

Mr. Chairman, my community has been working hard to restore the water quality in the Willamette River. We recognized that the American Heritage River program would make the federal government a better partner in this effort and spent years working to get the Willamette River so designated.

The Heritage River program has funded a river navigator who works full-time on behalf of our local governments and watershed groups. The River Navigator provides an important link between the river communities and the appropriate federal agencies and programs to clean the river. The local Heritage river communities have already dedicated an enormous amount of time and effort to this program without any additional funding, and we are committed to seeing this program develop to its full potential.

I am concerned, however, that the bill as written undermines our efforts. The bill's restrictions on heritage funding do not represent the type of support that was promised when the Willamette River and her sister rivers were designated. Since current federal participation in water resource management is poorly coordinated, we should not be stepping back from this commitment. I urge my colleagues to join with me in supporting the Kelly/Kanjorski amendment.