

**COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
OREGON INVESTMENT BOARD**

*******Wednesday, July 14, 2021*******

****** 10:00 A.M. ******

Hood River Library (502 State St, Hood River, OR)

or via Call/ Video Via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84189913794?pwd=WVZoUzZxYUxNaFVKazk3NHFISXRCUT09>

Call 541-296-2266 or email jill@mcedd.org for remote access

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Item</u>
Call to Order, Introductions	5 minutes	Information
Officer Elections	5 minutes	Decision
Minutes <i>June 9, 2021</i>	5 minutes	Approval
Financials	5 minutes	Approval
Grant Request <i>Columbia Gorge Community College</i>	15 minutes	Approval
Loan Request <i>Big Buddha Yoga, LLC</i> <i>Romul's West, LLC</i>	30 minutes	Information
<i>Executive Session per ORS 192.660 (f) (Exempt Documents)</i> <i>Regular Session Reconvened</i>		
Loan Action	5 minutes	Approval
Funded Loans Updates <i>Root and Cane</i>	5 minutes	Information
<i>Executive Session per ORS 192.660 (f) (Exempt Documents)</i> <i>Regular Session Reconvened</i>		
Loan Action	5 minutes	Approval
Other New Business, Good of the Order <i>Regular Meeting Date/ Time</i>		
Adjourn		

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. If you have a disability that requires any special materials, services or assistance please contact MCEDD at (541) 296-2266 at least 48 hours before the meeting so arrangements for appropriate accommodations can be made.

Executive Session Protocol Oregon Investment Board

After discussion agenda items are presented in open session by OIB staff, the OIB Chair will state the following: "Pursuant to ORS 192.660(f), Exempt Documents, I call the Executive session of the Oregon Investment Board to order"

OIB Chair asks all non-staff and non OIB members to leave the meeting. Staff will explain to visitors where they can wait and that they will be invited into Executive Session when their agenda item will be discussed.

For each discussion item on the agenda for Executive Session, the OIB Chair will follow the following procedural steps:

1. Invite the loan applicant (or their representative) into the Executive Session for the presentation of their loan request. OIB Chair requests a brief presentation from OIB staff on a summary of the loan proposal or other discussion item.
2. After presentation of information by staff, the OIB Chair asks if there are any questions for the loan applicant or OIB staff.
3. Following questions and discussion by the OIB, the loan applicant (and/or their representative) is asked to leave Executive Session with instruction that they will be invited into the Open session when Executive Session is adjourned.
4. OIB Chair asks OIB members if there is any discussion related to loan request that needs to take place before inviting the next loan applicant or other persons in to Executive Session for the next discussion item.
5. Additional discussion between the OIB members takes place then Steps 1-5 are repeated for each following discussion item for Executive Session.

At the end of discussion, the OIB chair will close the Executive Session. The OIB moves back to open session. At this point, the OIB Chair can ask for a motion of the decision items in open session. Open session is when the OIB can make decisions on agenda items.

Memorandum

Date: July 14, 2021
To: Columbia River Gorge Oregon Investment Board
From: Jessica Metta, Executive Director
Re: Officer Elections

Action: Officer Elections

Nominate and elect a slate of officers.

Overview

Annually the Oregon Investment Board elects officers for the following positions:

- Chair
- Vice-Chair
- Secretary/Treasurer

This typically occurs in July. Current officers include Chair Jill Amery, Vice-Chair Tammy Miller, and Secretary/Treasurer Jorge Barragan.

Consideration for officers usually includes:

- Rotation of officers up through positions
- Reflect a balanced composition to reflect county interests, to the extent possible
- Have terms continuing/anticipated to continue on the board through the next year
- Strong record of participation and engagement in Board activities.

Board status

Name	Term	Status
Doug Roof, Hood River County	October 20, 2022	Appointed to serve in his first full term.
Gil Kelley, Hood River County	June 30, 2024	Appointed to serve in his first full term.
Jill Amery, Wasco County	November 15, 2022	Reappointed to a second term.
Jorge Barragan, Wasco County	December 31, 2021	Appointed to serve in his first full term.
Tammy Miller, Multnomah County	August 22, 2022	Reappointed to a second term.
Kirk Wright, Multnomah County	March 10, 2024	Appointed to serve in his first full term.
Craig Bowder, At-Large	September 6, 2022	Reappointed for his first full term.

