



Clatsop County

Board of Commissioners

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February 20, 2025

House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: House Bill 2693, Continued Support of the Statewide Levee Grant Program

Chair Tran and Members of the Committee,

Clatsop County is home to critical levee infrastructure that protects our residents, businesses, and natural resources from the devastating impacts of coastal, riverine, and tidal flooding. The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners strongly supports House Bill 2693 and recognizes the Levee Grant Program as a crucial tool for local governments striving to maintain flood protection systems that serve both rural and urban communities. Our county's levees safeguard critical infrastructure, including Highway 101, working waterfronts, and low-lying neighborhoods, all of which are vital to our local economy and public safety. However, maintaining and upgrading these structures to modern safety standards requires financial resources that small coastal counties like Clatsop simply do not have. The urgency to invest in flood protection is even greater given the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) recent Biological Opinion (BiOp), which will significantly alter the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and impose new restrictions on development in flood-prone areas, including much of Clatsop County.

Levees across Oregon require significant investment to meet evolving federal safety standards, yet many local jurisdictions struggle to fund these improvements. Smaller, coastal counties face unique challenges due to tidal influence, aging infrastructure, and limited local funding. In 2019, the State Legislature created the Levee Grant Program and allocated \$15 million in lottery bond sales (HB 5030), but the COVID-19 pandemic halted the bond sale. Subsequent allocations in 2021 and 2023 provided crucial funding, yet the need for additional investment remains high. The program has been instrumental in helping levee operators plan, assess, and strengthen flood protection systems statewide. However, with the implementation of the FEMA BiOp, Clatsop County and other coastal communities will soon face additional development limitations that will make levee improvements even more critical to maintaining economic growth, protecting essential infrastructure, and continuing our efforts to address local housing needs.

HB 2693 of the 2025 Legislative Session would allocate \$15 million in lottery bond sales to continue supporting investigation, planning, and construction of flood safety improvements. For Clatsop County, this funding is essential for ensuring that our levees can withstand increasingly severe storms, storm surges, and rising sea levels. Stronger, well-maintained levees will also help reduce the impact of new NFIP regulations, which impose stricter building requirements and higher construction costs, making

development less affordable. Investing in levees now will mitigate future disasters, protecting people, property, and critical infrastructure while avoiding the costly aftermath of flood events.

Tragic failures across the country demonstrate what happens when levees cannot withstand floodwaters. The 1948 Vanport flood and the 2020 Umatilla River levee breach highlight the devastation that communities face when flood infrastructure fails. In Clatsop County, we have experienced increasing storm surges, erosion, and extreme rainfall that threaten our low-lying areas. Without sustained investment in levee infrastructure, our communities remain at risk. With new federal regulations on the horizon, state investment in flood protection is more important than ever to ensure that Clatsop County and other Oregon communities can remain resilient in the face of increasing flood risks and evolving federal policies.

We strongly urge the committee to support HB 2693—allocating \$15 million in lottery bond sales to strengthen Oregon’s levee systems and ensure our communities have the resources needed to protect lives, local economies, and critical infrastructure.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark Kujala, Chair
Clatsop County Board of Commissioners