

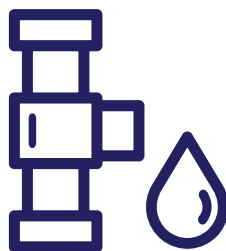
The Portland area's flood control system on the Columbia River is over 100 years old. While the region's levees are functional, the system no longer meets federal standards and requires major upgrades to withstand flooding.

## STATE INVESTMENT WILL FUND COST-EFFECTIVE FLOOD SAFETY SOLUTIONS AND SAVE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN DISASTER RECOVERY



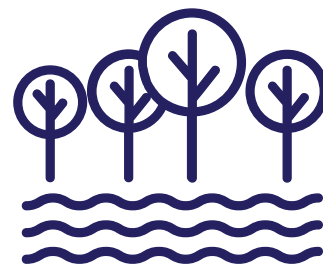
### Expand the levees and floodwalls in the most vulnerable areas

- Build a new levee along the railroad embankment that failed in the Vanport Flood.
- Upgrade levees to meet modern standards of flood protection.
- Rehabilitate and replace drainage infrastructure to reduce pressure on the levees.



### Upgrade pumps and other aging infrastructure

- Increase capacity to remove water by upgrading failing and underperforming pump stations.
- Add backup power generation to reduce risk.
- Ensure safe and functional facilities for flood preparedness.



### Increase resilience with natural flood protection solutions in open spaces and wetlands

- Slow and store floodwaters
- Reduce pressure on flood control infrastructure
- Support clean water
- Provide habitat for fish and wildlife





**A long-standing local, state, and federal partnership has assessed the levee system's safety and prepared a plan to mitigate the growing risk of flooding.** The system requires at least \$300 million in improvements to bolster its resiliency, meet modern flood safety standards, and continue to keep Oregonians safe.

With half—\$150 million—now committed from a local, voter-approved general obligation bond and nearly \$100 million authorized from the federal government, this capital package needs state support to complete critical flood safety projects, reduce flood risk for vital state assets, and ensure future federal funding priority for this lifesaving flood safety system along the Columbia River.

**\$150M**

AVAILABLE IN LOCAL  
BOND FUNDS

**\$20M**

OREGON STATE  
FUNDING REQUEST

Questions? Contact Colin Rowan at 503-281-5675 or [crowan@urbanfloodsafetyor.gov](mailto:crowan@urbanfloodsafetyor.gov).

## STATE OF OREGON INTEREST

The flood zone along the Columbia River includes:



Nearly 8,000  
residents



2,500 businesses  
employing approx.  
60,000 people



\$16B in annual  
economic  
activity



3 Major Electrical  
Hydropower  
Transmission Hubs



Oregon Air  
National Guard  
Base



2 Interstate  
Highways



2 Airports



State Owned  
Riparian Land  
and Waters

May 9, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Co-chairs Lieber and Sanchez,

The Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District (the District) operates a network of flood safety infrastructure—levees, pumps, and conveyance—that helps keep the Columbia Corridor in northern Multnomah County safe from flooding. Located across the northern section of Multnomah County along the Columbia River, the Columbia Corridor makes up one of Oregon’s largest business and industrial zones.

The State of Oregon has been an integral partner in efforts to modernize this important infrastructure, and further State investment is needed to help keep thousands of businesses open, tens of thousands of jobs protected, and thousands of residents and visitors safe at night. We respectfully request an appropriation of \$20 million in lottery-backed bond funding for the 2025-2027 biennium, which would allow the state to join local and federal partners in supporting the critical improvements needed to upgrade this important flood safety system.

In addition to businesses and jobs, the Columbia River flood safety system protects the Portland International Airport, two Interstate bridges, three Interstate highways, an Oregon Air National Guard Base, back-up drinking water for nearly one million Oregonians, electrical substations, and other critical public infrastructure. The levee-protected area is a statewide employment hub with nearly 2,500 businesses employing approximately 60,000 people—including more than half of greater Portland’s transportation and warehousing jobs—contributing \$16 billion in annual economic activity to the State. Additionally, 8,000 residents call the managed floodplain home and hundreds of acres of natural areas, recreational trails and paths, parks, and important habitat benefit from this flood safety system.

