



## EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 10 – 07

### REBUILDING VERNONIA'S SCHOOLS AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY IN THE WAKE OF THE DECEMBER 2007 STORM

During the December 2007 storm, eleven inches of rain fell in little more than a day, causing flooding in thirty-five square miles of Columbia County. At my direction, state agencies including the Oregon National Guard, the Office of Emergency Management, and the Department of Corrections, responded to offer help, aid, and assistance.

Much of Vernonia's public infrastructure and property was damaged or destroyed in the flood. The flood damaged every public school building. As much as five feet of floodwater poured into the elementary school, and water rendered the middle school and high school uninhabitable. Since the flood, the nearly 700 students of the school district have had to attend school in the minimally-repaired grade school building, the middle school, and modular classrooms located nearby. Half of the district's 2,200 homes suffered damage, with 800 homes suffering substantial damage, and over 100 homes deemed to be beyond repair.

In addition, the city's infrastructure was significantly impacted by the flood. Water tainted by the compromised sewage system inundated the health clinic, food bank, and senior center, as well as West Oregon Electric's main office and electrical substations. The waste water treatment facility was also severely damaged.

Despite these challenges, much good has happened. The flooding resulted in an outpouring of concern, interest, and aid from across Oregon and from a wide group of interests. Of particular concern has been the rebuilding of the community's schools. In 2008, I designated the recovery effort an Oregon Solutions project and appointed taskforce members representing federal, state and local government, private industry, civic organizations and philanthropy to bring capacity to the recovery effort and to chart a course to a successful rebuilding of the schools and community. This designation continues to attract valuable new partners to the table.

The community is working valiantly to rebuild. In November 2009, Vernonia School District voters approved a \$13 million bond to build a new integrated K-12 school complex outside of the flood plain in Spencer Park. Oregon Solutions will continue to lead the effort to close the gap in financing needed to rebuild the schools.



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Notwithstanding the fact that it experienced two significant and damaging flood events in eleven years, Vernonia can be seen as a classic example of the decline of Oregon's rural resource based economy. This community was one of the first historic timber towns to see the loss of its forest products infrastructure. If a strategy can be designed and implemented to bring this community back, beginning with its schools, the economy of the surrounding region can be revitalized. In addition to this significant achievement, a model will be in place that can then be replicated across other hard hit communities of the state. Success in Vernonia will send an important message that the tools exist to rebuild economic viability in Oregon's rural, as well as its urban communities.

To facilitate reconstruction of Vernonia's damaged schools and to bring about the economic revitalization of the region, agencies are encouraged to think broadly and creatively about actions that can be taken. This Order directs state agencies to work collaboratively and assist Vernonia and its surrounding community to rebuild its schools and public infrastructure.

**NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY DIRECTED AND ORDERED:**

1. All state agencies with roles and responsibilities for oversight, funding and regulation shall work in a cooperative and coordinated manner with local and federal government entities to assist Vernonia's efforts to rebuild its public schools. When consistent with state and federal law, agencies shall provide help, aid and assistance and give priority to the immediate task of school rebuilding. In particular, the following actions shall be taken:

- a. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) shall give priority to the processing of the application to the National Park Service for the conversion of Spencer Park to a non-park use for the new school complex;
- b. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) shall work cooperatively with the school district for the proposed changes to the intersection of Highway 47 and Missouri Avenue, which will provide primary access road for the new school complex;
- c. The Department of State Lands shall give priority to the review of removal/fill permit applications and wetland mitigation requirements related to school site development;
- d. The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) shall help with Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data collection, interpretation and application in assessing school



