

## ADVOCACY for the WILLAMETTE FALLS CANAL & LOCKS

### EFFORTS to KEEP the LOCKS REPAIRED & OPEN

Jan 12, 2016

1. [[aerial photo](#)] Good afternoon. I'm Peggy Sigler and I'm honored and delighted to be here this afternoon. Today is a milestone – I thank each of you for choosing to participate in this important project.

While Sandy has updated you on the history of the Locks and current status, I'd like to provide an overview of the advocacy efforts to date.

Even from the beginning, advocates have believed in and propelled the Locks efforts. In 1873, promoters convinced the state to fund 1/3 of the construction costs or \$200,000. In 1913, the Oregon City Commercial Club was credited with generating almost \$1million in “free money” appropriated by the state and federal governments to buy and improve the Locks.

And they've received accolades:

- In 1974, the Locks were listed on National Register of Historic Places.
- They were designated as a Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.
- The river is recognized as the Willamette River Water Trail, and was later made part of the National Water Trail system.
- And it is a designated American Heritage River.

In 2002, Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation was organized as a nonprofit by volunteers to advocate for preservation around the Falls, particularly the Locks and falls-area industrial heritage structures.

2. [[Darlene photo](#)] That same year, Congresswoman Darlene Hooley hosted a flotilla to illustrate the importance of one continuous river; in 2005, she convened the *Willamette River United* Conference to promote keeping the Locks open, and secured earmarks for summer operations for several seasons.
3. [[Lock Fest photo](#)] WFHF began hosting annual Lock Fests to get the public near and on the water, experience the thrill of traversing the Locks chambers, and promote Locks advocacy efforts.

Gov Kulongowski designated the Locks as an Oregon Solutions project, with Verne Duncan as convener and Steve Greenwood as staff advisor.

- They raised \$50k for an (INCA) engineering study.
- They garnered funds from County Tourism and Travel Oregon for a study of tourism potential and return on investment, along with media outreach.
- They updated National Register nomination.
- And raised \$29k for the CEDER study of potential transfer to a local entity. This study examines similar transfers of Corps of Engineers Locks systems, and provides our best roadmap. It is in your binder and reading it is most worthy of your time.

In 2009, the HSS - Hydraulic Structural Steel - study was conducted with \$511k in Corps funding and \$118k from ODOT.

4. [\[check photo\]](#) Thanks to local advocacy by Oregon Solutions and WFHF, the Locks received \$1.8mil in federal stimulus money (ARRA) and an additional \$570k from partners to complete HSS, and inspect and repair gates – a total of \$2.37mil!

5. [\[toast photo\]](#) And they celebrated! The Oregon Solutions Locks project was deemed a success! One Willamette River Coalition was created by and of the stakeholders to carry on the advocacy work of the Oregon Solutions.

And then, in NOVEMBER 2011, the Locks were transferred to “non-operational” status by the Corps of Engineers and closed to all river traffic. Public access to the Locks, grounds and Locks Museum was also restricted.

6. [\[this place matters photo\]](#) While I have long been active in heritage in the county and state, until my retirement in 2015, I was the Oregon Field Officer for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the nonprofit leader in preservation efforts nationwide since 1949. In 2012, the Trust selected the Locks as a one of its National Treasure projects, enabling me to bring the resources and expertise of the Trust to advocate for the repair and reopening of the Locks. Trust staff have deep experience in working with the Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies which are responsible for stewardship of their historic sites. In-state, Restore Oregon also listed the Locks on their “Most Endangered List” and have been steadfast advocacy partners.

The National Treasure selection provided Sandy, coordinator for One Willamette River Coalition, and I with a new toolbox and renewed focus. We hosted a large public meeting and built a network of allies and advocates through extensive meetings and outreach. We met

regularly with staff at Corps Portland District, while executives from the Trust also met with the Corps leaders both here and in DC.

We raised \$67k to fund an economic potential report by ECONorthwest. It cited pent-up recreational demand, and potential growing commercial use once the Locks are dependably and consistently open – this report included in your packet.

