

ANALYSIS

Item 4: Higher Education Coordinating Commission Klamath Community College Well Drilling Curriculum

Analyst: Kim To

Request: Allocate \$975,000 General Fund from the Emergency Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to disburse to Klamath Community College to develop and implement a well drillers curriculum.

Analysis: The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is requesting \$975,000 General Fund to grant to Klamath Community College to develop and implement a well drillers curriculum.

Historically, Klamath County has declared drought emergencies more than any other county in the state. The Klamath Basin water scarcity includes existing wells running dry leading to the need for deepening of those wells, new well construction, and well abandonment work. The current shortage of well constructors is anticipated to be exacerbated with increased training requirements for well constructor licensing effective July 1, 2023 as mandated by HB 2145 (2021). Working with Klamath Basin stakeholders, Klamath Community College proposes the development and implementation of a well drilling curriculum to address this workforce need. The curriculum aims to give students hands-on operational experience through industry partners at existing well projects. In addition to well construction, the curriculum will also include welding certification with a focus on pipe-welding, construction jobsite safety training, as well as laws regarding water well drilling. HECC is in the process of reviewing the proposed curriculum and anticipates approval of the curriculum in the near future.

The expected cost of the program is \$975,000 which includes \$25,000 for curriculum development and \$950,000 for the well drilling rig, a Speed Star PRD Max Drill 3000 customized for regional use.

If the funding request is approved by the Emergency Board and proposed curriculum is approved by HECC, Klamath Community College hopes to launch the program starting Winter Term, January 13, 2023.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Emergency Board allocate a one-time amount of \$975,000 General Fund from the Emergency Fund to Higher Education Coordinating Commission to grant to Klamath Community College to develop and implement a well drillers curriculum.

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Higher Education Coordinating Commission
Crawford

Request: Allocate \$975,000 from the State Emergency Fund for a grant to Klamath Community College for the purchase of a water well drilling rig and the creation of a well drillers curriculum.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Discussion: Oregon is experiencing drought. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's U.S. Drought Monitor, over 30 percent of Oregon is classified as being in extreme drought. This drought is being felt especially east of the Cascades where the proportion of land in extreme drought is higher.

During the 2021 Second Special Session, the Legislature appropriated funding to several items related to drought in Klamath County, including \$4.0 million to the Klamath Project Drought Response Agency for irrigation district assistance, \$4.0 million to Klamath County for domestic and community well assistance, \$3.0 million for livestock watering wells and construction of off-channel water facilities in Klamath County, and \$1.0 million for drought resiliency work. Over the past two calendar years, over 400 wells have been reported to the Oregon Water Resources Department as dry or underperforming in Klamath County alone.

To help address workforce training issues associated with the drought, Klamath Community College (KCC) has developed curriculum for a Well Drilling Training program. KCC is aiming the program launch in January 2023. The program will purchase a water well drilling rig with this allocation and the equipment will be used to give students hands-on operational experience through industry partners at existing well projects. The hands-on training may be used for the well drilling hours required for state licensure.

Legal Reference: Allocation of \$975,000 from the State Emergency Fund for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, for a grant to Klamath Community College for a water well drilling rig and curriculum for the 2021-23 biennium.



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Higher Education Coordinating Commission

3225 25th Street SE

Salem, OR 97302

www.oregon.gov/HigherEd

November 15, 2022

Senator Peter Courtney, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Joint Emergency Board
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs:

Nature of the Request

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) requests \$975,000 General Fund to grant to Klamath Community College for the purchase of a water well drilling rig and the development and implementation of a well drillers curriculum. The equipment will be used as part of a two-part curriculum totaling 583 hours to give students hands on operational experience through industry partners at existing well projects. The hands-on training may be used for the well drilling hours required for state licensure. The well drilling curriculum, which will be non-credit training, will also include welding certification, specifically pipe-welding, construction jobsite safety training, well construction, and laws and statutes regarding water well drilling.

Southern Oregon is experiencing a drought which is leading to existing wells running dry and the need for a deepening of those wells. These funds and the program will help mitigate the immediate crisis as well as train students for future work in the field.

