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January 26, 2022

Dear Legislators:

The McKenzie River has long been an iconic resource fueling the reasons why people choose to live in or visit the state of Oregon. This is a resource that needs to be valued, maintained and, after recent events, nurtured. The McKenzie River community has shown just such a stewardship quality for many years.

The upper McKenzie community has long represented the best qualities of small town and rural USA. The 20+ years efforts to repair and maintain the Old Hatchery at Leaburg speaks to this pride and appreciation for their community and protecting the valuable resources with which they have been entrusted.

Recent events have devastated the structure of this community, but not its fabric. The rebuilding of the Blue River community and its surrounds is a long term project well worth the effort and investment

The McKenzie River Discovery Center will provide two valuable assets to this end:

(1) It will be a community stimulus package ready to go, providing an influx of money for the immediate future and for the long term influx of outside monies. Support for this project would show an appreciation for the thousands of hours of volunteer work needed to get to this point, and provide additional hope for those trying to put their lives back together.

(2) As a teacher of the life sciences for 34 years, I was often reminded when children and adults became familiar with, and gained an understanding of the many wonders of nature, they were more invested in preserving these delicate treasures. The Discovery Center's interactive approach for teaching the hydrology and biology of the McKenzie River system would be an invaluable resource for educating local patrons and visitors about the necessity to protect this iconic river for future generations.

I strongly recommend your financial support for this project.

Sincerely,

Allen Heide  
Chairman, Conservation Committee, Cascade Family Flyfishers, Eugene/Springfield  
91282 Leavitt Lane  
Springfield, OR 97478  
Home Phone: (541) 726-8296

**Down Home Boatworks**  
**Custom Wood Drift Boats, Plans & Kits**

Dear Oregon Legislative members:

I am writing from Western Pennsylvania to add my voice to the local support for the McKenzie River Discovery Center. I have experienced the wonders of the McKenzie River first-hand: it's pristine water, the fishing, its iconic boats, its old growth timber, its upriver eateries and the opportunity to rub shoulders with a classic old-time fishing guide, Dave Helfrich. It was sheer tragedy when Holiday Farm Fire wreaked havoc to the area. There is little doubt in my mind that the Center will encourage people to experience a recovering environment first-hand. Few days pass that I don't think about my time spent in Oregon. I remember every redside trout I caught in the upper McKenzie and can still feel the push of the cold river against my legs.

I heartily endorse the McKenzie River Discovery Center as an educational and experiential venue where visitors will learn about the wonders of the region. I believe in the mission and historical significance the Center will provide for visitors near and far. And I'm also impressed by their commitment to state-of-the-art technology to be employed on site, but to also make it available remotely, to any person or group interested anywhere in Oregon or across the country. I believe this will be another gem in the long list of outdoor-connected experiences that Oregon has to offer.

I own and operate Down Home Boatworks in Western Pennsylvania. I design and build drift boats, fishing platforms that have been influenced by the original McKenzie riverboats. I am a longtime fly fisherman who has fished many eastern and western rivers. The McKenzie region is not only an Oregon treasure; it is a National Treasure. I have made and kept many friends that have shared this wonderful place with me over the last 15 years. Through them, I have made many return trips and have encouraged many others to visit the origins of the legendary drift boats so common on the McKenzie. Like me, all have fallen in love with the place.

Best regards,



Dave Zielinski  
Down Home Boatworks  
Saltsburg, Pennsylvania  
[www.downhomeboatworks.com](http://www.downhomeboatworks.com)  
[info@downhomeboatworks.com](mailto:info@downhomeboatworks.com)





Everyone's Market  
45602 McKenzie Hwy.  
Vida, OR 97488  
541-896-3261

Oregon State Legislature

RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

I support the construction of the McKenzie River Discovery Center at Leaburg Lake. This project would be a big benefit to the area's businesses and will be a truly world class facility that will boost our tourism economy, increase community pride, and add to the range of educational opportunities available to our youth.

Please vote for strong financial support for a project that will benefit the McKenzie River, Lane County and the state of Oregon.

Happy Dhami  
Everyone's Market



FRETWATER BOATWORKS  
1000 West Grand Canyon Avenue  
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

January 24, 2022

TO: Members of the Oregon Legislature

Dear Oregon Legislative members:

The McKenzie story about the boats, the very unique river and the river culture that I admire, must be told. I applaud the McKenzie River Discovery Center for its present and future work, and I see it as a portal to understanding these iconic boats, the culture that developed them and the river that spawned them.

I have worked over fifty years as a Colorado River Guide. I own and operate Fretwater Boatworks in Flagstaff. We build river dories, fix them, restore them, and use them. Each summer, I teach a course in building the McKenzie Drift Boat or one of its derivatives at Woodenboat School in Brooklin, Maine. McKenzie Drift Boats and their offshoots are now used around the country and the world.

My professional boat of choice is the Colorado River dory. Its design and function is pure Oregon. The boats deepest roots are in the McKenzie River where legendary McKenzie builder and guide, Keith Steele built the first Colorado River dory in 1962 for Martin Litton, renown environmentalist. That tradition lives on in Grand Canyon and continues to grow.

I endorse the McKenzie River Discovery Center as an educational and experiential venue where visitors will not only learn about the wonders of the river and its boats, but it will also serve as an informed gateway to places where people can experience the wonders of the river themselves.

Best regards,

Brad Dimock, proprietor  
Fretwater Boatworks  
928•853•2007  
brad@fretwater.com  
fretwaterboatworks.com





# GIUSTINA RESOURCES

---

P.O. Box 529  
Eugene, Oregon 97440  
(541) 485-1500  
FAX: (541) 485-2050

February 8, 2022

To: The Oregon State Legislature

Re: Support \$5.5M Funding request for the McKenzie River Discovery Center

Greetings:

The Holiday Farm Fire destroyed much of the McKenzie Valley. The McKenzie River Discovery Center has been at the forefront of the recovery efforts. Their existing buildings and broadband support have helped support the recovery efforts.

The McKenzie River Discovery Center can lead the tourism and economic redevelopment of the McKenzie Valley. Please support the \$5.5M request.

Thank you,

Peter Sikora  
Chief Executive Officer

January 26, 2022

To: The Oregon Legislature  
Re: Support Funding Request for the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC)

Dear Oregon Legislature,

Good morning! I respectfully request the Oregon State Legislature to approve funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center. I have been a supporter of this organization and truly believe that it is vital to not only the region but the entire state and beyond. There are three main reasons I feel the time is right for this investment into the region Economic, Education and Community.

This funding for the MRDC is vitally important to the economic recovery of the McKenzie River Valley, recently devastated by the 2020 Wild Fire and ongoing struggles from the pandemic. This region has been under considerable stress, and there is so much that still needs to be done to help the McKenzie River Valley “build back better.” The MRDC will attract tourists to the valley from all over Oregon and beyond. It will encourage visitors to learn about the uniqueness of the river, develop a stewardship for the river and then experience the wonders of the river first-hand through: fishing, whitewater boating, area restaurants and lodges, hiking, biking, and experience the variety of flora, fauna and tall timber. The Discovery Center will be a major attraction for the state, helping to revive the economy through increased tourism in the area year-round.

The MRDC will provide a much-needed educational opportunity about how unique and special the McKenzie River is. Education that will create river stewardship through exhibits, and hands on learning. Outdoor programs and immersive digital technology exhibits that highlight the ecology and the unique geology of the river, its cultural history; the history of the iconic McKenzie River Drift boat, river guides and the amazing “red side” McKenzie trout.

