

Hood River County is taking steps to limit exposure to and spread of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). In support of state and federal guidelines for social distancing, the Hood River County Board of Commissioners will hold this meeting by using Webex Event. To listen in to the meeting please call **(408) 418-9388** and use **Event Number: 966 442 485**. You may also access the meeting via a smart device or computer. Please visit the Board of Commissioners webpage for the link.

For best results please dial into the number above and mute the microphone and speakers on your device once logged in. Thank you.

HOOD RIVER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING & WORK SESSION/COVID-19 CHECK IN

April 13, 2020 @ 3:00pm, Virtual Meeting to be held with Webex Event

BUSINESS MEETING

Consent Agenda

- ✓ Approve and authorize the County Administrator to sign a letter of support, on behalf of the Commissioners, for USDA Rural Business Development Grant application for an e-Tractor Pilot Project in Rural Oregon
- ✓ Approve and authorize the County Administrator to sign a letter of support, on behalf of the Commissioners, for Forth's Hood River County Mobility and Resilience Project.

WORKSESSION

I. *COVID-19 Check-In*

- i. Updates from Commissioners and Staff
- ii. Recreational Closures
- iii. Other as needed

II. *Other Discussion(s)*

III. *Next Work Session/Check -In:* April 20, 2020 during the regularly schedule Board of Commissioners meeting via Webex. Check County website for meeting time.

IV. *Adjournment*

CONSENT ITEMS

HOOD RIVER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AGENDA REQUEST FORM

DATE: April 13, 2020 **DEPARTMENT:** Administration **NAME:** Jeff Hecksel

SUBJECT: Letter of Support: USDA Rural Business Development Grant; e-Tractor Pilot Project

AUTHORITY: *ORS:* _____ *OAR:* _____

COUNTY ORD.: _____

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF SUBJECT:

Commissioner Perkins has requested the Commission approve sending a letter of support for the above subject. A letter has been drafted for consideration for the County Administrator to sign.

It is being suggested the letter be signed by the County Administrator to limit the need for Commissioners to come to the County building during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

ATTACHMENTS: Background Docs 3

FISCAL IMPACT:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY AFFECTED PARTIES:

COUNTY COUNSEL *FINANCE* *OTHER AGENCIES*
HR DEPT *APPROPRIATE COUNTY COMMITTEE* *OTHER* *ADMIN*

RECOMMENDATION OF THE DEPARTMENT:

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

Approve and authorize the County Administrator to sign a letter of support, on behalf of the Commissioners, for USDA Rural Business Development Grant application for an e-Tractor Pilot Project in Rural Oregon.

FOLLOW UP: ORD/RESO/AGMT/ORDER, ETC: ORIGINALS TO R&A

COPIES TO: _____



Hood River County Administration

Jeff Hecksel, County Administrator

BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS

601 State Street · Hood River, OR 97031 · (541) 386-3970 · FAX (541) 386-9392

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Les Perkins – District No. 4

April 13, 2020

John Huffman
State Director
USDA Rural Development – Oregon
1220 SW 3rd Avenue, Suite 1801
Portland, OR 97204

RE: Letter of Interest and Support for USDA Rural Business Development Grant
Application for e-Tractor Pilot Project in Rural Oregon

Dear Mr. Huffman:

The Hood River County Board of Commissioners is pleased to submit this letter of support for Sustainable Northwest, Forth, Bonneville Environmental Foundation and Wy'East RC&D's proposed project to test the efficacy of electric tractors for rural producers. A shift to electric agricultural equipment will support our state's efforts to strengthen and secure our agricultural sector, retain and grow employment during a healthcare crisis, reduce workplace hazards for farmworkers, and begin to reduce agriculture-related greenhouse gas emissions. This project is also in alignment with our local and regional development goals regarding energy resilience, food systems security, emissions reduction, workforce creation, and local economic development.

We believe that this demonstration project could bring long-term benefits to our farming community, allowing us to increase the stability and security of our operation by reducing our dyed fuel costs and equipment maintenance expenses while reducing on-farm air- and noise pollution. Savings from reduced fuel and operation costs will support a vibrant agricultural economy for our state and our region.

For these reasons, Hood River County is pleased to provide this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hecksel
County Administrator

Cc: Board of Commissioners
Hood River Energy Council

A Small County with a big mission: Providing Quality of Life for all.