Chair: The Chair (1) shall be the principal presiding officer of the Board and shall preside at all meetings of the members and at all meetings of the Board at which he or she is present; (2) may sign any instruments authorized by the Board to be executed, except in cases in which the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the Board or by these Bylaws to some other officer or agent of the Board, or shall be required by law to be otherwise signed or executed; and (3) shall, in general, perform all duties incident to the office of the Chairperson and such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board from time to time.

Section 4. Vice-Chair: In the absence of the Chair, or in the event of his or her inability or refusal to act, the Vice-Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair, and when so acting, shall have all the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon the Chair. The Vice-Chair shall also perform such other duties as from time to time may be prescribed by the Board.

Section 5. Secretary/Treasurer: During the absence, disability or disqualification of the Chair and Vice- Chair, the Secretary/Treasurer shall exercise or perform all the duties and be subject to all the responsibilities of the Chair and Vice-Chair. In the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary/Treasurer, the remaining members present shall elect an acting chair.

**COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
OREGON INVESTMENT BOARD**

Wednesday, June 9, 2021
Remote Only – Zoom Meeting

ATTENDANCE

OIB Members: Jill Amery (chair), Doug Roof, John Kasberger, Craig Bowder, Jorge Barragan

Staff: Jessica Metta (Executive Director), Israel Ayala Guevara (Loan Fund Manager), Ami Beaver (Loan Program Assistant), Jill Brandt (Administrative Assistant), Dana Woods (Finance Officer),

Guests: Rodger Nichols (Gorge Commission), Gil Kelley (new prospective OIB member representing Hood River County), Kirsti Walker – Envirovillage (Cascade Locks)

CALL TO ORDER/ INTRODUCTIONS

Jill Amery called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. A quorum was present. A round of introductions took place.

MINUTES

Doug Roof motioned to approve the minutes from the May 12, 2021 meeting. John Kasberger seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

FINANCIALS

Dana Woods presented the Financials. Total Cash Balance as of April 30th was \$1,545,799. The amount increased from the prior month due to increased principal payments. Dana responded to Doug Roof's question from last month's meeting regarding the negative net income. Dana stated that this number comes directly from the YTD P & L report. She clarified that the number was affected by the budgeted allowance for doubtful loans. If that allowance is removed, one finds that the income is not negative. Dana confirmed that the accounting program's anticipation of bad debt has presented a skewed view at first glance.

Craig Bowder motioned to approve the financials as presented. Jorge Barragan seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

GRANT REQUEST: ENVIROGORGE

Jessica Metta introduced this proposal to the Board with a brief history of Envirovillage. This non-profit has been around for approximately ten years, and in the past year has developed summer camps and water recreation for kids living in Cascade Locks. The grant request for \$10,020 is intended to purchase water sports equipment to support the summer camps and will be free for community use. Envirovillage also plans to rent out the equipment to tourists in order to create operating revenue. The grant proposal that has been submitted shows clearly where the organization's goals meet OIB's grant criteria. While not all the OIB's grant criteria are met, enough are that she felt that it was appropriate to present to the Board. Jessica cautioned that the

main challenge is that the OIB has just awarded the \$10,000 that has been allotted in the FY22 budget for grants to the CGCC for their commercial kitchen project. The OIB budget would need to be amended to add this \$10,020 into the grant funds. Jessica also noted that marketing, outreach and admin expenses are not allowable expenses for grant funding. Therefore, the application is completely directed towards equipment purchase.

Kirsti introduced herself and gave a brief overview of the organization's situation and the request why she is here with this request today. She is aware of the grant fund's matching requirement and has already received approval from the City Council for a grant of \$5,000. She is currently actively pursuing the other \$5,000 needed to match this request with appeals to local businesses and is confident that the match funds would be found by the end of June.

Discussion: Jill Amery asked what would happen to the equipment if the organization ceased to exist in the future for some reason. Kirsti replied that she expected to either donate the equipment to the school or the after-school program. She also has contacts with the nonprofit organization Gorge Ecology, who actively participates with the school by sponsoring environmental programs. Kirsti stated that she felt that donating the equipment to this organization would ensure that the school would have continued access to and use of the equipment. Jessica reminded Kirsti and the OIB that the grant application criteria stipulate that equipment stays within the Scenic Area. The Criteria also require regular reporting to the OIB over time that ensures that the grant funds are being used correctly.