After the fire, the MRDC offered their buildings to host a relief center to help those who were impacted by the wildfire and for local county employees’ space to meet with families that needed help managing through the aftermath of the fire such as FEMA, Insurance, rebuilding and fire related issues. Currently the space is used monthly by the McKenzie River Garden club “Late Bloomers” for their monthly meetings, and the organization McKenzie Long Term Recovery Group uses the space for their office. The MRDC has partnered with the NW Youth Corp, EWEB, Boy Scouts, McKenzie CDC, McKenzie Recovery Group, McKenzie Fire and Rescue, Locals helping Locals, McKenzie Community Center and many others to support the Valley to “Build back Better.”

The time is perfect for the Legislature to support this project, making an investment in the future economic and educational growth of the McKenzie River Valley and the State of Oregon

Thank You for your support,

Yodels of joy,

Gretl Dupre’ Galgon  
Adventure Ambassador  
Owner of Camp Soles



A Helfrich Outfitter LLC  
1950 Yolanda Avenue  
Springfield OR 97477

Oregon State Legislature

Re: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

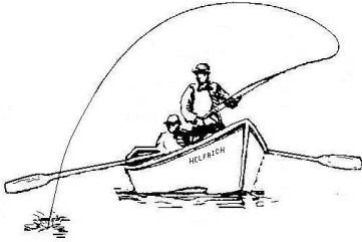
Please, support the request for state funding of the McKenzie River Discovery Center. After years of planning by numerous volunteers, the center is ready to be built.

The McKenzie River Discovery Center will be a world-class facility, boosting our tourism-based valley's economy, offering a range of educational opportunities for youth and adults and increasing community pride.

Funding this project and allowing it to rise from our valley's ashes would help not only local businesses but also, by association, the economies of Lane County and the State of Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Jonnie Helfrich, co-owner





# HELFRICH RIVER OUTFITTERS

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**[www.HelfrichOutfitter.com](http://www.HelfrichOutfitter.com) - [Ken@HelfrichOutfitter.com](mailto:Ken@HelfrichOutfitter.com)**

**(800) 507-9889 – (541) 953-1620**

To: Oregon State Legislature

RE: McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding Request

Dear Legislature,

Our family has lived and worked on the McKenzie River for the past 100 years offering guided fishing and float trips. We have been offering these fishing and rafting experiences to the many clients and visitors to the area for four generations. We have been a supporter of the McKenzie Discovery Center since its inception over 10 years ago. We fully believe in this project and believe it to be a great community asset for future tourism and economic development for many years to come. With the recent fire devastation, this project will provide a great economic recovery opportunity to a portion of Oregon that really needs it.

The MRDC will give our young people a chance to learn first-hand about the fish, fauna and flora of the McKenzie River as well as the development of the McKenzie Drift boat that was developed on our river. The many beautiful assets of this unique spring fed river will be displayed and featured for all people to visit and enjoy for many years to come. The site is perfect for this type of project to be developed on. I look at the scope of this project and see so much potential for this to be a world class tourism opportunity much the same as the High Desert Museum is in Central Oregon.

I would encourage you to help fund this wonderful project with the 5.5M being requested. The money will be wisely used to see this project forward and become a great investment for Oregon's future.

I truly appreciate your consideration and support of the McKenzie River Discovery Center.

Sincerely,

Ken Helfrich  
Helfrich River Outfitters

22 Jan 2022

TO: Oregon State Legislature  
RE: McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC) Funding Request

Honorable members of the Oregon Legislature,

The Lane County Board of Commissioners designated the MRDC as a legislative priority in October 2021. I fully support MRDC's funding request of \$5.5M. These funds are a necessary match and leverage for donors who stand ready to complete the MRDC's capital campaign. This project is vital to the economic recovery for the valley from the devastation of the Holiday Farm Fire and the ongoing struggles from the impact of COVID. Both issues have placed this region under considerable stress. Slowly the community is trying to rebuild. Funding the MRDC now will be an investment in the region's future.

The MRDC will be an important asset to the region's economic recovery. Visitors will learn about the unique origins and features of the river and its landscape, the ecology of the famous "Redside" Trout, Salmon, lamprey, other fish, fauna and flora, and the history and culture of the iconic drift boats. As you likely know, the MRDC property was also damaged by the Holiday Farm Fire and this tragic event will be both memorialized at the Center and the site will serve as an example of environmental recovery.

I believe that the MRDC will encourage visitors to experience the wonders of the river first-hand. The MRDC's use of immersive encounters and state-of-the-art digital technology will encourage people to experience the still beautiful McKenzie River Valley themselves: fishing, whitewater guided trips, searches for the pristine springs, hiking and biking trails, campgrounds, and viewing the fabulous flora, fauna and tall old growth timber, and restaurants and lodges.

The MRDC's request is not a cost, but an investment. This is one reason the Board of Commissioners committed strongly by unanimously authorizing a 99-year lease with MRDC for the 46-acre site of our historic Old Leaburg Fish Hatchery. It will not only be an important educational venue; it will be an economic engine that will enhance and strengthen the region's tourism-based economy. Economic recovery and environmental recovery will go hand in hand, renewing a positive sense of place for both locals and visitors.

I personally appreciate your consideration and support of the McKenzie River Discovery Center's request. It is a vital component of our efforts to "build back better"

Sincerely

Sincerely,



Pat Farr  
Lane County Commissioner

January 29, 2022

Oregon State Legislature

Re: Support Letter for McKenzie River Discovery Center

The McKenzie River Valley experienced tragic events over the last two years. As the communities in the Valley are pulling together and looking for a brighter future, they seem always to reflect on the organizations that have been so instrumental, and still are, in the relief and rebuilding efforts following the Holiday Farm Fire.

The McKenzie River Discovery Center is a standout organization that was singed by the fire but endured and served as a relief center in the days, weeks, and months following the fire. It was used to distribute food and provide overall support for firefighters and community members alike. The Center embodies and preserves so much of the history of this beautiful Valley, but even more importantly is a strong and steadfast organization that is leading toward a future of hope and opportunity for those who live here. It provides a place to gather and share information, has already opened many doors, and is helping to build a stronger and more stable future.

The new Discovery Center building will include a museum where people from around the world can learn about the great McKenzie River Valley. It will put on display the rich history of the Valley and contribute to the future economic growth of the surrounding communities.

Lane Electric Cooperative is pleased to submit this letter requesting support from the State Legislature to help in the funding of the construction of the new Discovery Center building,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debi Wilson".

Debi Wilson  
General Manager

January 21, 2022

To: The Oregon State Legislature

Re: Support of Funding Request for McKenzie River Discovery Center

As President of the Late Bloomer Garden Club and a McKenzie Valley resident, I am writing today to ask for your support in making the McKenzie River Discovery Center a reality. After the Holiday Farm Fire, which burnt our previous meeting space to the ground (Vida Community Center) the McKenzie River Discovery Center offered us a meeting place and a bit of normalcy for our community group. We are only one example of community support that the Discovery Center has demonstrated. At our monthly meetings, we have recently enjoyed watching the progress on the fishing pond restoration and we are actively restoring the grounds around the historic hatchery buildings.

The Late Bloomers members, as a service group ourselves, recognizes what the Discovery Center can do for our community's recovery from the effects of covid and wildfire on our economy and well-being. Working with, and supporting, our neighbors is at our core, and we see that in the Discovery Center also.

I highly support your funding the McKenzie River Discovery Center that, among other things, will bring recovery, education and outdoor recreation to the area.

Thank you,

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

Rose Philes  
President  
Late Bloomers Garden Club

---

# MCKENZIE RIVER LOCALS HELPING LOCALS

Oregon State Legislature

RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

Dear Legislators,

After the Holiday Farm Fire in 2020, the McKenzie River Locals Helping Locals group was formed to help all those who were impacted. It has been a long journey. We have focused on many families and their children and the development of the MRDC at the west end of our footprint would greatly benefit our kids and many more from the State of Oregon.

