

Stakeholder/Elected Official Letterhead Here

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Date:

The High Desert Museum has worked in partnership with Deschutes County and The Oregon Department of Emergency Management to submit the ***High Desert Museum Water Delivery System*** project for consideration under FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant in the 2023 program cycle.

The High Desert Museum is located near Bend, Oregon, United States and been inspiring families since 1982. The Museum's exhibit space offers access to hands-on historical and scientific learning opportunities. It brings together over 60 wildlife species and more than 30,000 irreplaceable cultural artifacts from across North America's High Desert Country. Over 200,000 visitors per year experience a close-up view of historical characters, may listen to stories of early Oregon explorers, and develop an understanding of Native American culture. Overall, The High Desert Museum creates learning experiences to help audiences to discover their connection to the past, their role in the present, and their responsibility to the future including, learning to live with wildland fire.

Central Oregon continues to live under the constant threat of catastrophic wildland fire events. In fact, this area has experienced upwards of 500 wildland fires which burn an average of 200,000 acres annually. The frequency and increasing severity of these events are of great concern to the emergency response community. The potential loss of the High Desert Museum coupled with the safe evacuation of wildlife, irreplaceable artifacts, and the general population continues to be a top priority for first responders and public safety agencies.

The proposed 100,000-gallon system will be utilized for storage while offering remote or sensor activated water deployment around the Museum's 134- acre campus including dozens of historical structures. This new technology will alleviate the improbability of successful evacuation strategies (and their costs) for the Museum under imminent threat of wildfire. In fact, the installation of this system would enable the museum to "shelter in place" in the event of a wildfire while ensuring emergency responders may focus their efforts where the need is greatest.

The Museum has and continues to complete hazardous fuels reduction strategies across their landscape in defense of catastrophic wildfire events. Nevertheless, wildland fire professionals have witnessed the extreme fire behavior in Western United States and agree that the Museum is vulnerable to the ongoing threat of extended fire seasons. As elected officials from Deschutes County, we urge FEMA to recognize the critical need of this investment through the BRIC Grant Program.

Sincerely,
Deschutes County Board of County Commissioners