

Central Oregon FY2026 Community-Initiated Project Quotes:

“Ochoco Irrigation District is pleased to hear that our renewable energy project is recommended for funding. The purpose of the floating solar project is to provide low-cost, locally produced, renewable energy to irrigators and area residents and to improve water quality. We greatly appreciate the support of Senator’s Merkley and Wyden for this important project,” **said Bruce Scanlon, Ochoco Irrigation District Manager.**

“Oregon DEQ is thrilled to see two funding requests are in the Senate Appropriations bill, which are critically important to addressing environmental challenges facing rural Oregon; groundwater quality and wildfire,” **said Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Director, Leah Feldon.** “Thank you to Senator Merkley and Senator Wyden for bringing federal funds to the table as the state investigates groundwater quality concerns in Crook County, and as we work to prevent catastrophic wildfire and improve air quality through sustainable management of woody debris.”

“Arnold Irrigation District is excited to receive funding from the Community Initiated Project program. Arnold Irrigation District in sponsorship with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Deschutes Basin Board of Control (DBBC) will be piping its main canal to eliminate seepage loss and ultimately restore 32.5 cubic-feet-per-second (CFS) of flow to the Deschutes Basin during the spring and winter. The water conserved will be permanently protected instream and improve conditions for native and several ESA-listed species in the Deschutes Basin. The project will also provide a drought resilient solution for enhancing the district’s water supply and reliability,” **said Chris Webb, District Manager, Arnold Irrigation District.**

“With drought conditions returning to Jefferson County, it makes clear the urgency and need for funding to implement projects that improve water security for our district,” **said Josh Bailey, General Manager of North Unit Irrigation District.** “Proactive action by Senators Merkley and Wyden to support this important project will protect our farms, communities, and environment from further impacts due to water shortages.”

“This project strengthens both our landscapes and our communities. By restoring areas of Lake County’s closed-basin watersheds affected by cycles of drought and wildfire, we are investing in the long-term health of the land while supporting local economies. This work reflects our community’s shared commitment to stewardship and creates lasting benefits for native fish, wildlife, and the people who call this place home.” **said Brandi Neider, Project Manager, Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council**

“As a conservation district, daily discussions surround the increased demands for climate change mitigation, natural resource conservation, reduced environmental impacts and improved economic stability,” **Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District Manager Cassi Newton said.** “With this funding and the expertise of many partners, we plan to use SWCD property overlooking the John Day River for the development of a mass timber

constructed multi-agency community center with locally sourced timber and juniper from Wheeler County to serve as a hub for conservation agencies that will provide much needed modern office, conference, education, and training services that is centrally located in the exceptionally rural district/county.”