

RESOLUTION NO. 2014-19

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF WEST LINN SUPPORTING
THE REOPENING OF THE WILLAMETTE FALLS LOCKS**

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1873, the Willamette Falls Locks and Navigation Canal (Locks), a private local enterprise that would have been impossible without State bonds, opened to allow passage around the great falls of the Willamette, thereby providing access to a one river system; and

WHEREAS, in 1915, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) purchased the Locks from the private operator to ensure free public passage through the Locks; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, the Locks were listed on the National Register of Historic Places; it was the first significant navigational improvement on the Columbia-Snake River Inland Waterway system and, through 1939, the most important; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, the Locks were designated as a State Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, Oregon's Governor designated the Locks as an Oregon Solutions project and formed the Willamette Falls Locks Oregon Solutions Task Force, which continues today as the One Willamette River Coalition (Coalition) coordinated by the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation (WFHF), to preserve the Locks and support its continued operation; and

WHEREAS, on October 23, 2008, the Center for Economic Development Education and Research released a report under contract to the WFHF, entitled *The Willamette Falls Locks: A Case Study Analysis of Potential Transfer Issues*; and

WHEREAS, from 2006 through 2010, funding provided to the Corps from the Oregon Department of Transportation, Clackamas County and the U.S. Congress allowed for seasonal operations and selected structural upgrades, including \$2.2 million in funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (PL 111-5); and

WHEREAS, in November 2011, the Locks were placed into "non-operational" status and were closed to vessel passage based upon an engineering assessment that identified safety concerns of potential failure; and

WHEREAS, closure has placed a severe hardship on commercial, recreational and tribal river users, including businesses that have used the Locks for 127 years for transporting aggregate, logs and other goods and conducting dredging and towing operations; and

WHEREAS, in March 2012, the National Trust for Historic Preservation declared the Locks as one of the most threatened National Treasures, thereby providing added technical and financial assistance to preservation efforts; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the Historic Preservation League of Oregon (now Restore Oregon) named the Locks as one of Oregon's 10 "Most Endangered Places"; and

WHEREAS, the Locks are a primary historic asset under applications being prepared for designation of the Willamette Falls Area as State and National Heritage Areas; and

WHEREAS, on September 23, 2013, the Corps gave notice of its intent to initiate a public consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to determine whether the closure action had adverse effects on the historic integrity of the Locks based upon the defining qualities and features that made the Locks eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, on May 15, 2014, the Corps released its finding of adverse effects under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act and announced its intent to proceed with development of an agreement to establish how to best "avoid, minimize or mitigate" the identified adverse effects to the historic character of the Locks; and

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2014, economics consulting firm ECONorthwest, under contract to the WFHF, published the *Willamette Locks Economic Potential Report* providing information on user demand, potential operating costs and community benefits of reopening the Locks; and

WHEREAS, the Locks closure is an undue hardship to West Linn residents and visitors who desire paddling access between the upper and lower sections of the Willamette River Water Trail that wraps around the City, offering recreational sites above and below the closed bypass canal and Locks; and their closure prevents Native Americans from using the bypass in their traditional canoe trips; and

WHEREAS, the 141 year old Locks are West Linn's preeminent iconic historic site; and the City's master planning efforts for the Arch Bridge Area have the potential to provide better public views of the River, the Locks and the Falls; and

WHEREAS, the City of West Linn has supported an open and vibrant Locks through both joining with others (e.g. the Coalition) to advocate for the Locks and providing substantial financial support to organizations that work for restoration of the Locks and who celebrate its historic role in our community (e.g. the Coalition and the WFHF's Lock Fest).

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF WEST LINN RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The City urges the Corps to reopen the Locks to the general public, commercial, recreational and cultural marine traffic.

SECTION 2. The City thanks the Corps for working with local stakeholders to assess and mitigate the adverse effects of the closure and urges the Corps to expedite the needed repairs and craft a plan for sustainable operations of the Locks.

SECTION 3. The City supports recognition of the Locks in the Regional Transportation Plan and inclusion of the Locks as a Metro JPACT federal priority.

SECTION 4. The City supports the Legislature's creation of a State Task Force to work with the Corps to develop a plan for sustainable operations of the Locks.

SECTION 5. The City urges the Oregon Congressional Delegation to support the expedited repair and reopening of the Locks.

This resolution was PASSED and ADOPTED this 15th day of December, 2014, and takes effect upon passage.

JOHN KOVASH, MAYOR

ATTEST:

KATHY MOLLUSKY, CITY RECORDER

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

CITY ATTORNEY