

Submitter: Eugene Jones
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Capital Construction
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5701
To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means
From: Eugene Jones, McKensie River Resident and President of the Board for
MRDC
Re: Support for McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding
Date: February 13, 2026

Dear Co-Chairs and Committee Members,

As a long time, McKenzie River resident and President of the Board for the McKenzie River Discovery Center, I write in strong support of state funding for this shovel-ready project that is under active construction and will deliver immediate economic recovery to the fire-impacted McKenzie River corridor.

The MRDC is not a concept—it is happening now. With all permits secured, construction underway, exhibits ready for fabrication at OMSI, and pilot programming in development for implementation in 2027, this project represents an investment in rural economic resilience.

I know first-hand the devastation the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire caused and how slow the recovery has been. Once open, the Discovery Center will attract 50,000 annual visitors, generating at least \$7 million in regional economic activity, creating year-round jobs in a community that is in desperate need of economic growth. These visitors will travel through Oregon's tourism gateway cities—Portland, Eugene, Bend, and Medford—supporting hotels, restaurants, and retail throughout the state while discovering a world-class environmental education destination in rural Lane County.

Through its partnership with OMSI, the MRDCs developing hands-on experiential exhibits that connect visitors to the river's hydrology, fish biology, culture and boating heritage, fostering education and stewardship of one of Oregon's most unique and pristine rivers.

The MRDC matters because it protects both the river and the culture tied to it.

Our funding request is \$4.8 million. Which will allow us to complete construction and exhibits and open the Discovery Center in 2027

I urge the Committee to support funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center.

Respectfully,

Eugene Jones
McKenzie Resident, Board President
541-968-0090