

SCR 21 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Sen. Bonham

Senate Committee On Rules

Action Date: 03/03/25

Action: Do adopt.

Vote: 5-0-0-0

Yeas: 5 - Bonham, Golden, Jama, Manning Jr, Thatcher

Fiscal: No fiscal impact

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Leslie Porter, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/3

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure commemorates the 100th anniversary of Multnomah Falls Lodge.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- The Lodge's preservation, history, and historic significance
- The Lodge's staffing presence of 24 hours a day, year round
- Multnomah Falls as the top natural tourism destination in the Pacific Northwest and its appeal to international tourists
- The management of the site by the U.S. Forest Service

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The spectacularly beautiful Columbia River Gorge, formed by ancient volcanoes and sculpted by massive floods, is an impressive corridor for the mighty river as it flows through the Cascade Mountains on its way to the Pacific Ocean. Stretching for 85 miles through this jaw-dropping natural splendor is the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. At the heart of the scenic area is magnificent Multnomah Falls, Oregon's tallest waterfall, which drops 620 feet from the cliffs above the Historic Columbia River Highway.

In the early 1900s, land around Multnomah Falls was donated to the City of Portland by lumber baron and philanthropist Simon Benson, and further donations were made by the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company under the condition that the city would fund construction of a lodge for visitors. The city commissioned design of the lodge to famed architect Albert E. Doyle, who also designed many other landmark Portland buildings. In 1925, construction on Multnomah Falls Lodge was completed, and the facility was opened to the public with great fanfare.

The lodge was constructed by the Shattuck Company for \$40,000 (equivalent to roughly \$700,000 in 2025) in the Cascadian style, using timber and every type of rock naturally found in the Columbia River Gorge. It originally had dormitories and rooms for overnight stays. Several significant remodels and additions have occurred over the decades, and the Lodge currently offers visitors a restaurant, interpretive center, gift shop, snack bar, and other services.

Ownership of Multnomah Falls Lodge was transferred from the City of Portland to the United States Forest Service in 1939. The lodge was closed during World War II from November 1942 until February 1946. It has escaped numerous natural disasters, including floods, rock falls, landslides, and fires, most recently the Eagle Creek Fire in 2017. In 1981, Multnomah Falls Lodge and the surrounding footpaths were added to the National Register of Historic Places.

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Multnomah Falls and its iconic Lodge attract millions of visitors each year from all over the world, making it the most visited natural recreation site in the Pacific Northwest. Multnomah Falls Lodge is a true Oregon treasure. It is set to launch another century as a historic landmark that showcases the beauty, history and spirit of adventure of the Columbia River Gorge.