From: [Mike Oates](#)
To: [Heidi DeHart](#); [Jeff Hecksel](#)
Subject: Fwd: Letter of Support
Date: Friday, April 10, 2020 8:57:23 AM
Attachments: RBDG_Letter of Support_Template_Organization.docx
[Electric Transformation for Oregon Producers_Concept.pdf](#)

First request. Oates

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject:Fwd: Letter of Support
Resent-From:mike.oates@co.hood-river.or.us
Date:Thu, 9 Apr 2020 09:11:54 -0700
From:Les Perkins <les@fidhr.org>
To:Mike Oates <mike.oates@co.hood-river.or.us>, Marla Harvey <marla@mcedd.org>

Hi Mike,

Sustainable Northwest has requested a letter of support for an agricultural focused electrification program. The email from Bridget provides some background as well as the attached documents. Looks like they are looking to have their letters together by next Tuesday.

Can you take a look and see if you want this on the agenda for Monday? This seems like a great opportunity to gather some good information for farmers without financial risk and it fits right in with our Energy Plan.

Thanks,

Les

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bridget Callahan** <bcallahan@sustainablenorthwest.org>
Date: Wed, Apr 8, 2020 at 3:48 PM
Subject: Letter of Support
To: Les Perkins <les@fidhr.org>, Marla Harvey <marla@mcedd.org>
Cc: Lee Rahr <lrahr@sustainablenorthwest.org>, Robert Wallace <robert@wyeast-rcd.org>

Hello Commissioner Perkins and Marla,

I hope you're able to enjoy this beautiful weather!

Sustainable Northwest is submitting a USDA RBDG application to support our electric tractor pilot project. (I'm attaching a concept paper to this email for more background). We're hoping MCEDD and Hood River County leadership would consider writing a letter of support for this project. A template is attached.

A little background: The goal is to accelerate electrification for Oregon's agricultural community. We're targeting Hood River County, Wasco County, Lake County, and Klamath County for this project. It allows producers to test out electric farm equipment for a set period of time at no financial risk.

Our team will collect data on emission reductions, fuel savings, operation savings, and run an economic and carbon analysis. We'll then launch a marketing campaign with field tours, demo days, case studies, and more. Our goal is to create policy and market recommendations to accelerate demand and adoption of electric tractors in Oregon.

We're hoping to show coordinated economic development support with local and regional governments. We're also looking to gather letters of support from interested producers. If you know any that would be interested I'd love to connect with them!

Happy to talk more about the project or this letter, but we're hoping to get these in by next Tuesday.

Thank you in advance for your consideration!

--

Warm regards,
Bridget Callahan



Bridget Callahan, Energy Program Manager
(503) 756-0494 (t)
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In an effort to help contain the spread of COVID-19, Sustainable Northwest employees are working remotely. We appreciate your patience and understanding.



Virus-free. www.avast.com

Electric Transformation for Oregon Producers



Accelerating market transformations for Oregon's producers by fueling a clean agricultural economy.

Background

Oregon producers make decisions every day that help grow their business and keep the lights on. While they enjoy autonomy over decisions such as crop rotation and water schedules, the industry is often impacted by forces beyond their control. Tariffs, drought, pests, and foreign conflict heavily impact the financial health of a farming operation, compounded by the impacts of climate change. Farming profit margins are thin, and potential savings related to energy and fuel are one of the few opportunities available to stabilize expenses. Producers are directly impacted by the effects of climate change and can play a critical role in mitigating the climate crisis. It's imperative there is an equitable transition to a clean energy economy, with the benefits shared equally between rural and urban communities.

The last decade has witnessed great advancements in the passenger vehicle segment. Battery technology is allowing electric passenger vehicles to travel farther and longer. Consumers are demanding more choice and access to affordable electric vehicles, with clear and demonstrated benefits for air quality and drivers' pocketbooks. On the policy front, Oregon legislators and utility regulators have invested in statewide charging infrastructure, created new financial incentives to purchase EVs and chargers, and developed tracking measures to ensure interim goals are met.

Challenge

While much of the focus has been on passenger vehicles, little has been done to advance electrification of the U.S.'s agricultural sector. Similar to electric passenger vehicles, technological advancements have improved the performance and duration of heavy electric machinery, but confidence in and demand for heavy equipment vehicles have not caught up. This is a quickly emerging space, and Oregon can be a national leader. Just as many car buyers are still unaware of electric cars, many agricultural producers remain unaware that electric tractors and utility vehicles are now available for use on farms, nurseries, wineries and woodlots. These vehicles are inexpensive to fuel, require very little maintenance, and run very quietly. Early adopters have found them to be both cost-effective and convenient to use; however, demanding hours and workloads leave most producers little time to investigate and pursue new technology opportunities.

