

Levee Improvement Program



Portland has levees?

There are 45 miles of levees near the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, running from North Portland to Troutdale and around large portions of Sauvie Island. The levees reduce the risk of flooding, protecting the Portland International Airport, thousands of jobs and residences, hundreds of acres of parks and natural areas, and thousands of acres of local farm land.

What is the Levee Improvement Program?

As a result of recent storms around the country, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the US Army Corps of Engineers have implemented higher standards for levee safety. The Levee Improvement Program is a collaboration of local government, business, and community based organizations working together to evaluate the condition of the levees, to ensure valuable regional resources are protected in the future, and to meet these new federal standards.

In 2015 and 2016, the Levee Improvement Program will finish identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the levees. The Program will also conduct several studies to better understand the economic, environmental, and community assets protected by the levees. Once all of this information is gathered the partners will work with the community to identify, implement, and pay for any necessary repairs or improvements.

How do I learn more?

- Project Website: <http://orsolutions.org/osproject/MCDD>
- Contact Information:
 - Joel Schoening, Community Affairs Manager
 - (503) 281-5675 or jschoening@mcdd.org

Below: Marine Drive runs atop the levee on the south shore of the Columbia River. In the distance, the Glenn Jackson Bridge and the Portland International Airport.



Program Partners

Audubon Society
Bridgeton Neighborhood Association
City of Fairview
City of Gresham
City of Portland
Bureau of Environmental Services
Bureau of Parks and Recreation
Bureau of Development Services
Bureau of Transportation Water Bureau
City of Troutdale
Columbia Corridor Association
Columbia Slough Watershed Council
East Columbia Neighborhood Association
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Jubitz Corporation
Metro
Multnomah County
Multnomah County Drainage District #1
Peninsula Drainage District #1
Peninsula Drainage District #2
Port of Portland
Sandy Drainage Improvement Company
Sauvie Island Drainage Improvement Company
State of Oregon
Department of Environmental Quality
Department of Land Conservation and Development
Governor's Office
US Army Corps of Engineers

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What is a levee and how does it work?

- A levee is an extended earthen berm or embankment intended to limit or divert the flow of water.
- Levees are typically made of locally made material. The majority of these levees along the Columbia are made of dredge sand which allows a small amount of water to seep through to reduce the water pressure on the levee.
- A levee reduces the risk of flooding. Areas behind levees always have some risk of flooding.

What is the risk of flooding?

- There have been five major flood events in the last 125 years near the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers (see chart below).
- There is a one in four chance that a “100 year” flood will occur in a 30-year period, the standard length of a home mortgage.
- Even just a few inches of flooding can be very costly to property owners.



Diagram of a levee illustrating the original river bank (darkest orange at the bottom), the core of the levee (orange triangle in the middle), and additional material on top of the levee (yellow).