And the Trust immediately requested that the Corps begin the mandated National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 assessment. As stewards of a historic property listed on the National Register of Historic Places, all federal agencies are required by NHPA Section 110 to maintain that property in good condition, and conduct a Section 106 assessment prior to any undertaking which may cause adverse effects to historic resources, such as the 2011 closure. In 2014, the Portland District assigned Louis Landre as Project Manager for the Locks and acknowledged that the closure had the potential to cause “adverse effects on the character-defining design, materials, features, and setting of the Willamette Falls Locks”. To develop “avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures” as required, the Corps hosted regular meetings of stakeholders, many who are also represented here today. A Memorandum of Agreement is nearing completion, needing final approval from the State Historic Preservation Office and the President’s Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The binding MOA will specify agreed-upon steps the Corps must take to begin a final disposition study, provide ongoing public outreach, conserve the Locks Museum collections, accommodate tribal cultural education, and more. Both the Advisory Council and the Corps’ own regulations advise concurrent Section 106 and NEPA assessments. It is anticipated that the NEPA assessment will commence very soon because the Portland District learned last March that funding had been approved.

The National Trust hired Congresswoman Hooley & Lisa Natio to build advocacy for the reopening of the Locks, and help identify a new owner, if that’s what’s necessary to reopen them. They have had hundreds of meetings with the Corps, agencies, advocates, legislators, our federal delegation, and others to educate people about the Locks and ask lots of questions. Their efforts for the Trust, working together with Sandy, me, and a growing cadre of advocates, has culminated in:

- Formal Resolutions to repair and reopen the Locks passed unanimously up and down the River by Clackamas, Linn, Polk, Marion and Multnomah counties, and the Association of Oregon Counties; Metro Regional Government, cities of West Linn, Oregon City, Wilsonville, Portland, Eugene, Independence, Salem, Milwaukie, Canby; and Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, WFHF, WFHAC, and CRYA, to date.
- Passage of Senate Bill 131 creating the Task Force....the reason you are meeting.
- Partnership with the Heritage Area Coalition for Senate Memorial Bill 10's passage, urging the repair and reopening of the Locks and National Heritage Area designation.

- Advocacy for and leadership from Clackamas County to create the WFLWG. Kudos to Commissioner Martha Schrader and Commissioner Tootie Smith who will elaborate on those efforts for you in a moment.
7. [Schrader photo] I'd especially like to thank staff here with us today from our Congressional offices. We've met regularly, both here and in DC, with our federal delegates and have received enthusiastic support all around. National Trust staff in DC continue to lead that coordinated effort. Congressman Schrader hosted a Locks tour with Army Corps leaders, National Trust staff, and other dignitaries, and he checks in regularly with me for updates. We worked with Sen Wyden on a letter to the Corps' Sec Darcy, and in August, Sen Wyden hosted a town hall with Corps Portland District Colonel Aguilar and District Engineer, Kevin Brice, and a roomful of stakeholders representing all three of the synergistic Falls projects that Sandy highlighted for you.

Many entities are working in partnership on these 3 WF projects, with each supporting the others. Redevelopment at the Legacy Project will be more successful with the Locks open, and the Heritage Area will provide advocacy and marketing for the Locks and Legacy, attracting new audiences to the region and incubating tourism, recreation, and as-yet-unknown economic engines. Together, these will create a historical, cultural, economic and recreational transformation of this special and unique area.

8. [sternwheeler photo] And lastly, I can't understate the strength of the public support we've found for reopening our Locks. This place touches so many different audiences: industrial and commercial users, mill workers, boaters - power boats, yachts, sailboats, fisherman, and paddlers – kayaks, canoes, crewing sculls; engineering buffs, those with Cascadia-event concerns, historians, cultural tourists - just think about the possibilities for river, wine or culinary tours! Over 100 stakeholders were at our first public meeting in 2012, and hundreds have enjoyed Locks Fests each year. Last January, 160 people attended a *Locks: Past, Present and Future* presentation at McMenamins that we presented with Louis Landre of the Corps – it was a standing-room-only crowd with many turned away. And Sandy and I have given numerous presentations on the Locks efforts to local organizations. People care about the future of the Locks.

Last year, Clackamas County took the lead in convening the Willamette Falls Locks Working Group. *And here we are today. With your help, our work continues. We are hopeful that the Willamette Falls Locks will again be open for commercial, recreation and tourism travel.*