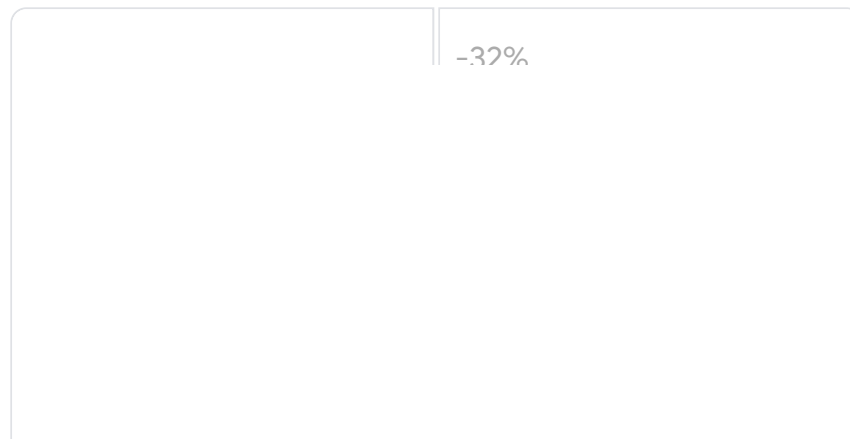


https://www.newportnewstimes.com/news/stage-set-to-secure-funding-for-big-creek-dam-project-in-newport/article_bd89dc96-982c-11ed-b41c-eb15c8a4aa0d.html

Stage set to secure funding for Big Creek Dam project in Newport

Jan 20, 2023

Late last month, President Joe Biden signed the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023. This package of bills included the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022. The authorization sets the stage to secure funding for essential water infrastructure modernization efforts across the nation, including an authorization of \$60 million for the city of Newport that can be used to fund the Big Creek Dam replacement project. This project would replace two seismically unstable earthen dams with a single concrete dam designed to survive a major seismic event.



The federal funding authorization for the Big Creek Dam was initially proposed by former U.S. Representative Kurt Schrader and approved by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee chaired by former U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio in July 2022. The funding provision for the city of Newport was not included in the Senate version of the bill. A delegation from the city including Mayor Dean Sawyer, councilors Ryan Parker and CM Hall, City Manager Spencer Nebel, and City Engineer Aaron Collette, along with State Rep. David Gomberg, traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, Schrader and DeFazio, and various committee staff to emphasize the critical nature of this funding for the central coast of Oregon. With help from Merkley and Wyden, an agreement was reached between the leaders of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that included an authorization for funding for the city's Big Creek Dam Project.

This recently adopted legislation will authorize future appropriations of funding for the Big Creek Dam. "The Congressional authorization of \$60 million is a game changer for proceeding with the replacement of the Big Creek Dams," Sawyer said. "We are grateful for Rep. Schrader's advocacy to initially include this request in the WRDA reauthorization bill with support from Rep. DeFazio. We are very appreciative of the hard work of Senators Wyden and Merkley to fight to include this authorization in the final bill approved by President Biden."



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This authorization will build upon \$14 million in funding approved by the Oregon State Legislature and governor in the 2021 state legislative session through the leadership of Gomberg, with support from State Sen. Dick Anderson. Gomberg said, “The \$14 million approved by the state was the impetus in securing future federal funding, and allowed the city to proceed with critical planning phases of the project. This project is extremely important to the residents and visitors to the area, as it is designed to secure a water source resilient to seismic activity.”

Nebel said, “The strong partnership between the city, state and federal government will allow the city to replace two obsolete, seismically unstable dams with a secure source of water for the future of Newport and the central coast. The dam problems were first discovered 10 years ago. The city has been grappling with various options to address this issue, and methods to finance this critical improvement over the past decade. The funding from the state and federal government is absolutely critical in order to proceed with a resilient solution that will safely serve the central coast for generations to come.”