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- location safety, potential flood threats, and wastewater runoff proposals; and
- e. The Oregon University System, the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development and Oregon State University will explore opportunities to add forest management programs and curriculum at the new school campus, including research, training and help in promoting the development of businesses and infrastructure utilizing wood as an economic resource.
2. State agencies shall also strive to assist Vernonia's efforts to rebuild and restore essential public infrastructure. In particular, the following actions shall be taken:
- a. OPRD shall work with the city to transfer a parcel of property adjacent to the Banks Vernonia State Trail for the purposes of establishing facilities to provide senior services, a food bank, and community health services. OPRD shall also assist the city in planning for the use of the hundred plus acres of land to be acquired through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buyout program and in its ultimate use in the city as an open space in perpetuity;
  - b. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) shall give priority to the review of the environmental assessment for the new waste water treatment facility and explore wastewater funding opportunities for the community. DEQ shall also help the city to overcome the effects of existing environmental contamination by providing Brownfield technical assistance to affect safe and timely property redevelopment;
  - c. The Department of Land Conservation and Development shall continue to assist the community of Vernonia in land use planning for its urban area in light of updated information concerning development hazards and evolving community needs associated with economic revitalization;
  - d. ODOT shall give priority to reviewing and providing technical assistance with transportation system improvements in response to flood recovery efforts; and
  - e. The Oregon Business Development Department shall promote access to the Special Public Works Fund, the Immediate Opportunity Fund and where appropriate, funding using the State Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program to



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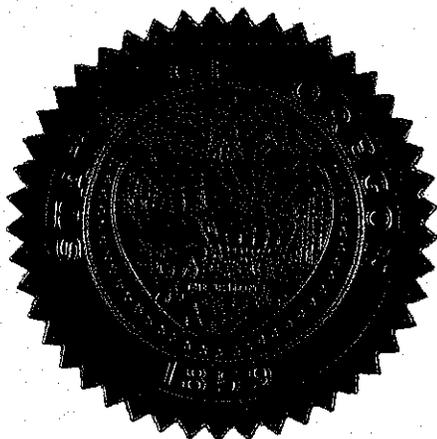
make available local health clinic, food bank and senior center facilities.

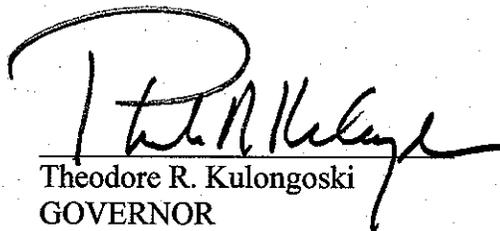
3. State agencies shall seek to facilitate economic development and revitalization in Vernonia. Specifically, the following actions shall be taken:
  - a. The Oregon Department of Forestry shall explore opportunities to facilitate the delivery of a renewable wood fuel supply from the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests, as well as private ownerships in the region. Agency activities related to developing wood as a renewable fuel source in northwest Oregon will be considered an important priority;
  - b. The Oregon Department of Energy shall assist with identifying and securing renewable energy and sustainable building upgrade opportunities; and
  - c. To the extent consistent with the DAS Facilities Division facility siting process (Policy Number 125-6-115) and the agency's mission, agencies shall consider siting a state facility in Vernonia.
4. The Oregon Military Department's Office of Emergency Management shall continue to work closely with federal agencies in the coordination of recovery efforts and in working to secure appropriate help and funding.
5. State agencies shall continue to communicate and collaborate with the Oregon Solutions taskforce about school and infrastructure rebuilding efforts as well as economic development opportunities.
6. State agencies shall report to the Governor on a periodic basis, as requested, regarding their progress in implementing this Order.
7. This order expires on June 30, 2013.



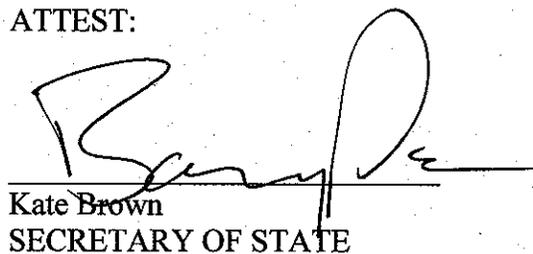
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Done at Salem, Oregon, this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of August, 2010.



  
Theodore R. Kulongoski  
GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

  
Kate Brown  
SECRETARY OF STATE