



For Immediate Release

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Mid-Columbia Economic Development District Now Includes Gilliam County

For the first time in its 57-year history, the boundaries of Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) have been amended to include Gilliam County, Oregon. MCEDD was established in 1969 by Klickitat and Skamania Counties in Washington and Hood River, Sherman and Wasco Counties in Oregon. The five original counties created the organization in recognition of the close connections between their economies.

MCEDD promotes the creation of family-wage jobs, the diversification of the economic base, and the growth, development and retention of business and industry. Regional Economic Development Districts bring communities together to benefit from better access to economic development loans and grants, pooled technical assistance, marketing, and administrative resources, and a regional approach to economic development efforts. Over the years MCEDD's membership has grown to include counties, cities, ports and chambers of commerce within the region.

Economic Development Districts (EDDs) were created by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 to foster regional, multi-jurisdictional planning in distressed areas. Originally focused on infrastructure, EDDs evolved to lead regional strategy, utilizing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies to boost competitiveness, and now number nearly 400 nationwide. MCEDD is unique among that number in its bi-state coverage. Because MCEDD is designated as a district by the US EDA, modification of the boundaries to add Gilliam County culminated in an official approval from the EDA received in late March 2026.

The move to add Gilliam County began in 2015. The MCEDD Board wanted to carefully consider the request to ensure any change could only benefit the organization. The process stalled several times as a result of leadership changes among the many local and federal organizations involved in the official request, hence the 11-year process. "The MCEDD Board supported adding Gilliam County because we recognize how similar they are to some of our other counties, especially Sherman and Klickitat Counties," noted Judge Joe Dabulskis, Sherman County Judge and MCEDD Board Chair. "We have benefited by being a part of MCEDD and wanted to share those benefits with Gilliam County." "Gilliam County is excited to join such a dynamic organization and is looking forward to better connecting with the other five counties to help benefit our communities and economy," added Judge Cris Patnode, Gilliam County Judge.

MCEDD is currently governed by a 22-member board of directors representing the counties, cities, ports, chambers and private sector representatives. As part of the boundary modification, the MCEDD Board will add a seat for Gilliam County at their next meeting. MCEDD's economic development-focused staff of 13 will begin more fully serving Gilliam County immediately. "I see opportunities for

working with the governmental partners in Gilliam County,” said MCEDD Executive Director Jessica Metta, “With project management, grant writing and grant administration support to help move their infrastructure projects forward. Our small business lending programs could also make an impact.”

The five-year update of the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is slated to begin later this year, with the inclusion of Gilliam County in that process already planned. “The official boundary modification now just makes the process cleaner,” noted Metta. The larger community will be invited to participate in the meetings for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy update with details announced in the next few months.

Learn more about MCEDD at mcedd.org or about the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy at gorgeconomy.org.

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