Craig Bowder said it is important to designate specifically where the equipment will go. He also counseled to include the school district with any alternate plans to ensure their participation and support. John Kasberger asked Kirsti if she has looked into any other funding opportunities. Kirsti replied that she has not yet. It was important to her to pursue local funding first, and she felt that securing funding with the OIB would provide a steppingstone towards more easily reaching out for funding elsewhere. John suggested that the Hood River Educational Foundation would be an excellent place to approach. That they have grants available and that this type of endeavor is exactly what the Foundation supports. John added that he would forward the contact information.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session entered per ORS 192.660 (f) (Exempt Documents) at 10:21am.

Return to regular session at 10:56am.

GRANT ACTION

Staff recommended *conditional* approval of grant funding in the amount of \$10,020 with the following conditions to be met:

- Requirement that the equipment stay within the NSA.

- Prior to use of these funds, the grant must be certified by the Columbia River Gorge Commission.
- OIB funds cannot be used for administration or staffing.
- Confirmation of all matching funds committed must be received in advance of disbursement of OIB funds.
- Reimbursements of OIB grant funds are to be done on a percentage basis.
- Envirovillage will report semi-annually to the OIB until project completion. Reports are due January 31 and July 31 of each year.
- Envirovillage will provide the OIB with a final report within thirty (30) days after completion of the project.
- Envirovillage will recognize the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area funds in literature, press releases, signage and news coverage when appropriate.

John Kasberger motioned to approve the grant, with the conditions recommended by staff that are listed above plus conditions that Envirovillage provide their non-profit by-laws, operating plan and proof of insurance and set a grant expiration of September 1, 2021. Doug Roof seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed unanimously.

Kirsti thanked the board and then left the meeting.

LOAN REQUEST: ROMUL'S WEST LLC

Israel introduced this client and gave a background of the client's history with their current loan.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session entered per ORS 192.660 (f) (Exempt Documents) at 10:59am.

Return to regular session at 11:12 am.

LOAN ACTION

Jorge Barragan motioned to approve that Romul's West pay down half of what they currently owe, and the OIB will continue to carry the other half under the current loan terms with a one year balloon extension. In addition, transparency with financials and timely responses to staff requests to provide appropriate documents is addressed by adding the condition that the remainder of the loan balance will increase to full interest if transparency and cooperation with staff requests are not met. John Kasberger seconded the motion. Five voted in favor, and the motion passed. Doug Roof abstained due to his personal connection with the client.

FUNDED LOANS UPDATES

Israel said he would be presenting information about current client Mt Hood Podiatry.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session entered per ORS 192.660 (f) (Exempt Documents) at 11:14am.

Regular session reconvened at 11:21 am.

John Kasberger motioned to approve staff's recommendation to deny the client's request to release the OIB lien on the property. He added that the OIB would be open to a reapplication at a later date if/when the client can provide proper financial information, proof of employment and cash flow. Craig Bowder seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion carried.

STAFF UPDATES

Israel said he would report on the status of the OIB loans with Seufert Enterprises, Root and Cane and the Thirsty Cafe.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session entered per ORS 192.660 (f) (Exempt Documents) at 11:23am.

Return to regular session at 11:35

No loan actions were taken.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

Jessica reported on the status of the Rural Business Development Grant for National Scenic Areas for \$2 million. This is a nationally competitive grant pool with conditions to be met that our region qualifies for. Jessica updated the OIB with her current plan for the application for these funds. MCEDD will apply and will function as the administrator of the funds with Oregon loans approved by the OIB. Jessica is currently collecting letters of support from the counties and other partners, including the OIB. Jessica is planning to work with Jill on the letter of support.

