



Re: Proposed Governor's Budget eliminating National Scenic Area Grants to counties. These funds are necessary for ongoing implementation.

As proposed, the Oregon Governor's Budget will eliminate all technical assistance grants provided by DLCDD except for those deemed necessary for coastal communities. Most critically for Gorge counties, this will **eliminate annual National Scenic Area grants** that have been received and relied upon for permanent staffing budgets since the early 1990's ordinance adoption dates - this includes \$45,000 to Wasco County each year. In staff time alone, the last two years of NSA grant reports included expenditures between \$50,000 and \$85,000 per year for each county.

NSA technical assistance grants are unique in that they are not project-based, and have been provided to support the State's ongoing agreement to implement the NSA Act. Loss of these funds would likely result in the land use review capacity being shifted back to the Gorge Commission for **all** planning related activities and private development in the NSA, detracting from our ability to prepare timely reviews of land use applications and reducing our ability to continue to provide our current levels of customer service.

Rescinding our ordinance and returning NSA implementation to the Gorge Commission would result in:

- A significant increase in land use applications processed by their limited staff capacity – bringing all new development to a halt
- A significant delay in timeliness of land use application review and decisions
- Requiring our residents to travel to White Salmon, Washington to apply for new development.
- A protracted three-step process for landowners requiring them to (1st) obtain Gorge Commission approvals, (2nd) obtain county approvals, and then (3rd) obtain building and septic approvals.
- A general willingness and need to not be compliant with NSA regulations; counties will experience a significant increase in unlawful activities and uses in light of extended review times and oversight.
- Loss of county-wide opportunity to participate in NSA grants for local business and community projects managed by MCEDD and OIB
- Unknown impacts to MCEDD and OIB if counties can no longer participate.

As we consider options, please note that retaining a local ordinance is necessary to ensure the following:

- Local decision making authority and discretion
- Local services for our residents
- Local control over timelines and quality of work
- Ability to participate and qualify for NSA economic development grant opportunities managed by the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District and Oregon Investment Board

Please help us in messaging to the Governor's Office how critically important it is for the Oregon counties to retain these annual grants.

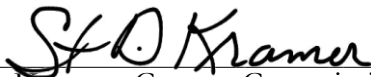
Wasco County
Board of Commissioners



Rod Runyon, Commissioner Chair



Scott Hege, County Commissioner



Steve Kramer, County Commissioner