



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA REQUEST & STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: January 14, 2026

SUBJECT: Submittal of a Letter of Intent to the Allen Foundation seeking a grant for a multi-partner fuels reduction project involving the production of bio-char

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Move to authorize the submittal of a Letter of Intent to the Allen Foundation seeking a grant for a multi-partner fuels reduction project involving the production of bio-char.

BACKGROUND AND POLIY IMPLICATIONS:

Deschutes County is coordinating a USDA Forest Service-funded Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) project in South County. This project will reduce fuels on 585 acres of County property and 100 miles of County right-of-way. Disposal of the biomass produced by removing these fuels is costly.

A funding opportunity from the Allen Foundation could help the County and other landowners implement fuels reduction more safely and cleanly, and enable disposing of biomass from fuels reduction projects in a cost-effective manner. The emerging bio-char market is an alternative way to dispose of waste from fuels reduction while generating revenue to help pay for that disposal.

The proposal is to use the air curtain burner the County is purchasing for the CWDG (or a larger unit and crew on a contract basis) to produce bio-char which currently has a market price of \$100-150 per ton in voluntary carbon markets. At the same time that producing and selling bio-char generates revenue for disposing of fuels, producing bio-char also diminishes the risk of fire escape inherent in burning waste, and mitigates harm from smoke.

If awarded, the grant from the Allen Foundation would be used to: fund the development of a business model and pilot production of bio-char; utilize bio-char in areas where carbon credits could be generated; and develop measurement and verification systems to facilitate selling the credits. Beyond exploring the production of bio-char from County lands and rights of way, the grant could also fund the exploration of producing bio-char from private landowner properties of various sizes (home-scale, small woodland owner-scale, private

industrial forest land owner-scale) and possibly from other public land fuels projects as well.

This grant requires that a government or non-profit applicant submit a Letter of Interest by January 15th. Oregon Department of Forestry and the Deschutes Soil & Water Conservation District have suggested that Deschutes County serve as the applicant.

The draft Letter of Intent is attached. The fourth section, "Description of Existing Project," will be a brief description of the County's CWDG project.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

Deschutes County would request between \$1,500,000 - \$2,000,000 for the proposed project. There is no match requirement for the Allen Foundation funds.

ATTENDANCE:

Erik Kropp, Deschutes County Administration
Will Groves, Planning Manager