The drought in Southern Oregon has affected the water table levels to such an extent that since June 2021, 451 homeowners in Klamath County have reported that their well is either dry or under-performing. As of October 24, 2022, 116 of these have been deepened, replaced, or otherwise fixed. Wait times vary; for some residents it takes almost a year for a well driller and in one case, there has been a home without water for 14 months. There are five licensed water-well drillers with primary business addresses in Klamath County. According to the data from Oregon Employment Department the statewide average annual pay for earth drillers (with the exception of oil and gas) is \$61,465. This occupation is expected to grow 12% between 2020 and 2030. It is projected that over 400 job opening will be created in Oregon due to industry growth and replacement of workers because they either change careers or exit the workforce. The average age for Oregon workers in this occupation group is 44 years; slightly higher than the average age for all civilian workers.

This request has the support of the Oregon Water Resources Department, The Klamath County Board of Commissioners, local Representatives, and East Cascades Works, the local Workforce Board.

It is hoped the program will be launched starting Winter Term, January 13, 2023. The plan is to have up to 10 students per session in the first sessions and have the program grow in future sessions.

Agency Action

HECC has recently approved the curriculum. The expected cost of program development is \$25,000 and the expected cost for the well drilling rig, a Speed Star PRD Max Drill 3000 customized for regional use, is \$950,000.

Action Requested

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission requests the Emergency Board allocate one-time General Funds in the amount of \$975,000 GF.

Legislation Affected

None

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Cannon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ben Cannon, Executive Director
Higher Education Coordinating Commission

Attachments:

Letter from Klamath County Board of Commissioners
Letter from state Representatives



Board of Commissioners

David Henslee, Commissioner
Position One

Kelley Minty, Commissioner
Position Two

Derrick DeGroot, Commissioner
Position Three

November 1, 2022

Higher Education Coordinating Commission
Donna Lewelling
Director of Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development
3225 25th Street SE
Salem, Oregon 97302

Dear Ms. Lewelling,

We fully support the efforts of Klamath Community College as they seek external funding to establish a well-drilling program designed to fill a much-needed trade gap and support students in our community who seek an alternative pathway to employment beyond a four-year degree.

Sincerely,



David A. Henslee
Commissioner



Kelley Minty
Chair

Not Present
Derrick DeGroot
Vice Chair

cc: Ben.CANNON@hecc.oregon.gov



November 8, 2022

Higher Education Coordinating Commission
3225 25th Street SE
Salem, Oregon 97302

Re: Emergency Board Request by Klamath Community College

Chair Cross, Vice-Chair Rowe, and Members of the Commission:

Thank you for your work ensuring pathways to postsecondary education success for Oregonians statewide. As Chair and Vice-Chair of the House Agriculture, Land Use, and Water Committee, and elected representatives of the people of the Klamath Basin, we urge you to support Klamath Community College in requesting funding from the Oregon Legislature's Emergency Board to purchase well drilling equipment and establish a non-credit well drilling certification program.

Many residents in Klamath County supply their own drinking water through wells. Klamath County has been especially hard hit by the 22-year megadrought across the Western United States. Drought and other water management challenges in the basin have left approximately 450 residents without a reliable supply of drinking water due to declining groundwater levels and lack of recharge. The legislature has approved \$9 million to the Klamath Basin over the past year to help residents with the cost of well deepening and new well construction. However, there is a severe lack of availability of accredited well drillers across the state, with wait times that can exceed a year.

Recognizing the significant need for well-drillers, Klamath Community College worked with local partners to develop a well-drilling certification course. That course is in the process of recruiting students, but investment is needed to scale up the effort. Funding for well-drilling equipment would allow the community college to train multiple students at one time and give them the hands-on experience they need to become well drillers.

We applaud Klamath Community College for their proactive and innovative approach to a pressing challenge facing their community, and we believe that an investment in necessary equipment will also benefit the state as a whole. We are encouraged to see community colleges identifying and filling important gaps in our water workforce. Please do not delay in moving forward this funding request for consideration in December by the Emergency Board.

Sincerely,

Representative Ken Helm, HD 34, Chair, House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water
Representative Mark Owens, HD 60, Vice-Chair, House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water
Representative Vikki Breese Iverson, HD 55, House Republican Leader
Representative E. Werner Reschke, HD 56

[Signatures on the next page]



Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water
Oregon State Legislature, House District 34
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P: (503) 986-1434



Representative Mark Owens, Vice Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water
Oregon State Legislature, House District 60
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Representative Vikki Breese Iverson
House Republican Leader
Oregon State Legislature, House District 55
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Representative E. Werner Reschke
Oregon State Legislature, House District 56
Southern Klamath & Lake Counties
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