



## Staff Report

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**File #:** 23-419

**Version:** 1

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**Item #:** 5.b.

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**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**THROUGH:** Keith Stahley, City Manager

**FROM:** Brian D. Martin, PE, Public Works Director

### **SUBJECT:**

Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Safe, Reliable and Efficient Infrastructure; Good Governance, Natural Environment Stewardship

### **SUMMARY:**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant program through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) makes federal funds available to U.S. territories, states, local governments, Indian Tribes, institutions of higher education, non-profits and commercial organizations for transformational habitat restoration and coastal resilience. This provides an opportunity to begin funding needed improvements to the Upper and Lower Bennett Dams, which control flow in the North Santiam River at the Geren Island Water Treatment Facility (GIWTF). These improvements will restore critical habitat in the North Santiam River and protect the long-term water supply for the City of Salem (City) and Santiam Water Control District (SWCD).

### **ISSUE:**

Shall the City Council authorize the City Manager to apply for the NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant and, if successful, enter into an agreement with NOAA to accept the funds?

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Authorize the City Manager to apply for the NOAA Transformational Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant funds and, if successful, authorize the City Manager to enter into an agreement with

NOAA to accept the funds.

## **FACTS AND FINDINGS:**

The North Santiam River divides into two main channels on the north and south sides of Geren Island (Attachment 1). Upper and Lower Bennett Dams are two timber-crib dams initially constructed in the 1940s to assist in directing the flow of the North Santiam River through the northern channel, which provides water for agricultural production to the Santiam Water Control District (SWCD) and for the supply of clean drinking water to the City.

Until the mid-1990's, accumulated riverbed material was dredged from the northern channel on a regular basis to maintain flow to the SWCD and GIWTF intake structures. Regular dredging ceased due to listing of Upper Willamette River (UWR) Chinook and steelhead under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Lack of dredging has resulted in deposition of riverbed material and changes in the river channel that have reduced the ability of the dams to divert adequate flow to the northern channel intakes.

In 2018, the City completed an alternatives analysis to identify a long-term water supply plan for the GIWTF. A key finding in the analysis was an imbalance in the North Santiam River system surrounding Geren Island. The dams' lack of adjustability limits response to changing trends of flow and inherently impedes fine gravel sediment transport down the North Santiam River. Replacing the timber-crib dams with an adjustable crest dam would not only secure future flow to SWCD and GIWTF's water intakes, but also allow for more sediment transport to create additional salmonid spawning habitat in the lower reaches of the North Santiam River. Adjustable crest dams would also increase connectivity for UWR Chinook migration to the upper reaches of the North Santiam River. Native Western River Lamprey, important to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde but not an ESA listed species, would also benefit from improved passage for spawning.

A Notice of Federal Funding for NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants Under the BIL and IRA (Attachment 2) solicits applications for habitat restoration actions that demonstrate significant impacts; rebuild productive and sustainable fisheries; contribute to the recovery and conservation of threatened and endangered species; and promote climate-resilient ecosystems. The BIL and IRA appropriated up to \$240 million in funding for transformational projects with awards between \$1 million and \$25 million.

NOAA has identified the North Santiam as a top priority area in the recovery plans for UWR Chinook and steelhead. However, the cost of all necessary improvements to Upper and Lower Bennett Dams and associated facilities is expected to greatly exceed the funding available through this single grant opportunity. City staff and consultants have reviewed the grant criteria and met with NOAA staff to help inform the scope of an initial project for this grant program. The scope of this grant project is expected to include design and permitting for all improvements necessary at both dams and construction of a new adjustable crest structure at Upper Bennett Dam and new fish passage facilities at Lower Bennett Dam. The grant application does not require matching funds; however, a cost share does aid in the competitiveness of the application. The cost estimation for the project is still being developed but is anticipated to exceed the \$25 million grant funding limit. The City will apply for the maximum allowable amount of \$25 million.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Staff continues to seek grant funding opportunities for various federal and state programs to augment the initial project and fund future improvements.

Allen Dannen, PE  
City Engineer

### **Attachments:**

1. City of Salem Geren Island Facilities
2. NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2023-2008081 NOFO Report