



RS EXCHANGE REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Monday, August 24th, 2026



Regional Updates

Eastern — Courtney Crowell

Fire Recovery – Virtual Fencing: As communities across Eastern Oregon begin to recover from the devastating fires of this summer we have learned that USDA is now allowing virtual fencing as an eligible component under the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This is a great tool that we are seeing being deployed across Eastern Oregon and might begin to help those ranchers across Eastern Oregon who are using this technology. Virtual fencing serves as an effective adaptive management tool, providing ongoing conservation benefits beyond its initial function. When appropriate for the operation, this technology enables flexible forage and water management without creating physical barriers that may limit wildlife movement.

Federal Funding for Wood Product Projects in Grant County: Great news this week as the federal government announced over [\\$6 million in USDA funding](#) for two Grant County sawmills. This is great news that will help to reopen two wood products facilities in the region.

Southern — Jessica LaBerge

Rogue Valley COAD responses to local wildfires: This year's wildfire response has been one of the largest on record and we wanted to give a shout out to the Rogue Valley Community Organizations Active in Disaster (RVCOAD). This group is doing fantastic work alongside many first responder agencies and emergency management staff, adding capacity and operational resilience locally. For helpful information, volunteer registration, or to support the organization, visit them at [RV COAD Rogue Valley Community Organizations Active in Disaster](#).

Jackson County residents are encouraged to sign up for Jackson Alerts – information on the Jackson County emergency management page or here: [Jackson Alerts](#)

Josephine County residents can sign up for alerts here: [JoCo Alerts - Sign In](#)

Rural Healthcare Workforce Grant: A business-led coalition in the Rogue Valley has secured a \$5 Million state grant to support expansion of the rural healthcare workforce in Southern Oregon. The funding was awarded to [Rogue Workforce Partnerships \(RWP\)](#) through the [Rural Health Transformation Program](#).

RWP, which connects residents with employment opportunities and helps local businesses access skilled workers, prioritizes healthcare workforce development in Jackson and Josephine Counties. The newly awarded funds will support RWP's Allied Health and Non-Physician Workforce Expansion Project, a coordinated effort involving multiple regional health organizations. This project aims to strengthen healthcare service delivery

and expand career pathways across Southern Oregon's rural communities. Find more information [here](#).

South Coast — Jessica LaBerge

New Executive Director at UEDP: Great news to share if you haven't heard, the Umpqua Economic Development Partnership has a new Executive Director, Jeana Beam. Regional Solutions sat down with Jeana recently to update on regional projects and engagement, and also collaborate with UEDP on future site visits, problem solving and funding for local projects. Jeana brings years of experience in disaster recovery and partnership building, we are excited to work with Jeana and the Partnership. More information can be found [here](#).

Not too late to register for the August 27th Governor's Marketplace in North Bend: This is Southwestern Oregon's opportunity to join us for the final Governor's Marketplace for 2026. The [Governor's Marketplace](#) brings information about public contracting opportunities and business resources to Oregonians across the state. The theme of this year's Governor's Marketplace is Pathways to Partnerships. This one day, in-person event will be held in North Bend on August 27th from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Pre-registration is highly recommended as session space is limited. The event is free to attend, and light morning refreshments and lunch will be provided at no cost.

This event includes several training session offerings that we invite you to attend. Contractors licensed by the Construction Contractors Board (CCB) who attend these training courses are eligible to receive one continuing education unit per session. To receive continuing education credits, you must complete the pre-registration form and also sign-in when you arrive at the training classroom. Event schedule and registration [here](#).



Metro — Kathy Hyzy

I-5 CLOSURE in Portland Coming Soon! Do you have a trip planned along I-5 through Portland? Starting September 11th, all lanes of I-5 Southbound will be closed for up to five weeks. The roadway surface has surpassed its 25-year lifespan and shows its age with an increasing number of ruts, cracks and potholes from heavy use. ODOT will repair and strengthen weak areas, replace bridge joints, resurface the concrete deck and repaint lane lines on the highway. The closure was the safest, most cost-effective option for completing this essential work. Expect congestion

on I-5 and on alternate routes, and plan ahead by allowing extra time and exploring alternate transportation, routes and timing. Learn more [here](#).

