



Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation

Summer Newsletter

August 2017

Taking Locks advocacy to the next level: Senate Bill 256 establishes a Willamette Falls Locks Commission

Sandy Carter reports that Clackamas County's Willamette Falls Locks Working Group (WG) has made giant steps in the direction of an open and operational navigation lock in West Linn with the July passage of Senate Bill 256. Here's a thumbnail history of the bill.

- At the instigation of the WG, the 2015 Oregon Legislature created the WF Locks Task Force, led by former Governor Barbara Roberts. That task force met throughout 2016.
- The Locks Task Force recommended the creation of a new public/private commission, modeled loosely on the Columbia Gorge Commission, to design future funding and operations models for the canal while a new ownership entity is being identified and to be the entity that negotiates the transfer with the Corps of Engineers.
- Senator Richard Devlin and a broad coalition of other lawmakers agreed to sponsor Senate Bill 256 in the 2017 session of the Legislature, to establish just such a commission.
- SB 256 was supported by strong public testimony organized by the WG. Lawmakers on several committees heard strong testimony from Gov. Roberts, Carlotta Collette, Russ Axelrod and others. The bill, with amendments, passed unanimously on July 6.

Official Summary of Senate Bill 256

"Establishes Willamette Falls Locks Commission as [policy-making and] advisory body for issues relating to repair, reopening, operation, maintenance and future transfer of ownership of navigational canal and locks...Sunsets commission, program and account on December 31, 2023. Sponsored by Senators Devlin, Olsen, Representatives Parrish, Kennemer, Lininger, Meek; Senators Burdick, Frederick, Girod, Monnes Anderson, Monroe, Roblan, Taylor, Thomsen, Winters; Representatives Barker, Gomberg, Helm, Huffman, Keny-Guyer, McKeown, McLain, Nearman, Nosse, Piluso, Power, Witt."

Please thank these legislators when you see or write to them.

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The public responds to Locks Disposition Study

Corps' draft recommendation would leave the canal closed

Between May 20th and July 12, the WG, the Foundation and the National Trust rallied to stimulate public comment to the Corps of Engineers (COE) on the COE's "preferred alternative" for disposing of the Locks. While saying it hopes for a transfer, the COE doesn't plan to make the canal operable prior to transfer. With the comment period closed, the COE now has to consider the dozens of thoughtful and passionate letters from river users and jurisdictions that want "One Willamette River" again, as soon as possible. Their final decision should come in December. Local and federal partners must also develop a Plan B in case all of the public input to "repair and reopen" is ignored.

The following comments from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's letter to the COE are an example of the excellent support most letters voiced for repair and reopening:

"A National Treasure for All Americans

...We do not support the transfer of the Locks in a non-operational state. Instead, we believe it is imperative for the Army Corps to transfer the Locks in working condition, not only to comply with the Corps' legal responsibilities for the stewardship and maintenance of its historic properties, but also to set a positive precedent for the appropriate disposal of other historic assets owned by the Army Corps and other federal agencies...

The Willamette Falls Locks is a nationally significant industrial heritage site, the oldest and most intact bypass canal and leaf-gate locks in the nation. In the mid-19th century the Willamette Falls area became the epicenter of government, industry, transportation, innovation, and commerce in the Pacific Northwest. The Locks played a pivotal role in the transformation of Oregon's pioneer society into the modern state we know today.

Section 4 of the Flood Control Act of December 22, 1944, formally recognized the Locks' value as a historical and recreational asset, and authorized the Army Corps to provide the public with a public park and recreational facilities at the Locks, opportunities to visit the Locks and the historic information center, and to safely use the recreational features on the premises. The Locks were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, and in 1991 they were designated as a State Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers, in recognition of their status as Oregon's first water resources development project."

The Foundation and the Working Group thank the long list of locks supporters from all segments of river users and heritage advocacy who submitted public comments. Donations towards the efforts of the Locks Working Group may be made through the Foundation. Please specify "Locks Working Group" on your donation.