Jill commended John Kasberger for his perspective during his time of service on the OIB. She requested that John continue with the OIB until Gil Kelly is officially appointed. John agreed to continue until the appointment is finalized and will be present at next month's meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Jill Brandt, Administrative Assistant

OIB FINANCIAL SUMMARY

REPORT PERIOD: May 2021

	TOTAL YEAR TO DATE	PREVIOUS REPORT	CURRENT ACTIVITY
CASH BALANCE AS OF 06/30/20	1,357,731		-
Less Payables	(1,314)		-
Plus Accounts Receivable	11,612		-
Plus Interest Receivable (Less Unrecorded Accr'd Int)			-
ADJUSTED CASH BALANCE 06/30/20	1,368,029	-	-
INCOME			
Interest	92,264	88,371	3,892
Loan Processing & Fees	2,769	2,781	(12)
Loan Late Fees	195	195	0
Other Revenue			-
Invested Interest	503	463	40
TOTAL INCOME	95,730	91,810	3,920
PRINCIPAL REPAYMENTS	278,653	268,235	10,418
REVENUE BEFORE DISBURSEMENTS	374,383	360,045	14,338
EXPENSES AND PAYMENTS			
Grants Disbursed FY21	-	-	-
Loans Disbursed	93,350	93,350	-
Converted to Principal		-	-
Bank Service Charges	90	82	8
Professional Services	97,052	88,843	8,209
TOTAL EXPENSES AND PAYMENTS	190,493	182,275	8,218
ADJUSTED CASH BALANCE	1,551,919	177,770	6,120
LESS:			
Approved Grants not Disbursed	-		
Encumbered Pilot Program Funds	(280,000)		
Approved Loans not yet Disbursed	-		
Interest Receivable at Period End	3,552 *		
AVAILABLE TO GRANT/LOAN	1,275,471		
LOANS RECEIVABLE BALANCE	1,379,467 ^		
PROOF:			
Cash Balance After Reconciliations - May 31, 2021	1,548,367 ^		
Less Payables	-		
Plus Interest Receivable	3,552		
ADJUSTED CASH BALANCE	1,551,919		

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District Balance Sheet - OIB

May 31, 2021

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings

1000 · Bank Demand Deposits

1070 · National Scenic Fund

1,548,367.38

Total 1000 · Bank Demand Deposits

1,548,367.38

Total Checking/Savings

1,548,367.38

Other Current Assets

1200 · Receivables & Accruals

1202 · Accounts Receivable

1222 · Year or Grnt End Receivables

1260 · Accrued Loan Interest

3,551.71

Total 1200 · Receivables & Accruals

3,551.71

1300 · Loans Receivable

1370 · OIB Loans Receivable

1,369,048.83

Total 1300 · Loans Receivable

1,369,048.83

1475 · OIB Holding

1500 · Allowance for Doubtful Loans

1575 · OIB Allowance

-148,149.53

Total 1500 · Allowance for Doubtful Loans

-148,149.53

Total Other Current Assets

1,224,451.01

Total Current Assets

2,772,818.39

TOTAL ASSETS

2,772,818.39

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable

2010 · A/P General

0.00

Total Accounts Payable

0.00

Total Current Liabilities

0.00

Total Liabilities

0.00

Equity

3100 · Fund Balances

2,560,916.75

Pilot Program Fund Balance

280,000.00

Net Income

-68,098.36

Total Equity

2,772,818.39

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY

2,772,818.39

9:04 AM

07/07/21

Accrual Basis

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
Profit & Loss - E975 OIB
May 2021

	<u>May 21</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
4600 · Loan Interest	3,892.19
4700 · Loan Processing Fees	0.00
4705 · Loan Filing Fees	-11.96
4710 · Loan Late Fee	0.00
4750 · Investment Interest	39.50
	<hr/>
Total Income	3,919.73
	<hr/>
Gross Profit	3,919.73
Expense	
6400 · Professional Services	
6410 · Legal Services	184.83
6450 · Contractual	7,994.17
6470 · Filing Fees	30.00
	<hr/>
Total 6400 · Professional Services	8,209.00
6900 · Other Materials & Supplies	
6931 · ACH Collection Fees	8.34
	<hr/>
Total 6900 · Other Materials & Supplies	8.34
	<hr/>
Total Expense	8,217.34
	<hr/>
Net Ordinary Income	-4,297.61
	<hr/>
Net Income	<u><u>-4,297.61</u></u>

Memorandum

Date: July 7, 2021

To: Oregon Investment Board

From: Jessica Metta, MCEDD Executive Director

Re: Columbia Gorge Community College - Kitchen Incubator Program

Request

Provide direction on change of use of Columbia Gorge Community College grant agreement.

