



## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

# AGENDA REQUEST & STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** June 21, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Approve an agreement accepting a Community Wildfire Risk Reduction program grant from the Oregon State Fire Marshal

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:**

Move approval of Chair signature of Document No. 2023-491, an agreement accepting a Community Wildfire Risk Reduction program grant from the Oregon State Fire Marshal.

**BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

In 2021, the Oregon State Legislature passed Senate Bill 762 (SB 762) providing \$220 million to help Oregon modernize and improve wildland fire preparedness through three key strategies: creating fire adapted communities, developing safe and effective response, and increasing the resiliency of Oregon's landscapes. As part of SB 762, the OSFM provided \$25 million to five categories of potential recipients. Deschutes County successfully competed for a \$500,000 grant, which can be implemented over a three year period, with no match requirements and is a direct allocation of funding once the attached agreement is complete. The purpose of this Grant is to award dollars for defensible space available to protect people, property, and communities from wildfire through community risk reduction programs and projects.

Deschutes County will use these funds to support the existing programming for the establishment of fire adaptive landscapes. The FireFree program was introduced in the mid-1990s to empower residents to understand the necessity of hazardous fuels reduction projects throughout the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). For more than two decades, the FireFree program has educated individual members of society to take ownership of defensible space projects while inspiring communities to collaborate with one another to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire events. Although the FireFree program was initially created to assist the residents of Bend, it has grown to include the whole of Deschutes County as well as portions of both Klamath and Jefferson Counties. Furthermore, these efforts have cultivated a pool of organizations qualified to conduct chipping operations and hazardous fuels reduction treatments. These projects have enabled the disposal of 35,000+ cubic yards of debris each year. In partnership with Deschutes Rural Fire District #2, this program guides local FireWise neighborhoods to achieve or otherwise maintain FireWise standards by ensuring treatments have been completed satisfactorily. Deschutes County

will leverage \$75,000 in funding over three years for FireWise maintenance and seed money for more neighborhoods to become FireWise, Fire Adapted Communities. Further efforts for the benefit of fire adaptive landscapes and programming would include collaborating with the Central Oregon Council on Aging and County Health Departments to identify vulnerable populations and communities at risk so that they may learn to withstand wildfire without loss of life or property while improving effective wildfire response (\$75,000) and OSFM grant administration, kickoff-meeting requirements, coordination with agencies, FireWise neighborhoods, and Fire Adaptive Community efforts (\$50,000).

**BUDGET IMPACTS:**

An amendment to the FY23-24 Deschutes County Budget will be required.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Joe Stutler, Senior Advisor

Jodie Barram, Oregon Living With Fire Co-Coordinator