We support all the help from Salem for this wonderful Discovery Center.

Thank you, Steve Schaefer, Dir, Locals Helping Helping



51187 Blue River Dr.  
Vida, OR 97488  
541-822-1110  
[www.mckenzielocals.com](http://www.mckenzielocals.com)



January 23, 2022

Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support for McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding

McKenzie Community Communications (MCC) is a non-profit formed after the Holiday Farm Fire of 2020 devastated our area. It destroyed both emergency and every day communications for months. We formed in recognition that the availability of a resilient, dependable, and durable communications infrastructure is critical to the safety and security of the residents along the McKenzie River.

During the fire recovery process volunteers established a Relief Center at the McKenzie River Discovery Center site. For six months, residents used the site to restore supplies of foodstuffs and household goods. Importantly, they were also able to access the outside world via an emergency public wifi service that was activated there.

MCC has since installed permanent public wifi sites in McKenzie Bridge, Rainbow, and Blue River. We are planning to activate another one on the McKenzie River Discovery Center property this year.

This project is an excellent example of Oregon's plans to "Build Back Better." We strongly urge the legislature to step forward with financial support of this project that will increase public safety for our community.

The board of directors of McKenzie Community Communications urges you to support the request for state funding for the completion of the McKenzie River Discovery Center project.

Kevin Leinbach, Treasurer





## McKenzie Community Development Corporation

Our mission is to foster and support economic, environmental and community well-being for the McKenzie River Area



January 20, 2022

Oregon State Legislature

Re: Support Letter for McKenzie River Discovery Center

The McKenzie River Valley experienced tragic events over the last two years. As these communities pull together and look for a brighter future, they seem to always reflect on the organizations that were so instrumental, and still are, in the relief effort following the Holiday Farm Fire.

A standout organization that was singed by this fire but survived and became a Relief Center to support survivors of the Holiday Farm Fire, the Center was used to distribute food and provided overall support for firefighters and community members as well. This organization brings so much history to the Valley but even more importantly gives the residents something to point to as an organization that leads in the direction of hope and opportunity. The new Center will be a place for people to learn about the beautiful McKenzie Valley, to have one place to gather and share information, a museum that will bring people from around the world to learn about this great Valley. The Discovery Center is a strong and steadfast organization and the communities look to The Discovery Center as a place that holds much history, has opened many doors and is helping build for a stronger and stable future.

The McKenzie Community Development Corporation is happy to submit this letter requesting support from the State Legislature to help in the funding for the construction of a new Discovery Center building which will help preserve so much of the history and contribute to the future growth of the McKenzie River Valley.

Respectfully,

Lisa C. Mattes  
Executive Director  
McKenzie Community Development Corporation



McKenzie Feed and Tackle  
39355 McKenzie Hwy.  
Springfield, OR 97478  
541-741-0191

Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

The McKenzie River Discovery Center is a project that is ready to be built. Volunteers have invested thousands of hours over the past several years to bring the project to the point where it is now ready to be built.

Several donors have said they are ready to make substantial commitments. They are waiting for action from the state to step forward. That time has now arrived for the legislature to fully back the project with financial support.

This project will benefit the McKenzie Valley business community and add a badly needed tourism destination to Lane County.

Please vote "Yes" on any measures that will guarantee the McKenzie River Discovery Center is built soon.

McKenzie Feed and Tackle

Chris Wright Owner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Chris Wright".

1-20-22





# McKenzie Fire & Rescue

January 27, 2022

To: Oregon State Legislature

RE: McKenzie River Discovery Center funding request (MRDC)

As the Fire Chief for McKenzie Fire and Rescue I have seen firsthand the devastating impact of the Holiday Farm fire and the ongoing struggles the pandemic has had on our community.

The funding for the MRDC is vitally important to the economic recovery of the McKenzie River Valley. This region has been under considerable stress, for over a year now, and there is so much that still needs to be done to help the McKenzie River Valley “build back better”. The Discovery Center will truly be a major attraction for the state, helping to revive the economy through increased tourism in the area year-round as well as being a great community partner for the valley.

The MRDC will provide a much-needed educational opportunity focusing not only on how unique and special the McKenzie River is, but the education will also create river stewardship through exhibits and hands on learning. Outdoor programs and immersive digital technology exhibits will highlight the ecology and the unique geology of the river, its cultural history; the history of the iconic McKenzie River Drift boat, river guides and the amazing “red side” McKenzie trout.

For me, the most important focus of this education center is having the public develop a better understanding and respect for the river and to “protect” our fragile eco system. We have seen with the pandemic that individuals and families venturing into the outdoors for probably the first time, that may have no understanding of what it means to interact with the river and nature. The more investment in providing knowledge and hands on experiences they have, the more our valley will thrive.

The time is perfect for the Legislature to support this project, making an investment in the future economic and educational growth of the McKenzie River Valley and the State of Oregon.

Thank You for your support,

Darren Bucich  
Fire Chief



January 26, 2022

The Oregon State Legislature

RE: Support to fund The McKenzie River Discovery Center

The McKenzie Flyfishers have supported the renovation of the Old McKenzie Hatchery to become the McKenzie Discovery Center for several years. Our club believes The Discovery Center has the potential to become a regional resource that will serve the McKenzie River Valley and regional community for years into the future.

The Discovery Center has already proven itself as a valuable resource to the community as a relief center following the devastating Holiday Farm fire. As a result, it has deep organic support from residents. The McKenzie Flyfishers will continue to support the Discovery Center through volunteer hours. The early stages of renovation of the original buildings and existing infrastructure are already underway.

With additional financial support from the State of Oregon, the Center holds potential to become a destination that will generate economic benefits, pride and educational opportunities for the McKenzie Valley, Lane County, and the State of Oregon. The Center can become the hub for multiple activities that celebrate nature: ecology, rafting, bird watching, drift boat fishing, hiking, camping – as well as the community businesses that support these activities. Also, the recent McKenzie River channel improvements that hold promise to improve anadromous fish spawning habitat can be show cased at the Center.

The parking lot at the High Desert Museum south of Bend is often full. The parking lot at the McKenzie Discovery Center holds the potential to become an equally popular tourist destination. The Discovery Center, with support from the State to construct high quality exhibits and educational venues, will attract local and out-of-state tourists to the many natural wonders supported by the icy, crystal-clear waters of the McKenzie River.

The McKenzie Flyfishers are proud to support the Discovery Center and will continue to do so with direct labor into the future. We urge the State of Oregon to financially support the Discovery Center to help build back the McKenzie Valley after the fire as well as building an economic engine for the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Thomas Fauria  
McKenzie Flyfishers, President



# McKenzie Masters Foundation

January 24, 2022

To: The Oregon Legislature

Re: Support Funding Request for the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC)

Dear Oregon Legislature,

We fully support the request for funding by the McKenzie River Discovery Center. We have donated to the early development and planning for this project for the last several years, and are excited to support the effort to get this project into building phase.

McKenzie Masters is an Oregon 501 c organized to support the resources and health of the McKenzie River Valley. The Discovery Center will be the centerpiece to lead the effort to recover from the Holiday Farm fire, as well as stimulating economic growth in this devastated region due to the Covid pandemic and the fire.

Most exciting are the education opportunities to teach current and future generations the value and history of this incredible resource. The McKenzie River is truly unique in its geology, hydrology, and fish. The hands-on learning, and visual displays will certainly teach everyone the value of river stewardship.

This is a critical time to invest in the McKenzie River valley, and the MRDC is poised to lead the economic and educational effort in this recovery effort.

Thank you for your support,



Gene Jones,  
McKenzie Masters Board of Directors

Oregon State Legislature

RE: Support of funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

January 20, 2022

I have worn many hats over the past 13 years as a resident in Blue River Oregon. One of the first projects was to fundraise and promote new signs for all of the McKenzie River Communities.

