



HARNEY COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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March 23, 2023

RE: House Bill 2948

To Whom it May Concern,

I have been the Harney County Emergency Manager for 3 years and part of the Eastern Oregon Regional Emergency Management group with 7 other counties, I know the importance of using county fairgrounds during disasters, emergencies, or events.

During the pandemic our Fairgrounds were used for testing & vaccine clinics as well as outreach. We use our Fairgrounds during events like the Fair for outreach.

Our County's Fairgrounds have been used for wildland fire base camp, staging area and campsites to keep resources close to the fires. During the Bootleg Fire, without charge to those who needed to evacuate, we opened up the fairgrounds to families, livestock and pets, and as an evacuation point and shelter for our local or regional residents in surrounding counties to include Lake, Deschutes and Crook. During the 2020 Oregon wildfires on the west side of the Cascades, most Eastern Oregon counties opened their fairgrounds to anyone affected by these fires to camp and opened their facilities and grounds to bring livestock and pets at no charge.

In the event of a catastrophic emergency, such as the Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake, our Fairgrounds will be the intake point for evacuees for mass care, mass feeding and potential short-term shelter as well as documenting evacuees for later reunification at other designated evacuation safety points as assigned by the state. Most of the counties have a similar plan.

This bill will assist counties to afford, through grant funding, a way to build up fairground infrastructure to accommodate more people, pets, and livestock during disasters or emergencies. COVID-19 affected our overall capabilities and saw fairgrounds lose funding by not being able to have events whose revenues are used to maintain these important facilities, as well as any future development in infrastructure. I support this funding opportunity for all of Oregon.

Respectfully,

Suzanne Settle
Harney County Emergency Management
Harney County, Oregon