



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE CAPITOL  
SALEM, OREGON 97310  
March 30, 1984

R. L. Friedenwald  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer, Portland District  
P. O. Box 2946  
Portland, Oregon 97208

Governor Atiyeh has instructed me to sign this letter and transmit it to you. An original copy bearing his personal signature will be sent from Israel next week.

Our current assessment of the worsening flooding conditions in the Harney Basin indicates that the flood disaster situation that has now existed in Harney County for the past two years, will intensify to emergency status with new record flood levels this year as a result of the spring runoff.

This forecast is based on recent information from Harney County and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Snow Surveys Branch that identifies a specific threat of increased flooding (a July 1 forecast of Malheur Lake elevation 4101 feet), and verifiable estimates of damages anticipated to occur as a result of higher water. Although a slight decline in lake elevation is expected later this year, the lake has been substantially above flood stage for over two years now, and is not expected to return to near-normal elevations, without the intervention of man in the foreseeable future. The major damages documented by Harney County will continue to be incurred until such a time as the lake is brought under control.

Our assessment of response capability at the local level indicates that Harney County is willing and capable of providing immediate sponsorship of a proposed drainage channel solution to alleviate the problems despite severe financial limitations as a result of this long-term disaster. I am attaching a copy of the letter from the County Court reflecting their position on this matter. The County will provide all lands, easements and right-of-ways, Federal indemnification, and will establish a drainage district authority within the County to provide for such maintenance and operation requirements as may be necessary. An evaluation of State resources has established that aside from coordination and review functions, I presently have no authority to provide funds, manpower, or material for any substantial action to alleviate the current flooding by construction of an outlet channel at Malheur Lake.

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I, therefore, request that an Advanced Measures investigation under the authority of Public Law 84-99, be implemented immediately by your office to determine the feasibility and propriety of constructing an outlet channel to drain flood waters from Malheur Lake into the South Fork Malheur River.

Concurrent with your action, I am directing all concerned State agencies to undertake the completion of necessary statutory review of this alternative, to address all legal, economical and environmental issues as may arise.

It is my understanding that previous PL 84-99 activities of this nature and magnitude have been undertaken in California and Utah (not to mention Mt. St. Helens) and such assistance is within the scope and authority of the Corps of Engineers.

Sincerely,



Gerry Thompson  
Executive Assistant  
to the Governor

GT:ab

Enclosures