Background

Oregon Investment Board (OIB) approved a \$10,000 grant to Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC) in May 2019 to purchase equipment and/or complete building improvements for the kitchen incubator. Prior to any expenditure, CGCC was to provide details to the OIB on equipment to be purchased/building improvements for review and approval to ensure eligibility for reimbursement.

The OIB reviewed the project in May 2020. At that time, staffing had changed since the original grant was awarded and the vision of the program has slightly changed. The goals were to focus on supplying the kitchen with essential equipment that is currently lacking, to serve up to 10 students at a time in order to focus on a new culinary program and commercial kitchen upgrades. The OIB reviewed a proposed draft list of desired equipment and approved an extension of the grant for one year to June 30, 2021. COVID-19 impacts caused additional delays.

In May 2021, staff presented an updated from Greg Price with the CGCC Small Business Development Center. The culinary program has not yet been certified by CGCC. As an alternative, Greg proposed to put together a fermentation science and entrepreneurship program that would work in partnership with the CGCC Community Education Department, the commercial kitchen and the SBDC. The grant would purchase equipment to help establish the technical/science side of this program, including Hydrometers, Refractometers, Hemocytometers, Autoclave, and ideally a small brewing setup that can be used for training purposes. The OIB approved another one-year extension until June 2022 at that time but did not discuss the program change in detail.

Staff recently received a request from Greg Price to change the approved use to develop a master plan to “improve the CGCC commercial kitchen and facilities to support the incubation of food businesses and workforce development in the food and hospitality trades.” The consultant’s proposal is attached to this memo.



PROJECT AGREEMENT

Project Name: CGCC Commercial Kitchen & Business Incubator
Project Address: Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC)
400 E Scenic Dr
The Dalles, OR 97058
Effective Date: June 25, 2021
Owner: Columbia Gorge Community College Small Business Development Center (CGCC SBDC)
Owner Address: 400 E Scenic Dr
The Dalles, OR 97058
Consultant: Urban Patterns, LLC
Services: Development Services
Scope of Services: Consultant will provide real estate development and design services to author a master plan in partnership with CGCC team including Greg Price (Director, CGCC SBDC), Tammy Huffman (Food Service Manager CGCC) and Dan Piper (Director of Facilities Services, CGCC) to improve the CGCC commercial kitchen and facilities to support the incubation of food businesses and workforce development in the food and hospitality trades. The CGCC team may engage an advisory committee and external partners.

The master plan may include:

- 1) A facility assessment informed by building records and as-built plans, equipment inventory, and a capital needs assessment of the existing facility
- 2) a 2-5 year strategic plan to support a CGCC vision for a commercial kitchen business incubator informed by an advisory group. The initial vision is “a regional facility that incubates food businesses.” The plan will be distilled to one page and include values, goals, objectives, and action items. Goals initially include:
 - a. Improve Commercial Kitchen;
 - b. Incubate Value-add Businesses; and
 - c. Develop Workforce.
- 3) Scopes of work for a 2-3 improvement plan, initially:
 - a. Phase I: Deferred Maintenance & Strategic Capital Improvements
 - b. Phase II: Demonstration Kitchen & Classroom
 - c. Phase III: Commercial Kitchen Improvement
 - d. Optional: Food Service & Dining Room Upgrade may be added through an amendment if a capital fundraising strategy is deemed to be feasible.
- 4) Preliminary capital and operating budgets identifying capital sources of funding. Development of the operating budget and identification of funding sources will require support of CGCC.
- 5) Preliminary project schedule
- 6) Executive summary

Architecture services may be provided by Urban Patterns Architecture, LLC as a subcontractor to Urban Patterns, LLC when requested by owner and as documented by written mutual agreement or when stamped drawings are required for a project. Such services will be labeled as ‘Architecture’ services on the Urban Patterns invoice.

Schedule & Expiration: The project is anticipated to be substantially complete by September 30, 2021. This agreement expires on December 31, 2022 unless amended. The initial schedule is:

Week 1: information gathering.

Week 2: present options & solicit input from CGCC team and advisory committee (CGCC to share internally and with external partners for input).

Week 3: refine options based on input and present to CGCC team, advisory committee, and possibly select partners.

Week 4: finalize mater plan publication.

There may be 1-2 weeks of limited activity between some of the weeks above to allow for scheduling of work and CGCC review.