As the former marketing director for the Chainsaw Art Festival, tourism committee and the McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce, I found a dire need for more opportunities to draw folks to the area in addition to the beautiful river, drift boat fishing, hiking, mountain biking and simply enjoying nature.

When I learned of the plans to build a Discovery Center at the Old Leaburg Hatchery, I was thrilled! It reminded me of when I toured the High Desert Museum in Bend Oregon. It will greatly improve the economic vitality to all the businesses and communities along the McKenzie River Corridor.

A feather in the cap of the McKenzie River - a Gem to share stories. A place where children and adults alike will learn about local wildlife, adventure and so much more! The McKenzie River Discovery Center be all of this.

I highly support the efforts to fund this venue.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy Casad".

Judy Casad  
McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce, Board Member and Secretary  
Real Estate Broker w/ Windermere Real Estate  
541-968-2400  
[judy@windermere.com](mailto:judy@windermere.com)  
judycasad.com



POB 297  
Walterville, OR 97489  
541-896-3330

January 20, 2022

Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

The McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce has represented businesses along the Highway 126 corridor for more than five decades. Community members and business owners alike share an appreciation for our watershed, our fisheries, and the area's role in the development of the Pacific Northwest's recreational industry.

The Chamber has demonstrated its commitment to the McKenzie River Discovery Center project with our annual donations of \$5,000. However, the twin catastrophic events of Covid-19 and the Holiday Farm Fire have had severe and lasting negative impacts that need to be addressed. We believe the MRDC is on track to be "shovel ready" by December of this year and can then play a major role in leading our area's economic and social recovery efforts.

We fully support the construction of the McKenzie River Discovery Center at Leaburg Lake. Marketing studies have shown this project will attract - and continue to attract - 50,000 visitors per year on a sustainable basis while the ecological and economic damage resulting from the 2020 Wildfire heals.

We urge you to vote for strong financial support for the McKenzie River Discovery Center project and are convinced it will benefit not only the McKenzie River region, but Lane County overall - as well as the state of Oregon.

*Nadine Scott*

01-20-2022 7:29 PM PST

Nadine Scott, President  
McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce

**MCKENZIE RIVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL  
SCIENCE DEPARTMENT**

51187 Blue River Drive

January 24, 2022

**TO: OREGON STATE LEGISLATURE**

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR MCKENZIE RIVER DISCOVERY CENTER  
FUNDING**

I'm writing in full support of state funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC). Our small, rural community has been through the wringer these last two years, with both the Holiday Farm Fire and COVID dealing enormous challenges to all those along the river. A museum dedicated to the natural history of the area would serve as a great economic resource and would benefit our students directly.

The McKenzie is famous for its unique geology, hydrology, and natural resources. Our watershed provides clean, clear drinking water for the entire city of Eugene, and is an incredibly charismatic touchstone for students of all ages from all areas to learn about our state's natural wealth. Citizens and community members who understand the ways our ecosystems work to provide for us will become dedicated stewards and strong advocates.

I look forward to taking groups of local students to a state-of-the-art museum dedicated to their watershed, one which I would imagine rivaling the High Desert Museum in scope and quality. With an added

depth to the backdrop of their own stories, students will take pride in their area and community, and will work towards the betterment of these natural bounties.

The MRDC is requesting \$5.5 million from the state to continue this undertaking and bring it to the next stage of implementation. For the sake of the economic wellbeing of our community and the education of generations to come, please consider funding the McKenzie River Discovery Center's next stages.

Sincerely,

Nate Day

Science Department Chair,  
McKenzie River Community School





***Organized for Better Sportsmanship  
and Conservation***

January 20, 2022

**TO: OREGON STATE LEGISLATURE**

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR MCKENZIE RIVER DISCOVERY CENTER  
FUNDING**

I'm writing to urge Oregon Legislators' support for state funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC). The Center, located near the McKenzie River east of Leaburg on the site of the Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery, will be a "world class" destination attraction able to **lead** the economic and social recovery of the McKenzie Valley community and its environment deeply affected by the Covid pandemic and devastated by the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire.

The McKenzie River Guides Association is a founding partner and an active advocate and financial supporter of the MRDC since 2007. Continued advocacy is based on the prospect of a renowned destination attraction at the 46-acre Old McKenzie Hatchery property held on a long-term lease by MRDC, obtained from Lane County. The MRDC will showcase the beautiful, rare-in-the-world McKenzie River, its unique and famous fish and its iconic McKenzie River drift boats and river guides. In revealing these under-appreciated treasures in digital and interactive ways, tens of thousands of visitors each year will experience the McKenzie and its watershed in new ways and help revitalize the McKenzie social, economic and environmental communities.

The projected cost of the MRDC is \$18.5 million of which 10% has been raised; \$5.5 million is needed from the state to “jump start” the project in a challenging fundraising climate. These one-time dollars will assure potential donors that the MRDC is a worthy and needed investment and will help the McKenzie community on its path to recovery and sustainability.

Sincerely,

/s/

Barrett Christiansen

President,

McKenzie River Guides Association



January 20, 2022

Oregon State Legislature

RE: Support for McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding

I am writing to urge you to support the request for state funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center. After many years of hard work by a wide range of volunteers, this facility is ready to be built.

I am an active member of the McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce and serve as the Chair of its Tourism Committee. The Committee has actively supported the Center concept financially over the past several years as the Center Concept Plan has developed. As a McKenzie River business owner, I support all meaningful efforts to expand the economic base for the McKenzie River and especially for investments that encourage visitors to our region.

I have experienced firsthand the pressures the last two years have had on our region's vitality. The McKenzie River Discovery Center will be a truly world class facility that will boost our tourism economy, increase community pride, and add to the range of educational opportunities available to our youth. This project would be a prime example of Oregon's plans to "Build Back Better" and I strongly urge the legislature to step forward with strong financial support for the McKenzie River Discovery Center.

Sincerely,

Carol Tannenbaum

McKenzie River Lavender

40882McKenzie Hwy.

Springfield, OR 97478

January 29, 2022

Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

How long will it take Oregon to recover from wildfires? That question can be answered in a month.

Why? Because approving funding for construction of the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC) in February means a truly world-class facility will be ready to open in 2024.

That goal will become a reality based on market research that has shown the MRDC will be sustainable, planning and zoning issues have been satisfied, and building permits are already in process.

My confidence in these assertions comes from over four decades of involvement in the social fabric of McKenzie River life. In addition to publishing the area's newspaper during that time, I've volunteered with over a dozen community groups - as well as holding office as an elected official.

The MRDC will complete the local concept of a three-legged stool. The first leg was the 2012 construction of common themed signs in the area's nine unincorporated communities.. The second was the 2018 designation of the McKenzie River Scenic Byway (of which nearly half was burned over during the Holiday Farm Fire). The third - and most substantial - will be the 2024 construction of the McKenzie River Discovery Center.

This project will deliver a potent prescription for wildfire recovery - much faster than the estimated 20 years it will take Nature to heal the scars. It can also serve as a model for other areas of Oregon to "Build Back Better" as they develop their own local plans.

The time is now for the Oregon Legislature to step forward and help fund the McKenzie River Discovery Center. It is a solid investment that will benefit not only the McKenzie River Valley, but Lane County, Oregon, and the Pacific Northwest.



Ken Engelman  
Publisher McKenzie River Reflections  
Vice President McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce  
Board Member MRDC

Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

It's time for the Oregon legislature to step forward and help fund the McKenzie River Discovery Center in Leaburg. As a business, we support this project because it would give a big boost to McKenzie Valley business economy and would add a world-class attraction to Lane County and Oregon.

