



Marion County

OREGON

Board of Commissioners

May 7, 2021

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Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Ways and Means
Committee on Capital Construction

**BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS**

Kevin Cameron, Chair
Danielle Bethell
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**CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE
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Jan Fritz

RE: SB 5534 - Testimony in Support of Santiam Canyon Sewer Project

Dear Co-Chairs Girod, Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

This proposal provides a comprehensive and expedited solution to the North Santiam Canyon's current sewer system. Marion County is requesting \$50 million for the sewer system, broken down into two projects as follows:

Project A: Cities of Gates and Mill City - \$40 million for constructing new and increased capacity sewer infrastructure for the City of Gates, linking to Mill City. Infrastructure will upgrade and increase sewer capacity for the collection, treatment, and disposal of sewage for a combined system. It is imperative for this project to commence immediately for the recovery and build back of the City of Gates.

Project B: Cities of Detroit and Idanha - \$10 million for interim septic measures and further engineering. We are seeking funding for homeowner and business septic system grants for Detroit and Idanha residents to preserve the water quality of the lake and the river. These grants are to purchase and install high tech geologically suitable septic systems as they begin to rebuild in their communities. In addition, funding will be used to evaluate and engineer an environmentally sound solution for the future Detroit and Idanha Sewer System. This solution complies with the Three Basin Rule that applies to the North Santiam River basin.

In 2015, Detroit, Gates, Idanha and Mill City, with the help of Marion County set out to resolve long standing wastewater issues that inhibited the cities from achieving their full economic potential. Within the cities of Detroit, Gates and Idanha, residents only have individually managed septic systems, which were suitable solutions from over 40 years ago, but are no longer effective and viable to protect water quality required by increased regulation. Mill City has a step-system sewer system which is nearing the end of its planned cycle and capacity.

After evaluating multiple approaches and alternatives and holding more than 40 public meetings, the cities came together and formed a regional ORS 190 Intergovernmental Organization, the North Santiam Sewer Authority (NSSA). The goal of the NSSA is to

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develop a sewer system that is geologically suitable, environmentally sustainable, financially feasible, and politically viable. The North Santiam Sewer Authority's legal formation does not allow for the organization to issue general obligation bonds nor does it have taxing authority although it may issue revenue bonds.

The Beachie Creek and Lionshead Wildfires have added significant urgency to the need for sewer systems in order for the cities to build back in a sustainable way while maintaining their small community's character. This high visibility regional project is critical to the recovery from the wildfires which tore through the North Santiam Canyon.

The North Santiam Joint Sewer Project is currently in the Master Planning phase. The proposed two project solution will expedite the Gates-Mill City connection and expansion, and assist Detroit and Idanha residents with high-tech septic replacements.

The North Santiam Sewer Authority, Marion County, the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments, and the City of Salem have been at the table and will continue to work together throughout the project and ensure the final engineering plans and the sewer system comply with the Three Basin Rule for the North Santiam River Basin.

Please approve \$50 million in lottery bonding authority to support our Santiam Canyon communities.

Sincerely,



Kevin Cameron, Chair