the event of a Cascadia earthquake.
- q. Metro, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, and the Counties of Clackamas, Linn, Marion and Polk have adopted formal Resolutions Supporting the Reopening of the Willamette Falls Locks.
- r. The 2015 Oregon State Legislature adopted SB 131, creating a Task Force to make recommendations on governance, ownership, and a finance model to repair and reopen the Locks for sustained operations.
- s. A Willamette Falls Locks Working Group has been established to coordinate local and regional interests to advocate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and to forge agreement on how to best repair and reopen the Locks.

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Resolves:**

1. Multnomah County urges the Corps of Engineers to expedite the needed rehabilitation of the Willamette Falls Locks and reopen the Locks to the general public and to commercial, recreational and marine traffic.

2. Multnomah County urges the Oregon Congressional delegation to support the expedited repair and reopening of the Willamette Falls Locks.
3. Multnomah County supports the Willamette Falls Legacy Project, the State and National Heritage Area at Willamette Falls, and the reopening of the Locks for their importance in providing jobs and economic prosperity to the region and State.
4. Multnomah County supports recognition of the Willamette Falls Locks in the Regional Transportation Plan and inclusion of the Locks as a Metro JPACT priority.
5. Multnomah County supports inclusion of the Locks in State planning for Resiliency and Emergency Preparedness.

ADOPTED this \_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2015.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

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Deborah Kafoury, Chair

REVIEWED:

JENNY M. MADKOUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Jacqueline A. Weber, Deputy County Attorney

**Submitted by:**