It is now ready to be built and the financial support of the legislature to ensure that happens is needed.

Vote "Yes" to ensure McKenzie River Discovery Center is built.

McKenzie Station Pub

*Cyndy S. Parazzo - owner*





January 26, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

*Board Members:*

*Lacey Joy, Chair  
Marilyn Cross, Treasurer  
Lucy Zammarelli, Secretary  
Randy Dersham  
Doug Farrington  
Sarah Koski  
Jared Pruch  
Dale Turnley*

The McKenzie Valley Long Term Recovery Group is working to find the resources we need to bring our families home and help them rebuild their lives after the Holiday Farm Wildfire. This recovery is a collaboration of service organizations who help survivors on their journey home. Among the organizations that have, without hesitation, offered amazing support is the McKenzie River Discovery Center. I am writing today in support of the McKenzie River Discovery Center's request for funding through the Oregon State Legislature.

*Executive Director:*

*Devin Thompson*

The old hatchery site of the McKenzie River Discovery Center was damaged in the fire. While working to repair their own damage, the Discovery Center went above and beyond their needs to help the community. They provided the space for a Relief Center at the west end of the fire zone in the early post-fire period. While our infrastructure was in a decimated state, the Discovery Center installed a WIFI hotspot to be used by anyone with connectivity challenges. They continue to provide meeting and office space for us to use as we work with survivors.

The history of the McKenzie River Valley is a very important component of our identity. The historical preservation planned for the old hatchery site will be a focal point for that historical perspective. We see its future as a unifying force for our 60-mile rural, unincorporated community. We urge you to provide funding that will allow the McKenzie River Discovery Center to reach the tipping point when the rest of the capital will flow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lacey Joy".

Lacey Joy  
Chair, McKenzie Valley LTRG of Lane County

January 25, 2022

Oregon State Legislature

RE: Support for McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding

To Whom It May Concern:

The McKenzie Watershed Council supports the development of the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC) and urges the Oregon Legislature to support this project with state funding in 2022. The Center will highlight the unique qualities of the McKenzie River and serve as an engine for the recovery of a region impacted by dramatic shifts in regional forestry decades in the making and the devastating 2020 Holiday Farm Fire. The broad cooperative approach of the MRDC is well-aligned with the mission and purpose of the Council, and we believe it will enhance our efforts to conserve and restore this special place.

The Council is a cooperative partnership among residents, state and federal agencies, local government, forestry, agricultural, and recreation interests, dedicated to the conservation and restoration of the McKenzie River watershed. The organization provides a framework for local partners and the community to develop and carry out voluntary watershed protection, restoration, education, and community engagement activities. An example of this cooperative, non-regulatory approach is our participation in the locally-driven response to the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire, which has supported watershed recovery efforts on over 150 private properties in 2021 [www.purewaterpartners.org](http://www.purewaterpartners.org).

The MRDC is working to raise \$18.5 million for the Center and has successfully secured over 10% to date. The \$5.5 million request to the State Legislature will serve as “seed” money and enable the MRDC to engage private donors more effectively. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jared Weybright  
Executive Director



January 24, 2022

To: The Oregon Legislature

Regarding: Support Funding Request for the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC)

Dear Oregon Legislature,

We respectfully request the Oregon State Legislature approve funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center. We have partnered with MRDC before and after the terrible Labor Day fires to help it remain a critical part of the McKenzie River community.

Funding for this project is important to the continued economic recovery of the McKenzie River Valley, recently devastated by the 2020 Wild Fire and ongoing struggles from the pandemic. The MRDC will help rebuild the local economy through increased tourism and visitation. The MRDC will provide a much-needed educational opportunity about how unique and special the McKenzie River is. Education that will create river stewardship through exhibits, and hands on learning.

After the Holiday Farm fire, Northwest Youth Corps partnered with the MRDC to make the property safe from hazards, so they could offer their buildings to host a relief center to help those who were impacted by the wildfire and for local county employees' space to meet with families that needed help managing through the aftermath of the fire such as FEMA, Insurance, rebuilding and fire related issues. This resource was a critical component in the immediate human and social recovery needed for the community.

An investment in the MRDC will allow it to continue as a critical community resource while it grows into an educational and tourism hub for people who want to explore the majesty of the McKenzie River. The time is perfect for the Legislature to support this project, making an investment in the future economic and educational growth of the McKenzie River Valley and the State of Oregon. We strongly support this project.

Thank You for your support,

Jeff Parker  
Executive Director

**Board  
of  
Directors**

- Bradley Copeland
- Scott Halpert
- Helen Haberman
- Jane Kammerzelt
- Erik Matisek
- Patricia Sheppard
- Lauren Sommers
- Michael Straub
- Rose Wolfe

**Friends  
and  
Advisors**

- Sam Naito
- Art Pope
- Barbara Roberts
- Jean Tate
- Carlton Woodard



Phillip Raab

15520 S, Maplelane Rd., Oregon City, Oregon, 97045

January 24, 2022

Oregon State Legislature

Subject: Support for McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding

I am writing to urge Oregon Legislators' support for state funding of the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC). As a long time resident of the McKenzie River Valley who only recently relocated to Oregon City I am deeply concerned that in light of the disastrous fires which swept through the valley more than a year ago that the personal, community, and economic fabric of the valley is endangered. Recovery will require full participation of the residents as well as partnerships focussed on various elements of a coordinated effort.

The MRDC is poised to play an important role in facilitating resident participation and the coordinated efforts needed to "create, develop, and sustain an exceptional, world class ... portal to the McKenzie River and Valley". (MRDC). Your support is critical to developing a facility which will as serve as a coordination hub for recovery efforts.

By voting for strong financial support you will be assisting residents, businesses, and communities in their recovery. That recovery will not only directly support the McKenzie Valley area but will also contribute to a stronger Lane County and State of Oregon.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Phillip Raab

Phillip Raab





35286 Camp Creek Rd.  
Springfield, OR 97478  
541-747-0321

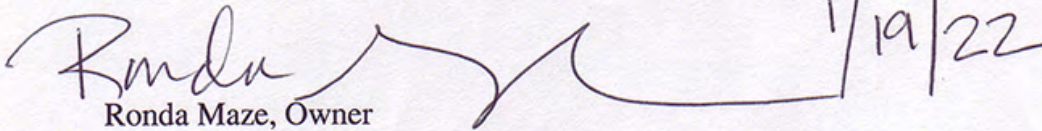
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Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support for McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding

I'm writing to urge you to support the request for state funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center. After many years of hard work by a wide range of volunteers, this facility is ready to be built.

I've experienced first hand the pressures the last few years have had on peoples' lives - as a business owner and a community member. The McKenzie River Discovery Center will be a truly world class facility that will boost our tourism economy, increase community pride, and add to the range of educational opportunities available to our youth.

This project would be a prime example of Oregon's plans to "Build Back Better" and I strongly urge the legislature to step forward with strong financial support for not only the McKenzie River area and Lane County but the sate of Oregon as well.

 1/19/22  
Ronda Maze, Owner

Riverview Market & Deli





49701 McKenzie Hwy.  
Vida, OR 97488  
541-731-1579

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Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

The construction of the McKenzie River Discovery Center in Leaburg is very important to this area. A world-class tourist destination, it would be a big benefit to the local economy as well as Lane County and the state.

It is now ready to be built and the financial support of the legislature is critical to ensure that happens.

Vote "Yes" to ensure McKenzie River Discovery Center is built.

Serendipity Coffee Co.

*Kara Elizabeth Hubbard* owner.

January 24, 2022

Oregon State Legislature

RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

On behalf of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, please accept this letter of support for the McKenzie River Discovery Center, a project that will bring about cultural, social, and economic benefits to drive our local and regional economic recovery.

