



March 28, 2023

Oregon State Legislature  
Attn: House Committee on Rules

**RE: Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Dear Chair Fahey and Members of the House Committee on Rules:

Clackamas County fully supports HCR 20, commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Willamette Falls Locks.

The Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks are located in Clackamas County, but it connects communities throughout the Willamette Valley by bridging the upper and lower Willamette River. As such, it is both an essential piece of infrastructure to restore economic vitality to river communities as well as an historic treasure for the State of Oregon.

The Locks were built in 1873 by private owners in order to quickly and efficiently ship lumber and agriculture from the Willamette Valley into Portland. It was purchased in 1915 by the U.S. Army (later referred to as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - USACE) for its national economic significance and made free to commercial and public users. At times in its history, the Willamette Falls Locks supported more shipping tonnage than other water locks in the Pacific Northwest, including the Columbia River.

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 2563 to create the Willamette Falls Locks Authority, a quasi-government agency that is tasked with receiving ownership of the Locks from the USACE and returning the facility to a safe and usable resource for economic and recreational benefit. Honoring the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Locks emphasizes the State's investment in the Willamette River, signifies the value of the Locks to river communities, and honors this historical asset that has helped Oregon's economy thrive for generations.

Sincerely,

Tootie Smith, Chair  
On behalf of the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners