

Submitter: Jim Goodpasture  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction  
Measure, Appointment or SB5701  
Topic:

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Re: SB5701  
From: Jim Goodpasture, Manager/Slash Owner, Robert Goodpasture Family LLC  
Re: Support for McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding  
Date: February 13, 2026

Dear Co-Chairs and Committee Members,

I am a third generation hazelnut farmer, the fourth generation is farming, and the fifth generation plans to live and work the farm in the future. The family came to Lane County in 1852.

As a local business owner, I know visitor traffic to MRDC will support our restaurants, lodging, retail jobs, schools, and infrastructure.

As a steward of the McKenzie watershed, I value MRDC's science-based education about threatened salmon and bull trout populations. MRDC will foster respect for riparian ecosystems, and their inhabitants. That matters to me. Because if visitors understand this river — really understand it — they'll fight for it and other watersheds.

The McKenzie River is one of Oregon's most extraordinary natural treasures — sustained by a vast, high-elevation volcanic aquifer that produces some of the coldest, cleanest water in the world. That water supports threatened fish, provides drinking water, and anchors a cultural heritage known far beyond our state.

The McKenzie River Discovery Center transforms the historic Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery into a living public asset — a statewide destination for environmental education, cultural preservation, and rural economic recovery. Through its partnership with OMSI, MRDC is developing nationally respected, hands-on exhibits.

For thousands of years before drift boats and hatcheries, Native peoples lived along this river. Too often, their histories have been simplified, romanticized, or left out altogether. MRDC is committed to doing this right. They are working with Tribal scholars and cultural historians to ensure Indigenous lifeways are represented with accuracy, dignity, and voice.

MRDC celebrates the McKenzie River drift boat — a craft born on this river and now known around the world. The McKenzie drift boat wasn't just built for beauty. It was engineered for this river's hydraulics — its boulder gardens, swift current, and precise eddies. From these waters emerged a design that influenced river dories from Alaska to Patagonia. Guides, builders, and anglers everywhere recognize the McKenzie name as a standard of performance and craftsmanship.

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 a smart investment in rural economic recovery. The Discovery Center will attract 50,000 annual visitors generating \$7 million in regional economic activity, creating year-round jobs in a community still recovering from the catastrophic 2020 Holiday Farm Fire. 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.

Our funding request is \$4.8 million. If obtained, this gives us the money to finish our capital assets—buildings and exhibits—and we open the Discovery Center in 2027!

The project is already 54% funded through \$7 million in funds already raised. State investment will complete what the community has already started, delivering a first-of-its-kind Oregon environmental education center that honors our natural legacy while driving economic recovery.

I write in strong support of state funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center, a shovel-ready project under active construction that will deliver immediate economic recovery to the fire-impacted McKenzie River corridor.

Respectfully,

Jim Goodpasture  
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