



May 6, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Capital Construction
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Capital Construction

Co-chairs Girod and Nosse and Members of the Committee:

The City of Newport is requesting \$2 million to complete the funding for design of the Big Creek replacement dam, which will protect the city's sole water supply. Immediate action is required to mitigate the risk of dam failure. Newport city is home to the Oregon coast's largest commercial fishing fleet, vital processing industries, and a number of essential federal and state research and educational facilities such as the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Due to these factors, our town's population can rise from 11,000 to 40,000 on any given day.

Both of Newport's earthen dams at the Big Creek Reservoir were rated as "potentially unsafe" in 2011 by the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD). In 2019 the dams were reclassified as high hazard, and Upper Big Creek Dam was rated as "unsafe" due to ongoing seepage issues.

The City of Newport cannot fund this project on its own, but we have committed and invested over \$6 million to this project since 2013. We are also appreciative of the state's previous allocation of \$14 million in lottery bond proceeds for design and environmental permitting of this project. This funding has been critical to keep the project on track to meet projected milestones, as design is currently 30% complete and on pace to be 60% complete by early 2026. This allocation of state funds also allowed the City to successfully advocate for a Congressional authorization for up to \$60 million in 2022 towards the construction of the replacement dam.

Due to rapidly rising costs of goods and services, the project's remaining design tasks costs have increased. The City needs to show that the project is shovel-ready to compete for any future federal appropriations and has an immediate funding need to complete the design work to get to that status. The City of Newport respectfully requests \$2 million in funding to complete the design and permitting for the Big Creek Dam replacement project, leverage federal funds, and ensure a safe and reliable water supply for its community.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this urgent request for Newport.

Sincerely,

Jan Kaplan
Mayor, City of Newport