NEA Chair Visits Oregon: Earlier this month, Business Oregon's Arts & Culture team hosted the National Endowment for the Arts' Chair Mary Anne Carter on a whirlwind tour of arts investments in Portland. NEA funding accounts for 26% of the budget for the Arts Commission; most of those funds are distributed locally to support the arts. I joined the group for a great tour of the Rothko Pavillion addition to the Portland Art Museum, which highlighted the ways the new addition welcomes children in particular to see themselves as artists. Stops also included North Pole Studios, Woodstock Cafe, and All-Classical Radio.

**We have A LOT of
Resources & Opportunities
this publication—keep reading!**

Resources and Opportunities

Additional Information Available on the Regional Infrastructure Fund Website

The Regional Solutions Team continues to talk with communities across the state about the Regional Infrastructure Fund and answer questions about this grant opportunity. To provide additional information about the program, the [RIF website](#) now includes a recording of last week's [Applicant Webinar](#) and answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#). To find these links and more, scroll down to the Documents and Resources section of the website. If communities are interested in the opportunity and still have questions or want to talk through their project before applying, please reach out to your local [Regional Solutions Coordinator](#) or RIF staff at RIF.BIZ@biz.oregon.gov. Questions are due by September 2nd, and applications are due on September 16th.

Recruiting for the Governor's Racial Justice Council – Apply by August 28th

The Governor's office is seeking applicants to join the Racial Justice Council (RJC) and its five committees: Criminal Justice Reform, Education, Health Equity and Human Services, Economic Opportunity, and Housing and Homelessness.

Codified into law in 2021, the RJC and its committees are composed of individuals from across the state that come from many different backgrounds and life experiences. The RJC provides communities that have been historically excluded from decision-making tables more meaningful access to and a voice in the policy making that directly impacts the lives of Oregonians of color. An individual serving on the Racial Justice Council or one of its five committees is a critical partner and advisor to the Governor, helping to align priorities and the state's policies and operations with a racial justice and equity framework. Council members are appointed by Governor Tina Kotek. Applicants must:

- Demonstrate a commitment to racial equity, social and economic justice, diversity, and inclusion.
- Have a connection to, or experience working with, historically underserved communities, particularly tribal communities, immigrants, refugees, Black, Indigenous and People of Color.
- Have personal and/or professional experience and knowledge in public policy, criminal justice reform, police accountability, economic opportunity, housing, homelessness, health equity, behavioral health, or education.

- Each Council member may serve on one of the five committees.
- Be committed to serving a one or a two-year term with active participation.

To apply please click [here](#) or visit the Governor's Board and Commission Appointments web page and scroll down to "EXTERNAL – New Applicant" to begin the process.

Applications will be accepted through August 28th at 5:00pm. For any additional questions please email Javier Cervantes at Javier.cervantes@oregon.gov.

Industrial Site Loan Fund Open for Applications through September 4th

Oregon's [Industrial Site Loan Fund](#) is still open for applications! The minimum loan amount per Project is \$25,000. Planning Projects (land-use planning, engineering, feasibility studies, surveys, and related pre-development work) will be considered for up to \$250,000 as forgivable loans and Development Projects (site acquisition, infrastructure, environmental remediation, construction, and related improvements) will be considered for up to \$4,000,000. Loan repayment may be deferred for up to 5 years. Applications are due by 5 pm on Friday, September 4th. Visit the Business Oregon website for more information and to view the recent Applicant Webinar.

Provide Input to the Rebuilding Our Transportation Vision Workgroup by September 10th

Governor Kotek's [Rebuilding Transportation Vision Workgroup](#) wants to hear directly from Oregonians about their priorities for Oregon's transportation system. The [survey](#) will be available online until 6 p.m., September 10. Feedback from the survey will help inform the upcoming recommendations from the Workgroup that will be delivered to the Governor. The Workgroup welcomes feedback from the public as it develops recommendations to rebuild Oregon's transportation system. [Take the survey here](#).

