

Row River Rural Fire Protection District

P.O. Box 44
Dorena, Oregon 97434
541-946-0110

February 12, 2026

Honorable Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair
Honorable Representative Rob Nossee, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Committee On ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction
900 Court Street NE
Salem Or. 97301

Re:

SB 5701: Disston Oregon Fire Station Building Funding Request

By: Row River Fire Response

For: Row River Rural Special Fire Protection District

Testimony by: Fire Chief Walter Bernard, MD

Honorable Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair, Honorable Representative Rob Nossee, Co-Chair,
Members of the Committee.

As Fire Chief of the newly formed Row River Rural Fire Protection District, I strongly support the 2025-2027 Capital Funding Request for a Row River Rural Fire Station (Disston, Oregon), submitted by Row River Fire Response included in SB 5701.

As you are aware, the Row River Rural Fire Protection District was created by State and County Legislative and Administrative action; ordered and adopted by Lane County Commissioners June 18th, 2024.

Our residents, community leaders, and supporting emergency services personnel are *eternally grateful* for your support and investment in the safety of our community, the great State of Oregon, we all call our homes.

Here are just a couple of recent examples of the benefits that your leadership and support made possible.

- On September 17th, 2025, the Row River Fire **all-volunteer team** responded to a house fire on Row River Road near Cottage Grove. Fortunately, all occupants had evacuated the structure. Quickly arriving on-scene, responders made entry, located the seat of the fire that was confined and hidden within an interior wall, then quickly extinguished the fire preventing full development and certain loss of the entire structure.
Someone's home was saved because of this new District.
- On September 19th, 2025, the Row River District responded to a RV camper fire on Shoreview Rd. near Dorena Reservoir. An intentionally set fire, the RV was rapidly consumed by a very hot fuel load and immediately threatened the surrounding area with potential for major wildfire. **The Row River Fire District in coordination with**

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ODF quickly established a defensive perimeter around this fire to prevent the possibility of a major fire disaster.

These examples clearly show the wisdom and results of your contributions towards safety in our community! Your willingness to support our efforts is a perfect example of how a public-private community-initiated project for the good of the people can overcome seemingly insurmountable barriers to yield extraordinary results.

One remaining community need has yet to be realized:

Fire Station buildings to house apparatus, equipment, and resources remains a critical need.

Row River Fire Response is leading the effort for fire service buildings in our community, including securing two parcels of land for both a main station and a smaller Disston satellite station through private donations. Land use planning for these buildings is well underway.

The Row River Fire Response is requesting Capital Funding for the Disston Oregon Fire Station Building as part of the 2025-2027 Capital Funding Projects included in SB 5701.

The Row River Special Rural Fire Protection District strongly supports this funding request.

Fire Station Buildings benefit both the Row River Valley and beyond, as a significant number of the District emergencies are for regional mutual aid needs. Improved emergency response capacity meets the goals of State and County Strategic Plans.

Thank you for your work!

Sincerely,

Walt Bernard

Walt Bernard, MD, Fire Chief

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Established July 1, 2024