Signage is final step for Grindstones Public Art installation



Grindstones and interpretive signs (photo by Sandy Carter)

The Grindstones Public Art installation interpretive signage was installed in time for the mid-July West Linn Old Time Fair, and signs honoring donors and mill workers are expected to arrive in time for a late September dedication party. Thank you to all who helped or donated.

Historic Paper Mill A in West Linn receiving tours

Foundation-led weekly tours are introducing decision-makers to Mill A in West Linn, to save a building and build potential for more public access on the West flank of the Falls.



Mill A (left) and Sullivan Power Plant (right)
(Photo courtesy of Sandy Carter)

Thanks to an ever-stronger partnership with West Linn Paper Company, Foundation founder and current board VP Jody Carson is organizing and leading small tours of Mill A on Fridays this summer. Contact Jody if you know an "influencer" who hasn't experienced our West Linn industrial heritage and who'd like to do the walk-through. The invitation-only tours were conceived to build interest and involvement in stabilizing the roof of Mill A, which has been deteriorating. Fixing the roof will protect the building and the amazing equipment it still contains, including grinding machines and the enormous debarking tumbler. Special thanks to Penny Machinski, our mill partner, and Jim Stallcup, new board member, who share the Friday responsibilities with Jody.

The Foundation is working to create partnerships that will enable public access, regular tours and potentially an official historic district surrounding the Locks. The combination of Mill A's deep history and the coexisting working mill on the remainder of the island, with its 250 living-wage manufacturing jobs representing the largest private employer in West Linn, is unique in America. Our deep thanks to WLPC for agreeing to these tours, which are engaging and exciting new mill fans

and building support for preserving future visitation opportunities on the West Linn side of Willamette Falls. Please contact Jody, too, if you know of a potential grant source to help with this project.

Donations for the roof stabilization at Mill A should specify "Mill A Roof."

Falls-related collection preservation needs assessed

A collection "Preservation Needs Assessment" has begun with the help of Rachael Woody, archival consultant, under a grant from the Oregon Community Foundation. Sandy will need a qualified volunteer in the Fall to assist with cataloging of lock and mill schematics, mill plans, and other items in our collection. Other grants or volunteers will be needed to help scan/digitize images and to help organize and implement the migration of old media to new formats before items like our original oral history tapes degrade. Lloyd Musser, of the Mount Hood Museum, will once again be a State Mentor training us in collection inventory and preservation. Thank you Lloyd and the State of Oregon for that great program. The Foundation is also exploring a partnership with the Oregon State Archive.

Donations to support this program should specify "Collections project."

County managing new Locks economic potential study

Clackamas County has contracted with ECONorthwest—the consulting firm that previously worked with Sandy Carter and Peggy Sigler—to produce a new report on the Locks' economic potential. The \$100,000 contract uses funding from the 2016 Legislature, which was intended to develop a deep study that can be used to help Locks advocates market the viability of an open locks. It will be an important tool of the Willamette Falls Locks Commission as that new group begins work to identify a new owner for the historic facility. The study report is due in December, so stay tuned for our December newsletter update.

Foundation and partners at the Old Time Fair

The Foundation, soon to also be doing business as “Friends of the Locks,” shared booth space under the “Unlock The Locks,” Historic Willamette, and Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition banners for three days in mid-July, spreading the word about local history and about history that is being made right now. More than forty new names were added to our “Interested Parties” mailing list.



