

## Written Testimony to Oregon Joint Committee of Ways and Means 4/22/21 Hearing

**Subject:** Budget Proposal (including 2021 American Rescue Plan Act Funds) submitted by McKenzie River Discovery Center

My name is Tom Ripp. I'm in my nineties and a former member of the Board of Directors of McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC). Because of business travel over the past 65 years, I was able to fly fish many blue ribbon waters of the world. The McKenzie River is one of them. In most of this period I was a member of the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club in San Francisco. The club's casting pools in Golden Gate Park has been the site of the World Fly Casting Tournament, often many times the winner has been a club member. Many years ago the club decided to devote one day a year to teach kids how to fly fish. It was open to the public on a Sunday in early summer. The success of this event has been overwhelming. Hundreds of kids have attended this event. It is the most exciting day these hallowed pools experience all year.

A significant part of the McKenzie River Discovery Center mission statement is a commitment to educate and entertain families. Early on discussions about future activities at the Discovery Center was a plan to have fly casting lessons for kids at the ponds on the property. The MRDC recently received notification from the ODFW Restoration and Enhancement Board of a \$20,000 grant to restore and plant trout in the Discovery Center's pools. Now MRDC can offer to kids both fly fishing lessons and the wonderful experience of catching trout in a well-planned ecological and environmental setting. Good sportsmanship will also be part of the program. There is a plan to have angling on the ponds by Spring 2022.

The entire McKenzie Valley and urban communities will benefit from this wonderful grant. This is a very generous offering and very much appreciated.

It is with this background of the importance of educating and entertaining families that I include a letter from ODFW to McKenzie River Discovery Center as follows:

“Hello friends -

Congratulations to us all!

The grant application to the ODFW Restoration and Enhancement Board (\$20K) was awarded to the McKenzie River Discovery Center for the restoration/conversion of the old hatchery pond into a community fishing pond.

Overall Project Goals listed in the proposal were - 1) Provide increased angling and education/outreach opportunities for youth, the McKenzie community, underserved populations, and urban families by creating a safe place and controlled environment for anglers to catch stocked trout 2) Build on educational information about aquatic ecology and history of fishing on the McKenzie that is already on location A)McKenzie Drift Boat evolution and fishing guides B)K-12 education about the unique geology and hydrology of the basin C)History of the old ODFW hatchery 3) Utilize the facilities and amenities that already exist and reconnect ODFW to a portion of its historical legacy in the basin. Park with picnic tables, water fountains, ADA accessibility, museum and interpretive center 4) Capitalize on the momentum started by creation of the McKenzie Discovery Center and show our support for a community recently devastated by fire to help draw visitors to the community.

A warm ‘thank you’ to everyone who has voiced support for the project. Wisteria Stuart (Executive Director of the McKenzie River Discovery Center) did a wonderful job of coordinating with ODFW and submitting the application. She will also be the point of contact for organizing and coordinating all of the future work on the project. The plan is to have anglers angling in the pond by the spring of 2022, and we hope this is just the beginning of something much bigger . .

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Now the work begins!

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