Additional feedback for the Workgroup can be sent to RebuildingTransportation@odot.oregon.gov. You can sign up for meeting and workgroup updates [here](#).

Join us at the Oregon Infrastructure Summit on September 16th in Salem!

Infrastructure is fundamental to Oregon's economic competitiveness, community resilience, and quality of life. The 2026 Oregon Infrastructure Summit convenes leaders from state government, local governments, tribal nations, ports, utilities, and the private sector to address the policies, funding strategies, and implementation challenges that influence infrastructure across Oregon. The Summit is designed to improve coordination, transparency, and alignment among organizations responsible for planning, funding, regulating, and delivering infrastructure projects. Through strategic discussions on policy, investment, and project delivery, participants will help identify solutions that strengthen communities, enhance economic competitiveness, and support Oregon's long-term prosperity. This year's program examines how Oregon can better align infrastructure priorities, funding tools, regulatory frameworks, and delivery models to meet the state's future economic and community development needs.

The Infrastructure Summit takes place on September 16th at the Salem Convention Center. This year, registration is complimentary for officials and employees of city, county, and regional governments, as well as legislative offices. This opportunity is made possible through the support of Summit sponsors.

[Register here!](#)

Regional Solutions staff will be tabling at the Summit – we invite you to stop by and say hello!

Oregon Businesses Encouraged to Report Wildfire and Smoke Impacts

As wildfires and prolonged smoke affect communities across Oregon, impacts can extend well beyond areas directly touched by fire. Businesses may experience physical damage, closures, reduced customers, canceled events or activities, lost revenue, or other disruptions associated with wildfire and smoke conditions.

The Oregon Department of Emergency Management has launched a Business Self-Reporting Damage Survey ([English/Español](#)) to gather information from businesses affected by wildfires statewide. Businesses experiencing physical damage, operational disruptions, reduced customers, canceled events, or economic losses due to wildfire or smoke—directly or indirectly—are encouraged to report their impacts.

Information provided through the survey helps state partners develop a clearer picture of the scope and scale of economic and physical impacts across Oregon and helps determine whether affected areas may qualify for SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans (though completing the survey does not guarantee assistance).

For more information visit [here](#).

EPA Grants to Strengthen the Water Sector Workforce – Apply by October 5th

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is soliciting applications to accelerate career pipelines in the water utilities sector and provide access to water utility workforce opportunities. The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support expanding career opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector and elevating public awareness about jobs in the water workforce. Eligible applicants include Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), nonprofit organizations, and public works departments and agencies. Eligible activities include apprenticeship and internship programs, education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students, regional industry collaborations, and training programs designed to support decentralized workforce. Efforts should aim for measurable results and clearly show tangible benefits for water systems and communities.

The deadline to apply is October 5, 2026. For more information, visit their website [here](#).

Resources for Communities Experiencing Drought

As drought conditions continue to impact communities across much of Oregon, state and federal partners are offering multiple programs that help communities address declining water availability, improve local water infrastructure, and offset drought-related economic losses. Some programs also have provisions applying to those affected by fire.

WaterSMART Drought Response Program

[The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program](#) supports projects that strengthen drought resilience through long-term planning and infrastructure improvements.

Who may apply:

- States, Tribes, irrigation districts, and water districts
- State, regional, or local authorities with water or power delivery responsibilities
- Other qualified organizations with water or power delivery authority

How funds may be used:

- Development of drought contingency plans
- Water management decision-support tools
- Infrastructure to improve water storage, distribution, and supply diversification
- Planning and implementation measures that help communities prepare for and respond to drought conditions

Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund

[The Oregon Water Resources Department's Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund](#) (WARRF) provides financial assistance to low-to-moderate income homeowners or members of a federally recognized Tribe in Oregon experiencing well water supply issues. Grants assist with dry wells and wells damaged or destroyed by wildfire. A majority of the program funding is dedicated to applications from state drought-declared counties or for wells impacted by wildfire.