A long-standing local, state, and federal partnership of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have invested many years, thousands of hours, and millions of dollars to assess the levee system’s safety and prepare a plan to mitigate the growing risk of flooding. Engineering studies conducted with the US Army Corps of Engineers identified projects necessary to bring the flood safety system up to federal safety standards. The system requires at least \$300 million in improvements to bolster its resiliency, meet modern flood safety standards, and continue to keep Oregonians safe. With half—\$150 million—now committed from a local, voter-approved general obligation bond and more than \$100 million authorized from the federal government, this capital package needs state support to complete critical flood safety projects and ensure future federal funding priority for this lifesaving flood safety system along the Columbia River.

To complete the necessary improvements, we seek legislative appropriation of \$20 million in lottery-backed bond funding during the 2025-2027 biennium. This \$20 million investment will upgrade and improve the levees, pumps, and conveyance that protect the people, property, and businesses of Oregon, and ensure their contributions to the state’s economy continue.

Flooding will happen and we must be ready when it does. The State’s continued partnership and investment comes with a great return: first and foremost, the lives of Oregonians are protected; thousands of businesses and the livelihoods of nearly 60,000 people are kept safe; mitigating flood risk is much less expensive than rebuilding after a flood; the businesses and employees that rely on the levee system contribute to state taxes; and without these improvements, the system could lose FEMA accreditation which would force property owners behind the levees to carry flood insurance without being able to access the more affordable flood

insurance provided by federal government.

This funding allows the District to make necessary infrastructure improvements that meet federal safety standards while also supporting the local match required to access authorized federal funding. State investment demonstrates to the federal government that Oregon remains committed to protecting its people from flooding—especially in this economically vital part of the state. The legislature's support contributes to a local, state, and federal investment partnership that will upgrade and improve the flood safety system and prevent costly new regulations.

In 2019, the Oregon Legislature created the Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District to increase flood safety in this century-old system that serves Oregon's largest business and industrial zone. The District identified required projects through an expert-reviewed and collaborative approach, secured strong local voter support, and built a broad coalition that supports this request as demonstrated by the signatories on this letter.

Flood risk is real and growing. The threat of storms, atmospheric rivers, and rain-on-snow events is increasing. With changes to operations of the Columbia River due to the Columbia River Treaty, upstream storage is less predictable. Extreme weather events and unprecedented floods are happening around the world. It is only a matter of time before the Portland region experiences such an event. State investment will help prepare Oregonians for the inevitable.

Thank you for your consideration of this vital infrastructure investment. If you have questions or wish to discuss this request further, please reach out to UFSWQD Director of Planning and Public Affairs Colin Rowan at [crowan@urbanfloodsafetyor.gov](mailto:crowan@urbanfloodsafetyor.gov) or 971-804-0608.

Sincerely,

A black ink signature of Jim Middaugh, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line.

Jim Middaugh

Executive Director, Urban Flood Safety  
and Water Quality District

A blue ink signature of David Ripma, written in a cursive style.

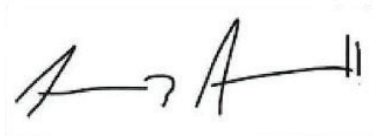
David Ripma

Mayor, City of Troutdale

A black ink signature of Keith Wilson, featuring a stylized 'K' and 'W'.

Keith Wilson

Mayor, City of Portland

A black ink signature of Travis Stovall, consisting of a stylized 'T' and 'S'.

Travis Stovall

Mayor, City of Gresham





Keith Kudrna

Mayor, City of Fairview



Ashton Simpson

Councilor, Metro



Andrew Hoan

President, Portland Metro

Chamber



Curtis Robinhold

Executive Director, Port of Portland



Shannon Singleton

Commissioner, Multnomah

County

CC

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Representative Ben Bowman

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## **SB 5531 – Section 11 - Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District Capital Funding**

### **The Problem**

The Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District, created by the Oregon Legislature in 2019, manages a flood safety system of levees, pump stations, and conveyances that protects the greater Portland region from flooding. The creation of the new district recognized the need to increase flood safety, prepare for climate change, advance natural floodplain restoration, contribute to water quality, embed equity in flood safety operations, and celebrate the diverse cultural history of the managed floodplain. Major floods are increasing with climate change and **this century-old** system requires capital improvements. Major floods would cost lives and homes, damage the natural environment, and affect tens of thousands of jobs behind the levees in the managed floodplain.