The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce is committed to investments that assure a resilient and diverse economy, those that drive economic opportunity and well-being. Investments in community development such as the Discovery Center builds critical infrastructure that attracts tourism dollars and future investment. It also boosts a sense of pride within our local communities and hope for better future.

The Chamber is supportive of the many community partners who are working diligently to raise funds for the construction of the McKenzie River Discovery Center. We urge your consideration of funding that will help drive this project to completion.

Sincerely,



Vonnie Mikkelsen

President & CEO

Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce





Patsy's Stage Stop Restaurant  
38491 McKenzie Hwy., Cedar Flat  
741-7907

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Oregon State Legislature

RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

As a business owner in the area, I fully support the McKenzie River Discovery Center project.

It is ready to be built and the legislature should vote to fund it. Why? Because it will give a big boost to the economies of several of the small communities along the McKenzie River and help build community pride. The McKenzie River Discovery Center will also be a tourism draw for all of Lane County.

Please vote "Yes" for financial support for the McKenzie River Discovery Center is built soon.

*Patsy Wilson*      1/19/22

Patsy Wilson, Owner  
Patsy's Stage Stop Restaurant



---

[tim@timlaue.com](mailto:tim@timlaue.com) (541) 525-1883 [c]

February 1, 2022

**MEMO**

To: The Oregon Legislature

From: Tim Laue

**RE:** The McKenzie River Discovery Center

When I think of the promise and potential of the McKenzie Reiver Discovery Center, I think of the High Desert Museum. High Desert started small and from day it opened the doors attracted thousands of visitors. Now I would not be a bit surprised if it's visited every year by more than a quarter of a million people.

I support the McKenzie River Discovery Center because it will be just as successful as High Desert, and like High Desert will succeed from the day it opens. There is so much to highlight about the McKenzie. It's unique geomorphology, with its pure, crystal-clear water—the best water on Earth. Water that flows year-round and supplies the Metro Area with the overwhelming majority of its potable water. The incomparable flora and fauna, the wildlife, the McKenzie Reds (Rainbow trout unique to McKenzie waters). The Fall Chinook who swim upstream to spawn as they have for thousands of years. (McKenzie folk set their calendars by because the salmon return on the same day every year.)

There is so much to learn in the McKenzie and the Discovery Center will be the stage where the story is told. Visitors will be enchanted. Field trips will arrive from kindergarten through post-Doctoral programs. I can only imagine what a trip like that would have meant to me—it might have made a mediocre student into a better one.

The cultural history of the McKenzie also enthralls. First Peoples who summered along the river for thousands of years. Fishing, hunting, and gathering berries along the Huckleberry Trail. Then on to the early years of the Twentieth Century. They found gold in the mountains above Blue River and it became the largest Town in Lane County. The Lucky Boy mine opened and Blue River became a boom town. Folk from the southern Willamette Valley travelled for two days to attend Blue River's week-long Fourth of July celebrations.

The Discovery Center will be the gateway to the wonders of the McKenzie, and it will be something else—the bedrock upon which the Valley's recovering tourist economy will rise. Fifty thousand visitors are expected within a few years. Not only will the Center bring dollars to the McKenzie, it will have an economic multiplier effect right away. River guides, whitewater rafters, kayakers, backpackers, outfitters, kayakers and outdoor enthusiasts will have great fun—and spend money. Resorts will provide a place to stay, and visitors will return to play and explore the wonders of the watershed. Perhaps they might extend a stay 'to play another day.' Instead of travelling through from Eugene to Bend, maybe travelers will stop along the way.

The Discovery Center makes a modest ask. They are not asking for full funding, only for some 'seed money' to attract more investment. It will easily add hundreds of thousands of dollars to an economy struggling to recover after the catastrophe of the Holiday Farm Firestorm, and it will do so as soon as it opens the doors.

***I whole heartedly support the McKenzie River Discover Center and I urge you to do the same.***

*Honest Communication to do some good and have some fun.*





2759 Main St.  
Springfield, OR 97478-5426  
541-747-515-6668

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Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

The McKenzie River Discovery Center site played a key role in recovery efforts following the Holiday Farm Fire when it functioned as a Relief Center for people who had lost their homes. It is now ready to move into the future as a world-class tourism center that will help revive and support the small businesses located throughout the McKenzie Valley.

Volunteers have worked for years to preserve the property, develop the museum display concepts and education programs for the project. Now is the time to build it but that is dependent on you to support their request for state funding.

Jen Nimmo, Owner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jen Nimmo", written over a horizontal line.

1/19/2022

Thurston Pack N Ship





P.O. Box 117, Vida OR 97488 fishor9446@aol.com www.tightlinesfishing.com  
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Oregon State Legislature

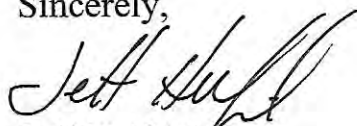
Re: Support funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

I have lived and worked in the McKenzie Valley for over 40 years and have learned the unique treasures this valley holds. Some of the most pure water and best fishing in the world deserves to have its story told through the McKenzie River Discovery Center.

Funding this world class center will show the world through education, the uniqueness of the people, the fish, the water, and the surrounding environment.

I urge you to support this one time funding of \$5.5 million to propel this center into reality!

Sincerely,



Jeff Helfrich

Tight Lines, Inc.



January 24, 2022

Re: Support for Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature:

Travel Lane County supports and encourages your support of the request from the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC) for \$5.5 million in State of Oregon funding.

The MRDC, located on Hwy 126E east of Leaburg on the 46-acre site of the Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery, will be an educational and cultural destination attraction that will contribute significantly to the economic and social recovery of the McKenzie Valley community, which was deeply impacted by the Covid pandemic and devastated by the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire.

MRDC programs will educate visitors to the facility on water and fish ecology, teach visitors about water recreation and safety, share history about the area and the world-famous McKenzie River Drift Boat and the work of river guides, and inspire spending and commerce along the McKenzie River corridor. Its digital and interactive displays will attract and inspire tens of thousands of visitors each year to experience the McKenzie and its watershed in new ways and help revitalize McKenzie River communities socially, economically, and environmentally.

Funding this request would be a significant and positive investment in fire recovery and rural economic development. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kari Westlund". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "W".

Kari Westlund  
President & CO



January 31, 2022

The Oregon Legislature

RE: Support Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC)

Dear Oregon Legislature,

I am writing to urge you to support the request of funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center. It is a project with widespread community support that will not only contribute to the economic recovery of the area following the Holiday Farm Fire, but will provide rich educational opportunities about the special and unique McKenzie River.

As a consulting forester, I assisted MRDC in assessing damage to their forest from the Holiday Farm Fire and developing restoration plans so that fire history and environmental stewardship could be part of their educational offerings. There is a compelling story here that is important to all Oregonians. Through direct interaction with their committed staff, board, and volunteers I am certain they will create a world-class facility and program.

Our company is proud to have played a small part in the early stages of this endeavor, and we have supported it financially. Now is the perfect time for the Legislature to add their support for this project, making an investment in the future growth of the McKenzie River Valley and the State of Oregon

Thank You,

Mark Miller  
Senior Forester  
Trout Mountain Forestry



August, 23 2021

Lane County Board of Commissioners  
125 E 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Eugene, OR 97401

RE: McKenzie River Discovery Center

Dear Members of the Lane County Board,

This letter is in support of efforts to establish the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC) on the site of the county-owned Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery in Leaburg. I have direct experience with the concept and the residents who are championing the project and believe the Center serves a critical purpose in preserving our heritage. Moreover, the devastating Holiday Farm fire of 2020 is now a part of that heritage and is worthy of interpretation. In short, the MIC meets the need for historic and environmental interpretation in the basin while adding a new amenity for that will attract visitors to the area.