Who may apply:

- Qualifying low-to-moderate income homeowners or members of a federally recognized Tribe
- Homeowners with a well connected to their home that can no longer provide enough water for essential in-home use including drinking, cooking and bathing

How funds may be used:

- Reimburse up to \$40,000 for work by a licensed professional and materials associated with and necessary to abandon, repair, or replace eligible wells

How to apply:

- Application and more information on qualifying and important instructions can be found [here](#)
- Funding is limited and allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis to qualified applicants

OWRD encourages reporting of all dry wells via the state's Dry Well website at owrd.info/drywell.

SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Program

The U.S. Small Business Administration announced the availability of low-interest federal disaster loans for eligible small businesses and private nonprofit organizations impacted by the drought in Oregon.

- **For drought in the following counties beginning March 24 and continuing:** Benton, Clackamas, Coos, Crook, Curry, Deschutes, Douglas, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Jackson, Jefferson, Josephine, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Morrow, Polk, Wasco, Wheeler, and Yamhill.
- **For drought in the following counties beginning April 1 and continuing:** Baker, Clackamas, Coos, Crook, Curry, Deschutes, Douglas, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jackson, Jefferson, Josephine, Lake, Malheur, Marion, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wasco, and Wheeler.

You can [apply online](#) and read more details on the [MySBA Loan Portal](#). Application deadline for Economic Injury Disaster Loans is March 1st, 2027.

Who Can Apply:

- Small businesses
- Private nonprofits & faith-based organizations
- Small agricultural cooperatives & nurseries
- Small aquaculture enterprises

Key Details – Economic Injury Disaster Loans (working capital for operational expenses):

- Up to \$2 million in loan funding
- Loan terms of up to 30 years
- No interest/required payments during the first 12 months after disbursement
- Interest rates as low as:
 - 4% for small businesses and
 - 3.625% for private nonprofit organizations

Applicants may call the SBA Customer Service Center with questions regarding their application at (800) 659-2955 or mail disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. For people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

Intertribal Agriculture Council Technical Assistance

The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) maintains a Technical Assistance (TA) Network that provides direct on-the-ground assistance with USDA program access and supplemental resource identification through conducting outreach,

assessing program applicability and eligibility, supporting interface with USDA and partners, advising on contract implementation, and growing tailored support networks. Visit indianag.org for more information and to identify your technical assistance specialist.

Additional Resources

- [County and Individual Resources](#)
- [Tribal Resources](#)
- [National Drought Mitigation Center CMOR Fact Sheet](#)

State Options for Water Right Holders

Water right holders in counties with a Governor-declared drought may have certain short-term tools available. See [Oregon Water Resources Department's Drought Emergency Tools document](#) or [contact your watermaster](#) for more information. Examples include:

- Temporary Transfer: Apply to change the type of use, place of use, or the location of the diversion under an existing water right. A temporary drought transfer takes place under an expedited process and is in effect for the duration of the drought declaration or up to one year, whichever is shorter.
- Temporary Instream Lease: Convert all or a portion of a water right to an instream use for a period of one year or the term of the drought declaration, whichever is shorter.
- Temporary Emergency Water Use Permit: An approved emergency water use drought permit allows a water user to temporarily replace water not available under an existing water right.
- Temporary Substitution: Any person holding both a primary right originating from a surface water source and a supplemental right from a groundwater source may apply to temporarily use the supplemental right instead.
- Temporary Exchange of Water: The Water Resources Commission can approve a temporary exchange of existing rights, such as using stored water instead of a direct-flow surface-water right.
- Special Option Agreements: A water-right holder can enter into an agreement that authorizes the use of water at locations, from points of diversion, and for uses other than those described in the water right. Interested parties must first work through the scoping of the need and propose it to the watermaster before ultimately submitting it to the Department for analysis and review. Once approved by the Water Resources Commission, these agreements would be usable the moment a drought declaration under Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter 536 is signed by the Governor and do not require approval each season.