- Hazardous Materials:** Consultant shall have no responsibility for the discovery, presence, handling, removal or disposal of, or exposure of persons to hazardous materials or toxic substances in any form at the Project site. Therefore, no such services are included within this Agreement.
- No Third Party:** Nothing contained in this Agreement shall create a contractual relationship with or a cause of action in favor of a third party against either Owner, Consultant, or Architect and no third party is intended to be a beneficiary of this Agreement.
- Indemnity:** To the extent allowed by law, Consultant agrees to indemnify and hold Owner harmless for any and all claims, damages, and expenses arising from performance of the work on the Project, but only to the extent of the negligent acts or omissions of Consultant or its agents or subcontractors. To the extent allowed by law, Owner agrees to indemnify and hold Consultant harmless for any and all claims, damages, and expenses arising from Owner's negligent acts, omissions, or willful misconduct.
- Limitation of Liability:** In no event shall either party be liable to the other for consequential, incidental, or punitive damages. Consultant's liability for any and all injuries, damages, claims, losses, expenses, or claim expenses (including attorneys' fees) under this Agreement shall not exceed \$9,920 the Consultant's Fee.
- Fee:** Based on time and materials, not to exceed \$9,920. Billed at \$175 per hour for Principal; \$135 per hour for Associate; and \$75 per hour for Assistant.
- Fee Assumptions:** 64 hours total. 16 hours for each of the 4 weeks of work. Principal will utilize Associate & Assistant whenever possible to lower the cost of services.
- Additional Services:** Additional Services approved by the Owner are subject to the time and material Fee. Additional Services are services beyond the Scope of Services stated herein.
- Billing:** Payment for services shall be made monthly based upon monthly invoice. Billings are due thirty (30) days past the date of the invoice and will be charged a late penalty of 1-1/2% per month on the unpaid balance after the due date. If payment under this Agreement is not received within seven (7) days of the due date, Consultant may elect, with written notice to the Owner, without prejudice to any other rights of Consultant, to suspend all of the duties under this Agreement. The Owner agrees to pay reasonable collection and attorney's fees required to collect should the account associated with this Agreement become delinquent.

Proposed by:



Ben Gates, Principal, Urban Patterns

06/25/21

Date

Accepted by:



Greg Price, Director, CGCC SBDC

07/06/2021

Date

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 6, 2021

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue Southwest
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing to express our support for the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District's (MCEDD) application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD) Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program.

MCEDD has a proven track record of creating opportunity in the Mid-Columbia region through their administration of the Oregon Investment Board, and partnership with Skamania County Economic Development Council to administer the Washington Investment Board. Through prudent use of past funds, MCEDD and the Investment Boards have spurred economic development in the region, creating nearly 1,000 new jobs. Their work is vital to communities in the Mid-Columbia region and a new infusion of federal funds would be well-timed to stimulate job creation in the local economy.

The Mid-Columbia region encompasses an incredible combination of ecosystems, wildlife, farmland, communities and cultural resources – some dating back 10,000 years. The region attracts over two million annual visitors through unique recreational activities and tourist attractions, generating significant economic activity in the region. Given the area's unique geography, it is also susceptible to economic impacts from natural disasters such as wildfire and extreme weather.

In 2017 the Eagle Creek Fire burned over 47,000 acres of forest in the region, threatening homes and businesses, evacuating communities, and shutting down major roads. The following year, the Substation Fire burned 78,000 acres through prime wheat land in Wasco County, OR. Major ice storms have paralyzed transportation networks and businesses on both sides of the river in 2017, 2020, and 2021. Gorge businesses, sensitive to transportation access and tourism, have felt the effects.

We believe MCEDD's efforts are a good match for these funds, and we thank you for your full and fair review of MCEDD's grant application. Should you have any further questions, please contact Dan Mahr in Senator Merkley's office at (503) 326-3386; or Jacob Egler in Senator Ron Wyden's office at (541) 330-9142; or Bree Rabourn in Senator Patty Murray's office at (206) 553-5545; or Madison Brown in Senator Maria Cantwell's office at (206) 220-6389; or Rachel Katz in Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler's office at (360) 695-6292; or Caroline Hinkley in Representative Bentz's office at (202) 225-6730.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jaime Herrera Butler
US Representative



Cliff Bentz
US Representative