Sandy Carter, Mayor Russ Axelrod, Alma Coston (photos by City of West Linn and Troy Bowers)



Sandy Carter and former Governor Barbara Roberts, 2016 Task Force Convener

President's Message

With new Board members, WFHF adds additional horsepower, skill-sets and enthusiasm

I am extremely pleased to have Joe Bernert, Jim Stallcup, Peter Ryder, and David Taylor join our dedicated and hardworking Board of Directors. Joe's family has a long history of working on the Willamette; he brings excellent insights to the reopening and continued potential of the Locks; and he has a passion for preserving the historic resources at Mill A. Jim was raised on the Willamette, and as a contractor, brings a hands-on approach to his focus on reopening the Locks, preserving and redeveloping Mill A, and celebrating the Powerhouse facilities at the Falls. Peter is passionate about navigational locks everywhere and wants to make sure Willamette Falls Locks are restored to service. He brings a strong background in project management to the Board. David Taylor will leverage his strong legal and financial background as he works towards reopening the Locks, preserving Mill A, supporting establishment of the Willamette Falls National Heritage Area, and preserving our industrial history. We welcome them and continue to look for people who can help us make a difference at Willamette Falls.

Troy Bowers, President

Become a Sustainer of the Foundation's work

Foundation Treasurer Jon Miller is happy to announce the birth of a brand new function of the Foundation's website (www.willamettefalls.org). Supporters may now sign up to become Sustainers of our projects at Willamette Falls. Any amount you can afford to contribute will help support our mission and will be deeply appreciated.

Mission: *Preserving & sharing stories of human enterprise & the power of the water at the great falls of the Willamette River*

The Budget Committee requested this new payment option to help us better predict our community support. Thank you for whatever you may be able to donate. Your donations, as ever, are tax deductible, and the Foundation is on the list of non-profits that qualify donors to the Oregon Cultural Trust to take advantage of the Trust's matching tax credit program.



7997. Fishing at Oregon City, Ore.

Westinghouse, Scott, Tesla and their lab at the Falls

The first long-distance transmission of direct current in the United States took place at Willamette Falls on June 7, 1889, several years before Niagra Falls events. In his full article, available on line, Charles F. Scott highlights the distinction between generating hydropower for lighting and inventing a type of motor that could use the power generated by falling water to power machinery at a mill in Colorado. This distinction was very real at the time of the great American race to harness electricity from falling water. As a Westinghouse engineer, Scott had worked under Tesla during the development of the polyphase induction motor, and was the inventor of the three-phase transformer in the late 1890s, to bypass Thomas Edison's more expensive rotary converter and permit two-phase generator plants to drive three-phase motors. (Wikipedia)

Excerpted from

"Long-Distance Transmission for Lighting and Power"

by Charles F. Scott, in the "Electrical Engineer," June 15, 1892

"A description is here given of two plants, one for lighting and the other for the transmission of power... The plants to be described are the first of their type installed in this country.... The lighting plant [Station A] was first installed. It is operated by the Willamette Falls Electric Company, of Portland Oregon. The falls of the Willamette River at Oregon City, in the combined points of size, accessibility and nearness to the seaport, are unequaled. Those falls, estimated at from 200,000 to 250,000 h. p., are about 13 miles from Portland, and it requires but a moment's thought to appreciate the value of an agent which can make this power available in the city. The Willamette River is about one-quarter of a mile wide and the fall is about 40 feet. The present station is located on an island at about the middle of the river. Victor wheels of 300 h. p. are geared to horizontal shafts, from which the dynamo belts pass to an upper floor at an angle of 45 degrees. Two alternating-current dynamos for incandescent lighting are driven by each wheel...

...The plant was first installed with two incandescent machines and started nearly two years ago. Since that time five additional machines have been added, so that there are now seven, each with a capacity for supplying 1,250 16 c.p. lights in Portland. The total capacity is 8,750 lights. The dynamos run admirably. One explanation for the success of the plant is the intelligent policy of its general manager, in harmony with his statement that: "It is not the first cost which counts, but the cost of throwing out and replacing apparatus." That same policy has happily governed the installation of the second plant to be described—the power plant. This is located near Telluride, Colorado."

Many thanks to Sherri Burch for the donation of "Empires of Light—Edison, Tesla, Westinghouse, and the Race to Electrify the World," Random House, 2003, by Jill Jones—the source book that led to this article.