

Submitter: Steven Hackett
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction
Measure, Appointment or SB5701
Topic:
Date: February 14, 2026

Dear Co-Chairs and Committee Members of the Joint Committee of Capital Construction,

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.

The MRDC is not a concept—it is happening now. With all permits secured, construction underway, this project represents a smart investment in rural economic resilience. 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.

As an active member of the local McKenzie Flyfishers, our club members volunteer hours of time building and maintaining important aspects for the Discovery Center, including walking trails, clean water flows for the fish pond, and landscaping. We do this to support the efforts of the MRDC organization to make the Discovery Center a reality. We understand how MRDC will inspire stewardship while connecting visitors to the McKenzie Valley recreation opportunities.

I value MRDC's science-based education about threatened species. Retelling the local history, geology, and hydrology of the McKenzie River valley is paramount to understanding the challenges ahead to protect the natural assets here and across our state.

This state investment will help to 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 where it's needed most.

I urge the Committee to support funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center. And Happy Birthday Oregon!

Respectfully,
Steven K. Hackett
Springfield, OR