



MEMORANDUM

To: Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners
From: Nancy Bush, Interim Director, Public & Government Affairs
RE: Support Letter Request for the Riverwalk Block 3 and 4 Project
Date: October 06, 2026

REQUEST: Approve letter in support of a grant proposal by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to fund the Riverwalk Block 3 and 4 Project.

BACKGROUND: The National Park Service (NPS) has issued a notice of funding opportunity under the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP). The program provides funding to acquire land and water for parks and other outdoor recreation purposes in qualifying areas, and to develop new or renovate existing outdoor recreation facilities that provide outdoor recreation opportunities to the public in qualifying areas.

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde | Riverwalk Block 3 and 4 Project: The project seeks \$15 million in funding to construct an elevated, ADA-accessible Riverwalk extending south toward Willamette Falls, restore shoreline habitat, reopen historic river alcoves, and reconnect the public to Willamette Falls for the first time in more than a century. The Riverwalk Block 3 & 4 Project is estimated to support up to 948 jobs across construction, restoration, design, and long-term operations. Metro's Large-Scale Community Visions Program (LSCV) has designated \$20M for Riverwalk Blocks 3 & 4. This investment will leverage additional federal and state funding, including up to \$15M from the National Park Service and future EPA/Business Oregon grants. The Grand Ronde Tribe and Oregon City jointly manage the project under a 2026 Intergovernmental Agreement, building on over a decade of community engagement and broad regional support.

Clackamas County departments do not anticipate submitting a competing grant application.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve letter in support of the grant proposal to fund the Riverwalk Block 3 and 4 Project.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Bush, Interim Director, Public & Government Affairs

ATTACHMENTS

#A: Draft Letter of Support
#B: Project Factsheet

DRAFT Board of County Commissioners Letter

October 06, 2026

Secretary Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Jessica Bowron
Comptroller, Acting Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Riverwalk Block 3 and 4 Project

Dear Secretary Burgum and Acting Director Bowron,

On behalf of Clackamas County, I write to express support for the Riverwalk Block 3 and 4 Project by the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon (Grand Ronde Tribe) for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP).

Formerly the Blue Heron Paper Mill, the Grand Ronde Tribe purchased the project site in 2019 and has been working to remediate contamination and prepare for redevelopment. The site is located within the Grand Ronde Tribe's ancestral homelands, as defined by the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855.

The Riverwalk Project at *tumwata village* will transform an underused stretch of the riverbank into a welcoming space with walking trails, gathering areas, river access, and natural buffers alongside Willamette Falls, the second largest waterfall by volume in the United States. Completing planned pathways will provide views of Willamette Falls that have been unseen for over 100 years.

The Riverwalk Project is one of the most exciting outdoor recreation initiatives in our region, and substantial progress is already underway. The Riverwalk Block 1 groundbreaking occurred on May 27, 2026; Block 2 is well into design with construction funding secured; and Riverwalk Block 3 & 4 will complete this once in a lifetime investment in public accessibility and shared stewardship along the riverfront.

Sincerely,

DRAFT

Craig Roberts, Chair
On Behalf of the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners



Riverwalk Block 3 & 4 Project

Restoring Habitat & Public Access to Willamette Falls

Overview

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (Grand Ronde Tribe), in partnership with the City of Oregon City, are advancing the next major phase of the Willamette Falls Riverwalk: Blocks 3 & 4. This project will restore long-buried shoreline habitat, reopen historic river alcoves, and reconnect the public to Willamette Falls for the first time in more than a century. It builds upon the Grand Ronde Tribe's successful remediation and planning efforts at tumwata village, a modern Tribal village now emerging at the former 23-acre Blue Heron Paper Mill site.



Project Purpose

Riverwalk Blocks 3 & 4 will:

- Construct an elevated, ADA-accessible Riverwalk extending south toward Willamette Falls.
- Restore critical salmon, steelhead, and lamprey habitat by removing contaminated fill and daylighting historic basalt channels.
- Reopen river alcoves and create a new regional trail connection identified in Oregon Metro and City of Oregon City transportation plans.
- Deliver a culturally grounded, publicly accessible riverfront integrated with ecological restoration and Tribal stewardship.

Community & Tribal Significance

Known since time immemorial as tumwata, Willamette Falls, this place holds deep cultural, spiritual, and historical significance. It lies within the lands addressed by the Willamette Valley Treating of 1855, whose annuities were paid to Tribal members living on the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation, connecting tumwata directly to the histories and obligations established through that treaty. The Grand Ronde Tribe's reacquisition of the 23-acre property in 2019 has enabled extensive environmental cleanup and redevelopment grounded in cultural knowledge, Tribal sovereignty, and community engagement. Riverwalk Blocks 3 & 4 continue this vision by extending public access to Willamette Falls and healing the land.

Economic, Housing & Workforce Connections

The Riverwalk is the cornerstone of the broader tumwata village redevelopment, which includes mixed-use development, housing, commercial activity, and cultural space. The Riverwalk Block 3 & 4 Project is estimated to support up to 948 jobs across construction, restoration, design, and long-term operations. CTGR's Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) will ensure Tribal employment and Native-owned business participation.

Adopted by the Oregon City in January 2025, the tumwata village Master Plan inclusive of the Riverwalk Project also includes residential buildings on both Block 1 (45,000sq ft, approximately 55 units) and Block 2 (56,600sq ft, 85 units). It is anticipated these buildings will support a mix of tribal housing, income-restricted affordable housing, and market-rate units. Residents in these units will have direct access to adjacent shoreline restoration and an ADA-accessible Riverwalk along the Willamette River.

Environmental & Climate Benefits

The project will remove approximately 130,000 cubic yards of contaminated fill, restore shoreline vegetation, stabilize banks, and create off-channel habitat. These improvements provide cool-water refuges for threatened salmon and steelhead, support lamprey habitat, enhance flood resilience, and revitalize ecological processes along the Willamette River.

Funding & Partnerships

Metro's Large-Scale Community Visions Program (LSCV) has designated \$20M for Riverwalk Blocks 3 & 4. This investment will leverage additional federal and state funding, including up to \$15M from the National Park Service and future EPA/Business Oregon grants. The Grand Ronde Tribe and Oregon City jointly manage the project under a 2026 Intergovernmental Agreement, building on over a decade of community engagement and broad regional support.

Outcome

Riverwalk Blocks 3 & 4 will deliver a resilient, culturally significant, publicly accessible riverfront that uplifts habitat, honors Tribal stewardship, strengthens resilience, and catalyzes long-term community and economic revitalization.