

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 29, 2016

Gina McCarthy  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

We are writing you today to lend our support and urge full and fair consideration of a grant application recently submitted to your agency's Community-Wide Assessment (CWA) Brownfield program by the Portland, Oregon regional government agency, Metro. Metro oversees 25 cities and 3 counties (Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington), and a population of 1.7 million people.

In 2011, the last working paper mill in Oregon City, Blue Heron, closed for good and 175 mill workers were left unemployed. The mill sits atop a majestic bluff overlooking the thundering Willamette Falls – second only to Niagara in volume in America. The Oregon Trail ended here, and there is evidence of 13,000 years of Native American experience on and around the site.

While loss of the mill created great hardship, we now have a chance to do something remarkable. While the site operated as a functioning mill site, ever since the mid-1800's, the site was blocked to public access and so were the Falls. Metro, Clackamas County, the State of Oregon, and Oregon City have all joined forces to collaborate on a vision for the future of this site, working with Tribal representatives and a host of stakeholders that spans business, conservation and environmental enhancement, community, culture, recreation, history, and economic development.

Critical to this overall vision, and the various component parts of the ultimate site redevelopment, is the need to address the many brownfield sites along the corridor known as the McLoughlin Investment area, a 9-mile segment of McLoughlin Boulevard located along the Highway 99E corridor. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has identified dozens of contaminated sites within the area, which includes the five communities of Milwaukie, Oak Grove, Jennings Lodge, Gladstone, and Oregon City. The Willamette Falls Legacy Site is located in this area -- a site which could serve as the crowning jewel and focal point of the entire target area's redevelopment.

As described earlier, for 150 years the 1,500-foot-wide, 40-foot-high spectacular Willamette Falls were utilized for industrial purposes. Yet, the 22-acre industrial site that is located between the Falls and McLoughlin Boulevard has been vacant since the last mill to make use of it shut in 2011. Since then, hazardous building materials located in over 50 unused buildings, as well as leaking underground storage tanks have been contaminating the Falls. Given that this was the final stopping point of the Oregon Trail and the place where most of Oregon's energy was generated during the 1800s, its current state does not do justice to the rich history and scenic beauty of this designated 'legacy site.'

Since 2013, Metro has led a statewide Brownfields Coalition that represents diverse interests in the brownfield area. The Coalition advocated for land bank legislation and a \$7 million recapitalization of the statewide brownfield redevelopment program in 2015. A CWA grant would greatly enhance the work that Metro and its coalition members are already doing on the Willamette Falls Legacy site. Metro has invested \$5 million from a Natural Areas Bond in the Site, and the State of Oregon has approved another \$12.5 million. Other public and private partners are also contributing through investment and in-kind donations. This grant will provide an economic boost to the entire targeted area as brownfield sites hinder major business development and job creation, and contribute to high levels of unemployment and poverty. Additionally, property values have decreased and economic strain has been put on local governments due to maintenance, security, and emergency response costs around the Willamette Falls Legacy Site brownfield. By tackling the problems created by brownfield sites, the CWA grant would have a positive impact on the lives of many Oregonians, and help to restore a national treasure that Americans from all walks of life can and should be encouraged to visit and enjoy.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of our request, and please do not hesitate to contact any of us or our staff if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,



KURT SCHRADER  
Member of Congress



RON WYDEN  
U.S. Senator



EARL BLUMENAUER  
Member of Congress



JEFFREY MERKLEY  
U.S. Senator



SUZANNE BONAMICI  
Member of Congress