

S U C C E S S S T O R I E S

Community & Economic Development Program

http://www.lanecounty.org/CAO_EconDev/



230 households depend on a public water system overdue for health and safety updates. The grant will pay for improvements the community can't afford without assistance.

Lane County receives \$1 million grant on behalf of Blue River

By Heather M. Edwards

After five years of paperwork and meetings the residents of the Blue River community received a \$1 million Community Development Block Grant from the OECD, the [Oregon Economic and Community Development Department](#).

Spearheaded by representation from the Blue River Water District, OECD and Lane County C&ED, the grant application was successfully submitted and accepted in August 2005.

As an unincorporated community, Blue River could not apply for the grant themselves. As a legal entity, Lane County acted as the eligible applicant for this grant and will own the project until its completion.

More than 70% of Blue River residents are low- to moderate-income. This qualifies them for CDBG funds from the state. But their existing utility rates were too low to meet another grant requirement. The same low-income status that qualified them for the funding is the same status that would make raising utility rates difficult. The BRWD Commissioners held a public hearing to address the issue. The prospect of receiving \$1 million made an increase of \$1.10 per year for the next three years seem manageable. The rate increase was unanimously approved.

The Lane County Board of Commissioners formally accepted the grant and [Lane Council of Governments](#) will be monitoring and administering the grant over the next two years. LCOG has opened the bid process for project contractors.

“This would not have been possible without Lane County”, says Ann Robson, a commissioner for the BRWD. After living in the Blue River community for more than ten years Robson is familiar with the needs of many of the low-income residents there.

Protecting residents dependent on a public water system from contaminants is just one of many ways that Lane County acts as a liaison to its rural communities that do not have municipal representation. Lane County strategic goals include ensuring public safety and maintaining a healthy environment while providing efficient financial and administrative support. The Blue River Water Systems Improvement Project is a job well done.

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