



Marion County

OREGON

Board of Commissioners

May 7, 2021

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Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Ways and Means
Committee on Capital Construction

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 5534 – Wildfire Recovery Funding

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

Kevin Cameron, Chair
Danielle Bethell
Colm Willis

On September 7, 2020, the Beachie Creek and Lionshead Wildfires swept through the Santiam Canyon causing unprecedented damage throughout the area. Losses in the Santiam Canyon are significant and include a loss of more than 700 homes, 85 businesses, and city infrastructure.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Jan Fritz

Marion County, along with our partner Linn County, strongly supports wildfire recovery funding. The extensive damage to our Santiam Canyon communities desperately need our immediate attention to support recovery and we genuinely appreciate everyone's help in assembling a wildfire needs list. We would like to highlight the following key items and ask for your support.

- **\$60 million** – Construct needed sewer and septic systems in the Santiam Canyon which are critical to the recovery and rebuilding after the wildfires. The infrastructure will upgrade and increase sewer capacity for the collection, treatment, and disposal of sewage for a combined system for Gates and Mill City, and septic improvements for Detroit. Marion County and the communities of Detroit, Gates, Idanha and Mill City have collaborated for the last six years in over 50 meetings to bring this project to this stage. In May 2020, the North Santiam Sewer Authority was formed as an intergovernmental organization upon the agreement of the impacted cities. The North Santiam Sewer Authority Master Plan is near completion. Marion County will be the fiscal agent.
- **\$12 million** – The Beachie Creek and Lionshead Wildfires caused significant damage to two Marion County radio sites, one of which was completely destroyed. Together, the sites provided 100% of the public safety radio coverage for the upper North Santiam Canyon. Restoring this public safety radio system is critical to supporting emergency response, but the damage incurred will require system-wide improvements as the aging technology is not replicable.
- **\$3 million** – City of Detroit permanent drinking water system. Currently, a temporary system has been put in place to aid in the recovery, but an expanded permanent solution is necessary for the future growth of the city.

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Wildfire Recovery Funding

- **\$772,000** – Staffing and operational needs for the Cities of Detroit and Gates for two years.
- **\$2 million** – For the Marion and Linn County Canyon Recovery Program to cover staffing and materials.
- **\$3 million** – Enhanced broadband in the Santiam Canyon to ensure access to information and vital communications during emergencies. The future viability of the canyon communities depends on broadband.
- **\$1.5 million** – For the Marion County Housing Authority for development of housing in the Santiam Canyon.
- **\$1.8 million** - To improve safety along the North Santiam Canyon’s North Fork Road and repair damage caused by the wildfires. North Fork Road provides all-season access to the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area, Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center, Bull of the Woods Wilderness Area, BLM and county parks, private timber lands, youth camps, fishing, camping areas, and well over 100 private homes. The area serves tens of thousands of recreationists annually, but the constant threat of landslides and lack of guardrails along the roadway pose an unceasing risk to the safety of travelers and threatens to undermine the entrance to this popular scenic recreation area.
- **\$4 million** – For rural fire protection districts in Marion and Linn Counties for emergency response, ambulance services, a fire station, and revenue losses (Detroit, Gates, Idanha, and Lyons Rural Fire Protection Districts).

Marion & Linn Counties are doing all we can to help support and encourage our canyon residents to rebuild thriving communities that will bring residents back, attract new residents, and promote job creation. This wildfire recovery funding will jumpstart recovery for our desperate and hurting communities. We deeply appreciate your consideration of our resident’s needs.

Sincerely,



Kevin Cameron, Chair



Danielle Bethell, Vice Chair



Colm Willis, Commissioner