In 2015, the Friends of the Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery commissioned my organization, the Institute for Policy Research and Engagement (IPRE—which at that time was the Community Service Center) to conduct a feasibility study for the MRDC. We concluded that the MRDC would attract 20,000 to 50,000 visitors annually. Our study concluded:

**In summary, our evaluation is that the proposed McKenzie Interpretive Center is financially feasible. Friends will need to secure approximately \$100,000 in annual operating revenues as well as generate an estimated \$18 million for capital costs.** We also want to make clear that the project will require dedication, and resources to meet these fundraising goals. Nevertheless, based on our financial analysis, **CSC believes that this revenue gap is not insurmountable.** On average, museums only generate 25% of operating revenues through earned income. Moreover, capacity exists—the High Desert Museum generates over \$1 million annually in private revenue. The McKenzie Interpretive Center project can achieve its financial sustainability with its unique characteristics, attractive location and exhibits, appropriate fund-raising and marketing strategies, and a group of dedicated patrons to build this facility.

Our study only looked at the feasibility of the MRDC and not on broader impacts that the facility might have on the area's economy. A 2014 study by faculty from Oregon State University and the University of Idaho commissioned by the Willamette National Forest concluded that the "McKenzie River Corridor is a 'high value' destination," with visitors spending more than national averages. The study found that day visitors spent \$37 to \$63 per adult per day and that destination visitors (parties that spent one or more nights) averaged between \$148 and \$357 per adult per visit.

Recovery from the Holiday Farm fire will take years. Strategic investments in facilities such as the MRDC can serve to help rebuild the basin's tourist economy and ultimately economic recovery.

Sincerely,

Robert Parker  
Director of Strategy & Technical Solutions





45641 McKenzie Hwy.  
Vida, OR 97488  
541- 896-3289

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Oregon State Legislature  
RE: Support of Funding for McKenzie River Discovery Center

We support the construction of the McKenzie River Discovery Center in Leaburg. This project would be a big benefit to the area's business community and would add a world-class attraction to Lane County and Oregon.

It is now ready to be built and the financial support of the legislature is critical to ensure that happens.

Vote "Yes" to ensure McKenzie River Discovery Center is built.

Vida Cafe



January 20, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

Following the Holiday Farm Fire of September 2020, I coordinated volunteers at the Leaburg Relief Center which was housed at the Historic Fish Hatchery and future home of the Discovery Center beside Leaburg Lake on the McKenzie Highway. For 6 months, residents visited the site to obtain goods and services but, while doing so, were fascinated by the facility's past. Questions were asked and, happily, information was available to shed light on this most interesting part of the area's past.

As vice president and secretary of Vida McKenzie Community Center, a community resource destroyed in the Holiday Farm Fire, I understand how important it is to maintain and restore important parts of our region's past which have been lost. We want our region to once again be an intact community and to prosper for future generations through expansion of our primary economic base of tourism.

Key community resources contribute to community health and wealth. The Discovery Center is clearly one of those resources worthy of preservation, restoration and development.

Respectfully,

Gerry Aster, Vice-president and Secretary  
Vida McKenzie Community Center

January 26, 2022

To: The Oregon Legislature

Re: Support Funding Request for the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC)

Dear Oregon Legislature,

Hello my name is Wade Hanel and I am a McKenzie River Guide.

I am in strong support for the funding of the McKenzie River Discovery Center. The educational opportunity that this spot would allow could be amazing for the McKenzie River Corridor, especially since the fire took place.

The Discovery Centers location allows an educational experience for the public to learn more about this wonderful area.

Thank You for your attention and funding of the McKenzie River Discovery

Wade Hanel  
Adventures North West  
(541)579-1851  
[Outdoork1@yahoo.com](mailto:Outdoork1@yahoo.com)  
2624 Kincaid St.  
Eugene Or. 97405



Walterville Grange #416  
P.O. Box 262  
Walterville, OR 97489

January 24, 2022

Oregon State Legislature  
Re: Support Letter for McKenzie River Discovery Center

In 2020 citizens of McKenzie Valley suffered great devastation and loss during the Holiday Farm Fire. As a community we came together and did what was needed to help families and businesses survive and rebuild.

One place that became an integral part of helping the community to start healing, rebuilding, and relieving some of the stress was the McKenzie River Discovery Center. The Center has been a welcoming fixture of our Valley for decades and has shared our beauty and history with countless numbers of visitors and locals alike. After the fire it became a central location for people to gather, check in, get much needed supplies, access to resources, and support from other community members that shared in their grief. The Center became a beacon of light, hope and safety during such a dark time. Visitors and locals alike would benefit from the new Center as not only a view into the history of the Valley but what is possible for the future.

Walterville Grange #416, as long-time members of our community, is happy to submit this letter seeking the support of the State Legislature to help fund the construction of the new Discovery Center.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Manthei', written over a horizontal line.

Tyler Manthei  
President  
Walterville Grange #416



# WoodenBoat

Tom Jackson, Senior Editor  
WoodenBoat Magazine  
P.O. Box 78  
Brooklin, ME 04616

Dear Oregon Legislator,


For everyone from, or of, the Pacific Northwest, rivers run in their DNA as plainly as the lines of the palms of their hands.

I am an editor with an international magazine, *WoodenBoat*, based in Maine, but I grew up in the Northwest. Quite a number of the great rivers of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia have left their marks on me. Among the most memorable is the McKenzie. I rafted the river through Erb Memorial Union programs while a student, and I covered the valley in my first reporting job after graduating from the University of Oregon in 1978.

I'm writing with enthusiasm to encourage your legislative support for the capital campaign now under way for the McKenzie River Discover Center's thoughtful and inspiring new facility. Your support will help this unique center on its way to becoming another of Oregon's many gems.

Much of the work I do now relates to salt water, but I have never forgotten the allure of the great rivers I have known, and I returned to the McKenzie in 2017 to write about the annual gathering of wooden drift boats in Vida. I foresee a day when the Center's interactive exhibits will place the river's story before new generations of Oregonians and visitors alike. The Center will reinforce their understanding of place, of heritage, of people and their inventiveness, and of the critical resource of water itself.

Sincerely,



Tom Jackson



CURVED RAKED TRANSOMS • MAINE LOBSTERBOAT • A HESS CUTTER

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## On the McKenzie River, a boat tradition lives

by Tom Jackson

Rivers, every bit as much as oceans, have inspired metaphor and poetry. Such inclinations may well lurk among some of the 60 or so fishing guides still working the McKenzie River, home of some of the best steelhead and trout fly-fishing in Oregon. Yet it is hard-headed pragmatism that makes many of them favor wooden boats.

Rivers demand local knowledge. The McKenzie River Guides Association has an unbroken tradition, since 1931, of taking fishermen through rapids of up to Class III to find the choicest eddies. Like other guideboats—the Rangeley and Adirondack boats of the Northeast come to mind—McKenzie drift boats were adapted from earlier types, in this case log-driving dories, to suit local conditions. On the McKenzie, real innovation came with the advent of plywood in the 1930s. Builders gave their boats extreme sheer and rocker, high freeboard, and brace points to support fly fishermen who needed to use both hands while casting. The guide faces downriver to row in a controlled descent, choosing a “line” through rapids to keep from dunking the paying guests in 38°F spring runoff. Fly fishermen, as a rule, venture far, and they have carried the drift boat’s reputation with them. Adaptations in aluminum and fiberglass appeared. But on the McKenzie, wooden boats remain the first choice for many.

“I think there has been a healthy resurgence in the number of people actually using more wooden boats,” Randy Dersham said in April during the 12th annual McKenzie River Wooden Boat Festival, which he founded in Vida. “Even the Helfrich crew has gone back to wooden boats, and Kenny has always used wooden boats.” Ken Helfrich is one of *nine* Helfriches listed as river guides, all of them descendants of Prince Helfrich, whose drift boats remain highly regarded (see WB No. 151).



**Above**—Randy Dersham, seen here at the oars, is the guide and boatbuilder who founded the McKenzie River Wooden Boat Festival in Vida, Oregon, in 2006. He sees a resurgence in wooden drift boat use among guides.

**Inset**—The April 2017 festival attracted 26 wooden drift boats, some new, some old, and each a little different from the others.

Running a few miles of river with Richard Helfrich, one of Prince’s sons and himself a guide, awakens envy of those who call one place home. He knows the name of almost every riverside cabin’s builder, and its year. As caddis flies hover, he points to promising eddies. He recounts heights and years of floods. An old ferry landing stirs memories of when he and a brother forded the river on horseback during low water. Ospreys nesting in broken-top old-growth trees, lichen eroding bits of Eagle Rock, a nest that water ouzels have used for decades—none of these escape his eye.

“Living up here on the McKenzie, my dad would kill animals every fall just to feed the family. You’d have gardens and you’d can, and it was kind of survival,” Helfrich said. For many, guiding was one part of a living. For some, boatbuilding was another. Helfrich first ran the river solo at age 10. Earlier, he went with his father. “My dad would say, ‘Let’s go out and catch a mess of fish for dinner.’ That’s how it started.”

TOM JACKSON (BOTH)

After Dersham bought the Eagle Rock Lodge in Vida (which he sold in 2014 but still hosts the festival), he wanted to renew a tradition from decades earlier, when a boat parade kicked off the spring fishing season and gave guides a chance to check new hazards and clean up litter. The tradition grew a little too popular, then got out of hand, and finally faltered in the 1970s. When Dersham revitalized it, he limited it to traditional wooden boats. “For me, it’s nostalgia, but I also really like the quiet ride,” he said. “I’ve never liked aluminum boats because of how cold they are. And they’re loud.” Not exactly the Zen of the fly fisherman.

For boatbuilder Steve Steele of Lebanon, Oregon, whose father built somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 drift boats, the festival became a time to reconnect with his river heritage. It was at a festival where he met Maurya Karhuus, granddaughter of immigrant Norwegian builder Tom Karhuus, who is credited with the first plywood drift boats. “I like to look at the boats, and it just brings back so many great memories of our childhood,” she said. Steele concurred: “Everybody wanted something like this. But Randy took it by the horns. And he had the perfect place to do it.”

The stories of builders past and present are celebrated. Steele still uses patterns and pieces from his father’s time. “We’d build parts for 50 boats. We built a boat a weekend. We’d start on Saturday morning and be done by Sunday night.” He helped from an age when he needed a stool to reach the boat. He went on to vocational-technical teaching, but after retiring he went back to boatbuilding.

“What’s important to me is, this is a working man’s boat,” Steele said. “This is how this evolved. And also the quality

of craftsmanship that dad used trying to make these boats to withstand years of use by guides, and make them *light* enough to where they could stack them, which was really critical. That was his cup of tea.” Removable thwarts allowed the boats to be stacked six-high on a trailer for transport.

Steele uses an old stock of Douglas-fir plywood, of a quality not found today. Some builders use meranti or sapele, usually ¼” for sides and ½” for bottoms. Bottoms are sheathed in heavy fiberglass cloth set in epoxy, sometimes with graphite. Some sheathe bottoms with ultra-high-molecular-weight plastic; others shun the practice. Every boat is a little different. Experimentation is part of the legacy. Today, for example, new-generation builder Mike Baker of Bend builds handsome drift boats—and also supplies kits—several of which were at the festival. He is experimenting with bottoms using a lightweight honeycomb core between thin plywood inside and glass-and-epoxy sheathing outside.

At day’s end, one philosopher leaning against his double-ender adjusted his bill cap, oblivious to the rain tracers in a brilliant sunbreak that also set the moss in the old-growth trees on the opposite bank aglow with emerald green. “Couldn’t have asked for a better day,” he said. Ah, Oregon.

*Tom Jackson is WoodenBoat’s senior editor.*

*See [www.mckenzieliverdriftboatmuseum.org](http://www.mckenzieliverdriftboatmuseum.org), [www.mckenzieguides.com](http://www.mckenzieguides.com), and [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org). Mike Baker, [www.bakerwooddriftboats.com](http://www.bakerwooddriftboats.com), 541-410-1048. Steve Steele, 30198 Larson Rd., Lebanon, OR 97335; 541-451-1532.*

## Catching up with ELBE No. 5 —the former WANDER BIRD

by Matthew P. Murphy

On a recent visit to Hamburg, Germany, I visited LOTSENSCHONER No. 5 ELBE, or “ELBE No. 5,” for short. Some readers will recognize this German-built, 1883 Elbe River pilot schooner as WANDER BIRD, which was owned for many years by Harold Sommer of Sausalito, California. The legendary sailor Warwick Tompkins had operated WANDER BIRD with cost-sharing crews, and sailed her from Gloucester, Massachusetts, to San Francisco in 1936, around Cape Horn. His subsequent book about that adventure, *Fifty South to Fifty South*, galvanized a generation of bluewater sailors and armchair adventurers. A more recent film, edited from Tompkins’s footage, also tells the story ([www.lifeonthewater.us](http://www.lifeonthewater.us)). Sommer, who died in 2010, saved the schooner from oblivion; she was used as a houseboat before he acquired her, and he returned her to sailing condition.

**The white-hulled schooner ELBE No. 5 (ex-WANDER BIRD) is one of 12 historic vessels operated by Stiftung Maritim Hamburg (The Hamburg Maritime Foundation) in Germany. In the foreground is the 1912, 12-Meter sloop HETI. Soon, the 377’ steel-hulled four-masted bark PEKING, formerly of South Street Seaport in New York City, will join the fleet.**



MATTHEW P. MURPHY



Greg Hatten. 541-232-3565

January 24, 2022

Dear Oregon Legislature:

I learned to row a drift boat on the McKenzie River - learned how to build one, fish from one, and guide from one. The McKenzie is a special river with a special history and over the course of many years I developed a deep love and connection to the river, the wildlife, the entire eco-system, and the people that live along it's banks.

While I live in Missouri now, I continue to be a member of the McKenzie Guides Association as a way of staying connected to one of the classic rivers in the Pacific Northwest. For the last several years I have written a number of articles for outdoor magazines about the McKenzie style drift boats and their special place in the wood boat culture. A few years ago I was part of a U.S. Team that was featured at the largest wooden boat festival in the world - in Australia. The organizers of the event were so enthusiastic about my hand crafted drift boat, they shipped it all the way "down-under" so over 300,000 people could see it on display and hear my talk about the boat and the McKenzie River.

I was at the very first McKenzie Drift Boat Festival and continue to be a faithful and active participant in that annual event which draws boats and visitors from all over the region. A permanent McKenzie River Discovery Center would be a great addition to the McKenzie River valley where the story of the river and the boats could be properly told through interactive stations, boat building demonstrations, historic boats on display, classes, seminars, and programming of all sorts to attract people to the area and grow the tourism component for valley recovery.

I fully support the McKenzie River Discovery Center and volunteer my services as a writer, a boat builder, a fly fisherman, a former guide, and an influencer in the outdoor space to help build it and promote it in every way possible. I am currently leading a \$20mm initiative to build a discovery center in St. Joseph, Missouri to tell the story of the Beginning of the Oregon Trail, western migration, and the role that rivers played in the exploration of the west.

Best Wishes for a Successful Initiative,

*Greg Hatten*

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