



Administration Office

# Rogue Valley Council of Governments

(541) 664-6674 ■ FAX (541) 664-7927 ■ [www.rvcog.org](http://www.rvcog.org)

May 1, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey, members of the Committee;

The Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG), which represents the interests of Jackson and Josephine counties, all the incorporated jurisdictions within, and a number of special purpose entities, firmly supports Oregon's proposed integrated approach to disaster preparedness, response, and mitigation as embodied in HB 5005's proposed \$12M capital investment. Southern Oregon is well aware of the challenges it faces from a variety of potential natural disasters, and as one manifestation of that awareness the region is approaching its second year as a participant in the test implementation of the ShakeAlert earthquake early warning technology. At present there are more than two dozen public and private sector entities in the region working to integrate ShakeAlert into their operations and emergency plans, and we project a significant increase in that level of participation in the near future. Our intention in becoming involved in ShakeAlert has been to not only increase Southern Oregon's earthquake resiliency, but also to provide lessons learned and best practices to assist other communities in Oregon in the lead up to the eventual implementation of ShakeAlert state-wide in 2023.

RVCOG's Board of Directors has embraced ShakeAlert because it is convinced of the transcendental threat posed by the Cascadia Subduction Zone, and the need to employ new tools to increase our readiness to meet that threat. For much the same reason, the region has moved quickly to reach out to the University of Oregon to make clear its interest in ALERTWildfire. While the region's heavily forested areas and hot, dry summers have always made wildfire a concern for our communities, the last several years of unrelenting smoke for months at a time have transformed that concern into the fear that the regularity of catastrophic wildfires into the future will threaten the viability of our region. The health impacts on the more vulnerable members of our population, and the damage done to the local economy, especially that part of the economy that depends on a robust tourism, have already been severe. With the projected increase in future average temperatures, and the continued limited funding for the critically necessary thinning of our forested areas, the situation we are facing can only worsen should nothing material change.

We are aware that no one measure will be adequate to meet the wildfire challenge we are facing here in southern Oregon. We believe the impetus to identify and deploy the needed solutions can come from a serious attempt at further developing and implementing Governor Brown's Resiliency 2025 policy agenda, and we also believe that a solid and necessary first step in that direction is the funding of a multihazards monitoring and detection network that includes the installation of ALERTWildfire cameras in the State's more fire-prone regions as soon as possible. We cannot overemphasize our concern for the future of our community should we not be able to mitigate our wildfire threat in the very short term -- we are in crisis already, and the consequences of not moving decisively now cannot help but become increasingly severe.

*The Rogue Valley Council of Governments is a voluntary association of these local governments and special districts in our region:*

- Jackson County
- Josephine County
- City of Ashland
- Town of Butte Falls
- City of Cave Junction
- City of Central Point
- City of Eagle Point
- City of Gold Hill
- City of Grants Pass
- City of Jacksonville
- City of Medford
- City of Phoenix
- City of Rogue River
- City of Shady Cove
- City of Talent
- Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO)
- Jackson County Library District (JCLD)
- Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District
- Rogue Community College (RCC)
- Rogue Valley Sewer Services (RVS)
- Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD)
- Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc. (SORED)
- Southern Oregon University (SOU)

Finally, should any of the members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee wish to witness the importance this region places on the ALERTWildfire component of an eventual comprehensive approach to meeting our wildfire threat, they are welcome to attend a region-wide meeting we are convening on the potential of installing ALERTWildfire cameras on May 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 at the RVCOG main office in Central Point. The meeting will be facilitated by Doctors Leland O'Driscoll and Douglas Toomey of the University of Oregon.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Cavallaro', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Cavallaro

Executive Director

Rogue Valley Council of Governments