

October 3, 2023

Jill Rolfe, Coos County Community Planning Commission

Re: Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan, Phase 1

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect citizens' right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters of Coos County (LWVCC) appreciates the effort by the County, supported by the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) and others, to update the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan (CBEMP). The LWVCC has been engaged in planning and public participation regarding the estuary for decades. Our members have attended meetings and studied the documents that have been provided with these digital updates. We appreciate the effort you and others have made in this current effort to update and provide digitally available documents of the current CBEMP available for review and discussion.

Clarification of the Future Process and Entities

The LWVCC is strongly supportive of an effort to begin planning toward Phase 2 of an updated planning process that will incorporate the best available science and understanding of the challenges for our coastal communities. To ensure that this is a fair process moving forward, we recommend that the County and our local jurisdictions establish a Citizen Advisory Committee as well as a Technical Advisory Committee to ensure that a fair and comprehensive process is conducted as we move forward to revising our 40-year-old management plan.

With this in mind, we hereby request that the role of the International Port of Coos Bay be carefully evaluated before a list of entities to be considered for membership on the Citizen Advisory Committee or other advisers is determined, and before any appointments are made.

The LWVCC has conducted comprehensive studies of the Port of Coos Bay with positions adopted in 1962, 1981, and 2000. Our most recent study was completed this year, and updated study and position statements were adopted on May 13, 2023. These documents and recorded sessions are available on our website at <https://my.lwv.org/oregon/coos-county/article/international-port-coos-bay-study-finished>. The LWVCC's recently adopted Port position statement includes the following clauses which state our position on these important issues. The Port should:

- (4) Put overall public interests ahead of special interests; and be transparent in all aspects of decision making;
- (10) Incorporate climate change, seismic risks, and other natural hazard risk analysis adaptation and mitigation into all planning;

- (11) Engage regional Tribes in all planning activities and establish goals that enhance the protection and understanding of Indigenous cultural heritage; and
- (12) Share plans for the management of Port assets that articulate a desired future condition shaped by a consideration of appropriate financial, social, and environmental factors.

HB 3382 provides the Port the opportunity to request an exception to Goal 16 of our State Land Use regulations for deep-draft navigation improvements. This pathway provided only to the Port clearly provides a conflict of interest in discussions of future designations of zoning and use of the estuary.

In addition, the role of the Port on the Steering Committee should be clarified to ensure the Port does not have undue influence on estuary management at the expense of other users and stakeholders, or of our estuarine resources.

Final Comments:

We fully support the intent of this necessary process. We encourage all entities to seek adequate funding to allow the important revisions to move forward, and to engage with other Oregon entities that are in the process of revising their estuary management plans, such as the Yaquina Bay with their updates <https://www.yaquina-emp.org/>.

Sincerely,

Kay Kerriden

President, LWV Coos County

cc. Michael Howard and Amanda Ferguson, Institute for Policy Research and Engagement; Meg Reed, Oregon Coastal Management Program Coastal Policy Specialist; Lisa Phipps, Oregon Coastal Management Program Director; Hui Rodomsky, Department of Land Conservation and Development South Coast Regional Representative; Chelsea Schnable, City of Coos Bay Planner; Derek Payne, Planning Administrator, City of North Bend