



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

LINDSAY BERSCHAUER • CASEY KULLA • MARY STARRETT

535 NE Fifth Street • McMinnville, OR 97128-4523
(503) 434-7501 • Fax (503) 434-7553
TTY (800) 735-2900 • www.co.yamhill.or.us

January 6, 2022

The Honorable Kate Brown
Office of the Governor
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254
Salem, OR 97301-4047

Senator Jeff Merkley
500 Liberty Street SE, Suite 320
Salem, OR 97301

Representative Suzanne Bonamici
U.S. House of Representatives
2231 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Ron Wyden
707 13th St. SE, Suite 285
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown, Representative Bonamici and Senators Merkley and Wyden,

We are writing in of support of SB 3126, which will allow the agreement that governs the Grand Ronde Tribe's ancestral hunting and fishing rights to be updated. This important step will open the door to restored rights, which will honor the Grand Ronde's tribal sovereignty and begin to correct a longstanding injustice.

The injustice began in the 1850s when ancestors of Grand Ronde Tribal members were forcibly removed from their lands in western Oregon. It continued when the federal government terminated recognition of the Tribe in 1954. And it appeared again in the 1980s as the U.S. government restored the Tribe's federal status. At that time, the state of Oregon demanded that the Tribe sign a consent decree limiting its hunting and fishing rights in exchange for its support of the Grand Ronde Reservation Act. With seemingly no other choice, tribal leaders reluctantly signed the decree. Only one other tribe in the entire United States is bound by such an agreement.

For almost 40 years, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has abided by the unjust rules of the consent decree, which limit where, when, and how tribal members may hunt and fish – something that has always been core to the identity of the Grand Ronde people. It is important to right the wrongs of the past. It is time to support their efforts to have their hunting and fishing rights restored. It will have no impact on other Oregon tribes, but it will allow the Grand Ronde to nourish its members, provide for its community and honor its ceremonial teachings. And it will strengthen the Tribe's traditional role as caretakers of the land.

In November, Oregon's U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley introduced Senate Bill 3126, which would give the Tribe the opportunity to work collaboratively with the State of Oregon to negotiate new hunting and fishing agreements. We fully support quick passage of this legislation, which will open the door to a review of the fishing and hunting rights of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. This bill is a first step, but an important one, toward restoring tribal rights. It's the right thing to do.

Respectfully,

Chair
Lindsay Berschauer

Vice-Chair
Casey Kulla

Commissioner
Mary Starrett

Accepted by Yamhill County
Board of Commissioners on
1/6/22 by Board Order
22-02