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Oregon House Passes Legislation to Re-Open Historic Willamette Falls Locks

Locks would provide economic, environmental, and cultural benefits

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon House of Representatives voted today to take the next step in reopening the historic Willamette Falls Locks.

“The economic development benefits of reopening the Locks are enormous,” said Rep. Mark Meek (D-Oregon City), the chief sponsor of the legislation. “In addition to the riverfront revitalization opportunities in communities along the Willamette, this will provide us the opportunity to bring businesses back to the area. Reopening the locks will also allow the paper mill to receive materials by river barging, a more efficient, affordable, and environmentally friendly method than trucking. This is an important project for my community and for the entire region.”

[House Bill 4150](#) establishes the Willamette Falls Locks Authority as a public corporation. The authority would own and operate the locks in an entrepreneurial manner to ensure the financial stability of the Authority while remaining accountable to the public.

For most of the last decade the Willamette Falls Locks have been inoperable, completely bisecting the Willamette River. The Legislature created the Willamette Falls Commission in 2017 with a focus on getting the locks reopened.

Rep. Meek and Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego) serve as members of the Commission.

“The Willamette Falls Locks are a critical investment in our economic vitality, public safety, environment, and our history,” Rep. Salinas said. “This is an incredible opportunity for Oregon to retain a fantastic resource, support local business growth, and address contributing factors to climate change, that we should not allow to pass us by.”

Rep. Rachel Prusak (D-West Linn), whose district includes the locks and serves as an ex-officio member of the commission, echoed the sentiments of Rep. Salinas and Rep. Meek.

“Getting the locks reopened will be a benefit to commerce, to tourism and to recreation on the Willamette River,” Rep. Prusak said. “I am excited that we are continuing to move this effort forward. It will not only be beneficial to my fellow community members but to everyone who visits our community.”

The bill passed off the House floor unanimously and now moves to the Senate for consideration.

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