

CITY of REEDSPORT

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February 13, 2023

Senate Natural Resources Committee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 634, Continued Support of the Statewide Levee Grant Program

Chair Golden and Members of the Committee,

The Reedsport levee is failing. Not for lack of repair or maintenance but because it was constructed on highly organic soils and with construction techniques that are no longer accepted practice. This has resulted in 3-5 feet of settlement making parts of the levee susceptible to even a 1% chance flood or washout due to under seepage. A flood would produce flood depths behind the levee from 1-9 feet resulting in the complete destruction of the downtown and midtown areas and cutting off nearby communities from essential utilities and services.

The community of Reedsport is located on the south coast of Oregon. This community is an outpost on the coast and serves as the municipal local government for the City and the outlying rural areas. This region is located approximately 70 miles west of Roseburg, the next major City in Douglas County. The community lies on the south side of the Umpqua Estuary at its confluence with Smith River and Scofield Creek. The community's river frontage consists of over three miles with a large area of the community being only slightly above sea level.

The lowest lying area of the City is protected by a levee that was constructed in 1969 as a result of the flood of 1964 that wiped out much of the community. This area contains and protects, two major state highways including Hwy 101 and Hwy 38, two state bridges including the Schofield and Umpqua, 550 properties containing large areas of high-density low income housing, all major food and fuel outlets, all government offices, the historic downtown area, and the police, jail and fire departments.

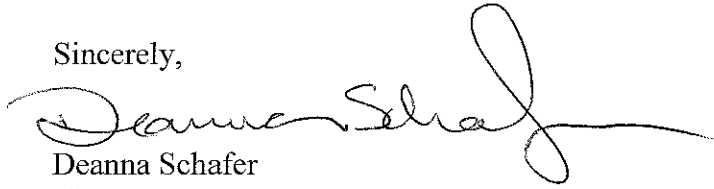
Economically the City lacks the debt service or bonding capacity to take on this critical project. This is due in part to a condition created by the levee itself. With the high likelihood of a flood residents and building owners refuse to invest in even the regular maintenance of their structures forcing property values down and in turn tax revenues. These are revenues that could be utilized for the reconstruction of the levee. These now extremely affordable structures and homes have attracted the working poor to locate in this area putting the most physically and socially vulnerable populations at the highest risk.

The City relies on funding assistance to rebuild the community's failing levee system, it will only be a matter of time until all is lost. With flood depths as previously noted, buildings will sustain damage exceeding 50% of the building replacement value, which is the threshold by which FEMA ranks buildings as a complete loss.

Thankfully, FEMA has already partnered with the City to fund a portion of the levee project. Along with a 1.1 million dollar federal appropriation the City will be able to break ground on this project in the summer of 2023. However, due to rising costs funds such as those provided through HB 2307 will be necessary to complete the project.

Thank you for your previous support of levee operators and communities across Oregon. Please direct \$15 million in lottery bond sales to the Levee Grant Program through your support of HB 2307/SB 634. This is a much-needed resource for critical flood safety infrastructure throughout our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deanna Schafer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Deanna Schafer
City Manager