

TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR



November 29, 2023

Board of Directors
Rogue Siskiyou Regional Wildfire Training Center

Dear Board of Directors – Rogue Siskiyou Regional Wildfire Training Center,

I'm writing to express my sincere gratitude for your leadership and vision to work towards development of the Rogue Siskiyou Regional Wildfire Training Center (Training Center).

It has become increasingly clear that Oregon is fighting fires of a new age, made more intense by the impacts of climate change. Catastrophic wildfires threaten public safety, public health, our communities and critical infrastructure, cultural resources and our environment, tourism, and our economy. In response to this challenge, the Legislature created the wildfire programs in 2021 with a goal to advance fire protection by responding to and mitigating the catastrophic impacts of wildfire across Oregon. The Wildfire Programs include a 19-member advisory council appointed by the Legislature, a director appointed by the Governor, and 11 agencies with wildfire-related programmatic responsibilities. Some of this funding was directed towards the development of your vision to create the Training Center, and I am pleased to see the progress you have made thus far.

I understand that the Training Center, once established, will offer a state-of-the-art facility where regional trainings will be offered to develop the next generation of wildfire fighters. Regional demand for training entry level Type II to Type I fire fighters is on the rise. Fire line leadership training including Single Resource Bosses, Task Force and Strike Team Leaders, among others is of increasing importance in the region and I understand the Training Center's facility will be made available to all entities seeking to partner in wildfire training.

I understand that when in full operational status, the Training Center can function as an Incident Command Post to house Incident Management Teams and helicopter base camps, during disasters to include wildfires. Curry County has limited ability to respond to all hazardous events due to capacity, equipment and required training. This facility will increase response as it will allow response resources to pre-position, train locally and better prepare responders within Curry County to respond when needed. Finding locations suitable for these missions can be hard to come by and the strategic location of the facility will be of great value to the region. For initial attack resource stationing, I appreciate the vision you have established to make the facility available to interagency 20-person hand crews, air-attack and helitack management crews – all essential assets when available housing for these crews in rural southwest Oregon is becoming increasingly more difficult to find. This is a region of Oregon where initial attack resources are

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critical to keeping the next catastrophic wildfire off the landscape and immediate response of wildfire resources can make the difference between a fire stopped during the first burn period and a mega-fire.

I understand that the facilities and surrounding acres will also be available for the administration and training development for Oregon's prescribed burn program. Prescribed fire and other wildfire mitigation strategies to support landscape resiliency are essential to reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. I greatly appreciate this aspect of the Training Center's vision, as executing mitigation strategies are of growing interest nationally and there is much work to do regionally on this front.

As an official Oregon 501c3 non-profit organization with an outstanding board of directors representing a strong cross-section of the wildfire fighting profession, I see great potential for your partnerships regionally. I encourage you to partner with all wildfire fire agencies, local fire districts, non-governmental organizations, Tribes, and the private firefighting sector who is wishing to advance fire protection in southern Oregon. Your grassroots achievements to date have been impressive. I understand you have acquired two parcels for the Training Center in Curry County's Euchre Creek Valley, totally 30 acres. I understand you are completing extensive site work, wetland delineation and environmental work, geotechnical work, and I have seen the initial engineering, design, and architectural work for the facility. Very impressive!

This project is an ambitious undertaking for Southern Oregon that will protect the regions communities and natural resources from catastrophic wildfire and other natural disasters. You have my full support in your bid to seek \$30 million dollars in federal funding towards the construction of this state-of-the-art training facility. I understand that \$30 million dollars in federal funding would help to facilitate the opening of the Training Center's doors to wildfire training courses within an 18-month period from receipt of the dollars; I appreciate your constant state of readiness.

Please feel free to share this letter of support broadly, as you seek financing for the effort. I want to thank you for your dedication and commitment to advancing fire protection in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Doug Grafe

Wildfire Advisor for Governor Tina Kotek