

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**OREGON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION REJECTS COAL DOCK PROJECT 3-1**

March 19, 2015 (Salem, OR) – The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) voted 3-1 to reject funding for a controversial \$2 million ConnectOregon project related to dock improvements for a proposed coal export facility at Port Westward.

The OTC originally rejected the grant application, submitted by the Port of St. Helens, by a 3-2 margin last August. After that vote, former Governor Kitzhaber removed then-OTC chairwoman Catherine Mater when Ms. Mater voiced concerns about critical omissions in the Port of St. Helens' application. Ms. Mater's seat remains vacant.

"Members of the Oregon Transportation Commission made the right decision today, and Oregonians deserve no less from their public officials," former OTC chairperson Catherine Mater said. "Oregon families expect the commission to hold public funding proposals to the highest possible standards and that our public funds are invested in the best transportation projects. We are glad that the commission exercised appropriate oversight and resisted strong political pressure to rubber-stamp approval of a bad project"

"Coal export harms our river, public health and our salmon. Oregonians shouldn't be forced to provide subsidies for projects with such broad negative impacts to our state," said Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky of Columbia Riverkeeper. "Today, the OTC stood up for Oregon values and sent a message that Oregonians won't tolerate being bullied into spending public money to support controversial special interest projects."

The dock proposal faced a bleak future even before the OTC denied funding: Ambre Energy, the coal company promoting the Morrow Pacific coal export project, had pledged to provide necessary matching funds if the OTC approved the ConnectOregon grant. But Ambre Energy's participation seems unlikely now that the Oregon has denied the company a critical permit for its coal terminal at the Port of Morrow. Additionally, coal loading operations at Port Westward also hinge on yet-to-be granted authorization from the Oregon Department of State Lands.

About Columbia Riverkeeper

Columbia Riverkeeper's mission is to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. Representing over 8,000 members and supporters, Columbia Riverkeeper works to restore a Columbia River where people can safely eat the fish they catch, and where children can swim without fear of toxic exposure. The organization is a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, the world's fastest growing environmental movement, uniting more than 200 Waterkeeper organizations worldwide. For more information go to columbiariverkeeper.org.