



# RS EXCHANGE

## REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

### **Announcing New Regional Coordinators**

We're excited to welcome four new Coordinators to the Regional Solutions team in June! After a rigorous hiring process that included interviews with local community leaders, we were fortunate to have exceptional finalists rise from a strong pool of candidates for each position. Each of our new Coordinators brings deep connections within their regions, experience working across layers of government and with different types of partners to accomplish community goals, and a diverse set of backgrounds that will enrich the whole team's capacity across the state.

Together with long-serving Coordinators Courtney Warner Crowell (Greater Eastern & Northeast OR Regions) and Nate Stice (North Central and North Coast Regions), Director Porterfield (Metro Region), and Regional Solutions Assistant Zach Pippo, these hires will restore statewide coverage within the program. We're all eager for this added capacity to allow us to work more closely with communities to solve problems and advance projects.

Please help them feel welcome as they start their new roles!

#### **Jessica LaBerge – Southern OR & South Coast Regions**

Jessica comes to us with an extensive emergency management background and experience working at the community level in counties across the southwest corner of the state. Most recently as the Disaster Services Program Manager at Catholic Charities where she served Oregonians impacted by the 2020 and 2021 wildfires, Jessica has also worked in the public sector including as Emergency Services Manager for Josephine County. Based in Grants Pass and working from the Medford Regional Solutions Center, Jessica will start her new position on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **Zavier Borja – Central & South Central OR Regions**

Most recently serving as Community Relations Manager for the City of Bend, Zavier previously founded Vamanos Outside, a nonprofit dedicated to ensuring equitable access to the outdoors, worked for the Bend LaPine School District and Bend Parks and Recreation District and is active with a number of community organizations. He grew up in Central Oregon (Redmond, Metolius,

Madras & Kimberly) and has deep connections within the region. Xavier will be based at the Bend Regional Solutions Center and will start his new position on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Courtney Flathers – South-Valley/Mid-Coast Region**

Courtney comes to us from Business Oregon, where she has served as the Ports Program Policy Coordinator for the past year. Previously a Field Representative for US Senator Merkley and Chief of Staff for former State Representative Caddy McKeown, Courtney has experience solving problems within multiple levels of government in communities across the region and has participated in Regional Solutions Teams in the past. Based out of the Eugene Regional Solutions Center, Courtney will start her new position on June 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **Beth Wytoski – Mid-Valley Region**

The former Mayor of Dayton and President of the Oregon Mayors Association Board, Beth has extensive experience with local government and a track record of finding creative ways to resolve difficult situations. Beth has also taught Government and Economics at Dayton High School for over a decade and previously served as Board Chair for Yamhill Community Action Partnership, helping provide service to vulnerable populations to address homelessness, hunger, and mental health. Based in Dayton and working from the Governor's office in Salem, Beth starts her new position on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **North Central Region**

**Warm Springs Interagency Coordination:** Regional Solutions continues to be engaged in work to address drinking water instability for the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs. Team members helped to secure the initial state investments (both legislative and from Business Oregon) to help stabilize the current drinking water facility, and the Warm Springs engaged Regional Solutions in facilitating ongoing conversations to address continued stabilization of the current plant, planning for contingency should it fail, and the development of a new plant.

Team members attended a meeting convened by federal agencies last week to hear updates on the progress and assess reengagement with the project. IHS and EPA are close to completing a contract that will move the replacement project to 30 percent design. There is still concern about the current plant, especially with the replacement not expected to come online for several years.

## **Greater Eastern Region**

**City of Granite Emergency Response Needs:** Business Oregon staff alerted the Regional Solutions team that the city of Granite (population 30) was in need of funding to secure a generator to mitigate the power safety shut offs that will be practiced by the regional power company during certain weather events. This could impact the city's water system. RS passed this request along to the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM) and found out that they have a grant program that this would be eligible for. ODEM staff will be helping assist the community with the grant information and ODEM is also looking to see if they might be able to find a used generator that the community can use while the grant funding is secured. RS will continue to follow-up with the City of Granite as this process unfolds.

## Resources & Opportunities

### **Oregon Coast Trail Action Plan Open for Public Comment through June 12<sup>th</sup>**

The Oregon Coast Trail (OCT) spans the entire Oregon coastline, offering hikers spectacular coastal vistas, lush forests, and an incredible recreation opportunity. However, 10 percent of the trail remains disconnected, inaccessible, or unsafe. Oregon State Parks has partnered with the Federal Highway Administration, Association of Oregon Counties, and Oregon Solutions to develop an Action Plan to complete the trail. Aiming to fill the gaps and provide a continuous hiking opportunity along the coast, the Oregon Coast Action Plan will guide improvements, maintenance and management of the trail. The draft Action Plan can be viewed at a [Virtual Open House](#), where you can also provide your input. Public comments are due by June 12th.

### **USDA Webinars on Programs to Advance Clean Energy Initiatives in Rural America**

USDA will host a series of webinars to help organizations learn how to apply for financial assistance to advance clean, affordable and reliable electric energy in rural America. USDA recently announced \$10.7 billion in funding available under the USDA [Powering Affordable Clean Energy](#) (USDA PACE) and [Empowering Rural America](#) (New ERA) programs. Eligible organizations may apply for loans, grants, loan modifications and partially forgivable loans. [Details about the webinars, which start June 6<sup>th</sup>, can be found here.](#)