

April 23, 2005

National Preservation Awards Coordinator  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Madame or Sir:

This is a letter of recommendation for the Friends of the Reservoirs (FOR) for a National Preservation Honor Award. FOR, a citywide group, was initiated in the fall of 2002 in response to the City of Portland's fast-track plan to demolish and replace Portland's five historic open reservoirs in the city's Mount Tabor and Washington Parks.

FOR is an advocacy group for the reservoirs and Portland's entire Bull Run water system. Initially the group wanted to slow the project down to assure that good decisions could be made and that an adequate public process could be accomplished. In requesting documents, using the Oregon Public Records Act, and through countless hours of meetings with water bureau and other city officials, as well as exhaustive research on a variety of issues, FOR became convinced that the project was not only ill conceived but unnecessary. The project was discontinued by City Council in the summer of 2004. Subsequently, the FOR received a Spirit of Portland Award, Volunteer Group of the Year in December 2004 from the Portland City Council.

Over a period of two and one half years, FOR educated officials, business groups and the public, along with themselves, about the historic significance of the reservoirs, as well as the complicated issues interwoven in the politics of the costly project that would have demolished them. FOR demonstrated the widespread appreciation of the reservoirs by hosting large events attended by hundreds of people and other smaller actions. They engaged the media as well as utilizing legal actions to make sure that the reservoirs got as much protection as was possible.

Early in the process, FOR took on the task of nominating the reservoirs to the National Register of Historic Places. Both the Portland Landmarks Commission as well as the Oregon State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation unanimously forwarded the two nominations, Mount Tabor Reservoirs Historic District and Washington Park Reservoirs Historic District. The reservoirs were listed in the National Register of Historic

Places in January 2004.

The reservoirs, built at the turn of the twentieth century and strongly influenced by the City Beautiful movement, had been identified at the top of the City's inventory of historically significant resources. FOR was able to complete the nominations with a grassroots, volunteer effort.

After completing these two nominations, FOR, supported by the Mount Tabor Neighborhood Association, submitted a nomination for Mount Tabor Park. The park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in September 2004.

The Mount Tabor Neighborhood Association believes that the Friends of the Reservoirs are deserving of this award due to their continuing and successful diligence against many odds. Their efforts have had a community building and education effect and have helped to revitalize not only the neighborhoods adjoining the reservoirs, but have boosted grassroots activism and furthered the interest in historic resources in the City. FOR continues to advocate for the reservoirs and acts as a watchdog organization regarding future projects that would affect them. In the future it intends to seek rehabilitation grant funds to insure the preservation of these resources.

Portland's reservoirs are rare, intact examples of early public water works. They represent important architectural, cultural, and engineering resources. Their creation helped to build Portland into the largest city in the state. The documentation of these outstanding and rare intact examples of early public water works is an important contribution. That the effort was funded and completed by the public that the reservoirs have served for over a century makes the nominations even a more valuable community asset.

The Mount Tabor Neighborhood Association welcomes the National Trust for Historic Preservation to Portland this fall for the annual conference. We hope that your organization will honor Portland's Friends of the Reservoirs with a National Preservation Honor Award. You may contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely yours,

Diane Redd  
Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association President

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