Opportunity

Tractors and other farm equipment are currently dependent on fossil fuels in order to perform the eight to twelve hours of work required each day. Electrifying heavy agricultural equipment is a prudent method to reduce polluting emissions, with significant airborne particulate pollution as well as 8% of all human-

caused greenhouse gas emissions coming from the agricultural sector. Electric heavy machinery also lowers and stabilizes producers' operational costs by eliminating the need for dyed fuel and reducing downtime and repair expenses due to equipment maintenance. Electric motors often contain one moving part, vs. the 300 plus moving parts in a diesel engine. Lastly, electric heavy machinery is often a safer, quieter and healthier equipment choice compared to diesel engines. Supporting advances in electrification will help reduce carbon emissions, increase health conditions for Oregon's farming community, and create a robust and vibrant clean agricultural economy.

Proposal

This project aims to increase market demand for electric agricultural equipment in order to achieve policy outcomes and programs that advance the electric transformation in the agricultural industry. Sustainable Northwest and Forth seek support for an innovative demonstration project that will allow agricultural producers to pilot electric agricultural equipment for a set period of time without taking on significant financial risk. Our team will collect survey and other data from their experience, develop case studies, and identify and work to overcome market barriers. We will also develop policy support and practical financing solutions and conduct a targeted marketing and outreach campaign to increase consumer demand and advance rapid adoption across Oregon.

Project Strategies

The project team shall work collaboratively to implement the following activities:

1. *Equipment Procurement and Participant Recruitment:* The team is currently recruiting participants in key regions of the state, focusing on agricultural sectors that are likely to be the best fit for early electrification (e.g. nurseries, wineries, fruit orchards, etc.) and women and minority-owned farming operations. Four to six producers in the agricultural or forestry industry will be selected to participate in the pilot demonstration. The team is currently vetting different products to pair with likely candidates. Forth's close industry ties help keep them abreast of new products, and the [E-Utility](#) tractor manufactured by Solectrac based in California, is a likely candidate.
2. *Pilot Demonstrations:* Producers will take turns using an electric tractor for 4-6 months, with the project team facilitating rotation schedules and delivery. This time period should allow producers to familiarize themselves with the equipment and build confidence in the technology. Electric vehicle charging stations will be installed on each participant's site and remain on-site after use. After each use, the equipment will rotate to the next participant.
3. *Data Collection and In-person Support:* Smart chargers will collect data, including electricity demand profiles, utilization, cost, etc. Farmers will also receive proactive phone support to troubleshoot any problems as quickly as possible. A post-pilot survey will collect relevant data such as relative fuel costs, operations and maintenance cost comparisons, and limitations of the electric equipment to better understand e-tractors' benefits and remaining market barriers.
4. *Post-project Outreach and Marketing:* After the performance period, the team will launch an outreach and marketing campaign to amplify results and initiate market transformation. Two case studies will be developed and disseminated, highlighting producers' stories and findings from the surveys. Field tours will also be organized to the demonstration sites to bring together legislators, business leaders, and producers.

5. *Market Transformation and Finance:* Through the performance period, the team will build a pipeline of new communities and interested producers wishing to purchase their own electric heavy machinery, creating consumer demand and political allies. The team will investigate financing and policy tools including purchase incentives, tax credits, and lending and/or leasing options to make e-tractors more accessible to interested producers.
6. *Policy Recommendations:* Draft and share policy recommendations with state and federal decision makers and agency staff to accelerate new program and incentive offerings.



Hood River County Administration

Jeff Hecksel, County Administrator

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Les Perkins – District No. 4

April 13, 2020

Jeff Allen, Executive Director
Forth
2035 NW Front Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97209

RE: Letter of Support for Forth's Hood River County Mobility and Resilience Project (HRCMR)

Dear Jeff:

The Hood River County Board of Commissioners is pleased to submit this letter of support for your partnership with Hood River Energy Counsel to demonstrate and refine a model combining a new zero emission electric school bus for the Hood River County School District with solar PV, energy storage and microgrid technology to create a resilient energy system located at the Hood River Electric Cooperative. The integration of electric school bus technology with a solar + storage microgrid will make this among the first projects of this type in the country.

Hood River County believes that this demonstration project will model long-term benefits to our region as well as other rural regions seeking to improve their resilience through a microgrid project. We are honored to have this opportunity to participate in this important innovation. In addition, we are supportive of this project as it will help our region advance the goals and strategic vision of the Hood River County Energy Plan through transportation electrification, reduced fossil fuel use, and increased community resilience.

Hood River County is pleased to provide this letter of support to Forth.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hecksel
County Administrator

Cc: Board of Commissioners
Hood River Energy Council