

Supporting the Economic Recovery of McKenzie Valley

Introduction

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Personal Commitment and Impact

My name is Kelly Gustafson. Alongside my husband, Craig Gustafson, I am deeply invested in the economic future of McKenzie Valley.

We have been residents of this area for more than 25 years, and my real estate business is closely tied to the well-being and development of our community. The events and decisions that shape McKenzie Valley directly affect our lives and livelihoods.

Community Challenges After the Holiday Farm Fire

The Holiday Farm Fire brought about significant challenges for our community. The fire caused severe ecological damage and economic hardship, destroying homes and businesses. Only a small portion of the destroyed homes have been rebuilt, and many vacant parcels remain unsold. Tourism has decreased, families have relocated, and the recovery process has been slow and uneven.

A Vision for Resilience: McKenzie River Discovery Center

The McKenzie River Discovery Center stands as a wise and forward-thinking investment in rural resilience. It is designed to welcome up to 50,000 visitors each year and is expected to generate approximately \$7 million annually in regional economic activity. This will provide support for local lodging, restaurants, outfitters, guides, and small businesses. The Center revitalizes a historic hatchery site, transforming it into a year-round destination focused on education, heritage tourism, and stewardship.

In partnership with OMSI, the Center will feature nationally recognized, hands-on exhibits that attract visitors from across Oregon and beyond, encouraging repeat visits.

Active Progress and Tangible Results

This project is not speculative. Construction has begun, permits have been secured, and programs are already operating on site.

Long-Term Impact and Community Identity

The McKenzie River Discovery Center positions McKenzie Valley as a model for sustainable rural recovery after wildfire, strengthening both our economic foundation and our community's identity.

Conclusion

Thank you for supporting our community's efforts to bring joy, pride, and economic recovery to the beautiful McKenzie River Valley.

Sincerely,

Kelly Gustafson

Vida Resident