The system requires nearly \$300 million of improvements to bolster its resiliency, meet modern flood safety standards, and continue to keep Oregonians safe. With more than half--\$150 million--committed from the local voter-approved general obligation bond and \$100 million authorized from the federal government, this capital package needs an additional \$45 million from the State of Oregon to complete the projects. This \$45 million investment will complete necessary flood safety projects and ensure future federal funding priority for our lifesaving flood safety system.

### **Solution**

To complete the list of needed improvements to the flood safety system, the coalition is seeking an allocation of \$20 million in **lottery funds during** the 2025-2027 biennium.

The state's investment comes with a great return on investment. The investment will protect the lives of Oregonians working and sleeping behind the levees. Additionally, mitigating flood risk is much less expensive than rebuilding, saving the region, state, and federal governments hundreds of millions in rebuilding costs. There is also a financial reason for investment as the businesses and employees in the managed floodplain contribute to the state tax base and economic vibrancy. Some of the costs can come before flood loss. Without these improvements, property owners behind the levees could lose FEMA accreditation, mapping the managed floodplain as a high hazard floodplain, requiring private flood insurance, restricted development and redevelopment, zoning changes, and potential loss of federally-based mortgages. While the District has been vigilant in the operation and maintenance of the system, capital investments are needed to protect lives, jobs, and the environment.

### **The Urgency**

This funding is needed so the District can make necessary improvements to the infrastructure to meet federal safety standards and unlock more than **\$100 million of federal funding**. The funding completes the capital package identified by engineering studies conducted with the US Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA as necessary to bring the flood safety system up to federal safety standards. State investment demonstrates to the federal government that our state remains committed to protecting Oregonians from flooding. State support reflects a funding



**Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District**  
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package leveraged at the local, regional, state, and federal levels to upgrade and improve the flood safety system and better position our federally cost-shared projects.

## **Background**

The area in the managed floodplain served by the Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District not only includes the Portland International Airport and Oregon's second largest source of drinking water, but it is also home to nearly 8,000 residents and 2,500 businesses that employ nearly 60,000 jobs and generate \$16 billion in annual economic activity and associated revenue for the State. This flood safety system also protects three interstate highways (I-5, I-205, and I-84), two major rail lines, the Oregon Food Bank, an Air National Guard Base, State and County Correctional Facilities, to name a few. The managed floodplain is an economic engine for the entire state. That economic generator relies on the flood safety system to thrive.

The system no longer meets federal safety standards. Meeting these regulations will keep Oregonians safer, more resilient, and more economically vibrant. Falling out of compliance could cause FEMA to require a remapping of the Columbia River floodplain from the Willamette River to the Sandy River—an area larger than the City of Beaverton—as a Special Flood Hazard Area. That designation will restrict or stop new development and redevelopment on the managed floodplain, putting additional pressure on other buildable areas in the greater Portland region. Costs for existing property owners would increase significantly as they would be required to purchase flood insurance without federally subsidized rates – which could cost up to 10 times as much as the federal flood insurance program if it's obtainable at all.

Flood risk along the Columbia River along the Columbia Corridor is real and growing. With climate change, the risk profile is increasing. With changes to operations of the Columbia River, upstream storage is less predictable. With increasing atmospheric river rain events, the heart of our transportation and warehouse sectors faces internal and external flood risk. Extreme weather events and historic floods are happening around the world. It is only a matter of time until the Portland region experiences such an event. State investment is needed to prepare for the inevitable. Flood risks—and the needed solutions to reduce those risks—are known. The next step is to complete the investment package needed to implement the cost-effective, technically-sound capital projects that will bring the flood safety system up to modern federal standards and make the biggest increase in disaster preparedness in a generation.

The passage of SB 431 in 2019 (now ORS Chapter 550) was foundational to putting a more modern, environmentally friendly, and financially sustainable governance structure in place to protect people and property from flooding, prepare for climate change, and contribute to the health of the river and the watershed. With additional capital funds from the State, the District will be able to deliver the flood safety needed by the community to be better prepared for an uncertain future. Please support SB 714 and HB 2726.

For questions: Mark Landauer (503) 896-2338 [mark@mjlconsulting.com](mailto:mark@mjlconsulting.com) 5/8/2025



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