

Washington, DC — Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) announced today that the Water Resources Development Act of 2003 (WRDA) passed by the House of Representatives last week authorizes funding for two important Oregon projects: the rehabilitation of the Celilo Indian Village and a study of potential salmon restoration habitats across the state.

“This WRDA affirms our commitment to restoring critical cultural and ecological resources, and to improving livability and the environment throughout Oregon,” Blumenauer said. “Native American fishing sites and salmon are two important symbols of the remarkable journey of Lewis and Clark. Funding these two projects is a fitting way to approach the bicentennial of their historic exploration in 2004.”

Celilo Village is one of the most prominent Native American locations along the Lewis and Clark route. The village was moved from its original location to a nearby site after the construction of The Dalles Dam in the 1950's. In 1998, Congress passed Title IV, the Columbia River Treaty Fishing Access Sites law (PL 100-581), authorizing the Corps to work with the Warm Springs, Umatilla, Yakama and Nez Perce Tribes to rehabilitate run-down fishing sites and construct new ones, but Celilo Village was exempted. The current bill authorizes much needed redevelopment to housing and other features of Celilo Village, where nearly 100 Native American permanent residents are living in 14 dwellings.

The House-passed WRDA Section 4024 authorizes the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a feasibility study of possible ecosystem restoration and fish passage improvements on rivers throughout Oregon. Improving threatened and endangered species habitat and overall watershed health are the study's primary objectives. The study will be carried out in conjunction with local government, federal agencies, and organizations such as watershed councils. Upon completion of the study, pilot projects may be carried out to demonstrate the effectiveness of restoration work.

The House of Representatives passed WRDA on September 24, 2003. Senate action on WRDA in 2003 is pending.