

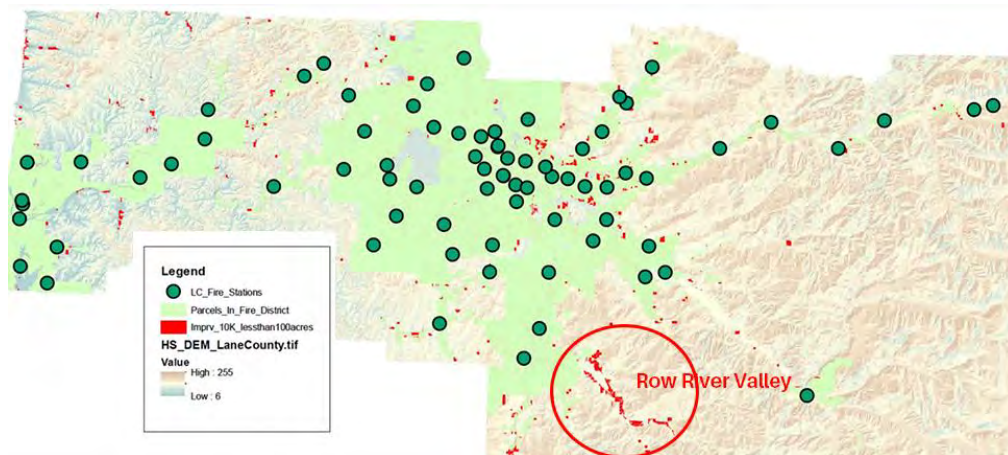
March 14, 2026



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We write to you today as a 22-year and as a 46-year residents of Dorena, Oregon to provide a short background of our community to get to know the families that you are helping. Community members began this non-profit as the Row River Fire Response, as our main goal was to obtain emergency services in the area. Our DBA is the Row River Valley Community Partnership, first, to differentiate us from the fire district, and second, to reflect our community's wider commitment to environmental stewardship and building a connected, fire-safe, and resilient community.

Our community, located in a narrow valley in south central Lane County in the Western Cascade foothills, is an area classified as High and Extreme Fire Risk. The valley has a single access road and also serves as a gateway for more than half a million visitors each year who recreate at a county park or travel through the valley into the Umpqua National Forest. Because of this combination of wildfire risk and heavy public use through a confined corridor, residents have lost homes to fire and surrounding forests have experienced major wildfire events and remain under constant threat.



For many years, the Row River Valley held the largest unprotected population in Lane County. In May 2024, our rural community of 1,250 residents came together and [chose to tax ourselves](#) to obtain emergency medical and fire response by forming the [Row River Rural Fire Protection District](#).



This valley also supplies the sole drinking water source for many downstream communities, including more than 10,000 residents in the City of Cottage Grove.



The Row River Valley supports a diverse range of wildlife across its aquatic ecosystems, wetlands, and forests. Species observed in the valley include American beaver, bobcat, mountain lion, American black bear, red fox, and gray fox. Protected species found in the area include the Oregon spotted frog, gray wolf, and northern spotted owl.

Community members have made personal commitments to protect the land and strengthen fire safety for residents. Since 2023, twenty-three volunteer firefighters have continued their professional training with South Lane Fire & Rescue as Emergency Medical and Fire First Responders. In addition, more than 82 active volunteers contribute thousands of hours each year toward community preparedness, wildfire mitigation, and stewardship of the valley's natural resources.

Volunteers must combat adverse weather conditions as they work from & store equipment in open barns & sheds



10" OF ICE IN PUMP VALVE
RRFR, JAN. 2024

This journey has not been easy, but it has been rewarding.

Many of our emergency responders are parents, mothers and fathers who volunteer their time and energy to help protect neighbors and children. Others are in their 60s, and some are grandparents.

Out of necessity, our fire engines and equipment are currently housed in sheds and other outbuildings that are not temperature controlled and cannot protect apparatus from freezing weather. During the January 2024 ice storm, our volunteer firefighters maintained a 24-hour vigil using hair dryers and portable heaters to keep critical equipment from freezing.

Stewardship of this valley extends beyond the firefighters. Community members of all ages are learning and applying environmental practices and fire resilience as neighbors work together to clear defensible space around homes, protect the watershed, and preserve wildlife habitat.



We host regular community gatherings, including community events, Neighborhood Teams meetings, mitigation teams, disaster readiness courses, and Think Tank Tuesdays. These gatherings bring residents together to share community needs, concerns, successes, and meals. Because technology access is limited in our remote valley, we rely on simple and direct communication. We publish a bi-monthly newspaper, the *Row River Review*, which is mailed to every household. [This linked issue is the most recent edition.](#)

Row River Valley Community Partnership helps coordinate community efforts to improve wildfire preparedness, emergency response capacity, watershed protection, and long-term resilience in the valley. This work is supported by 87 regular volunteers and 23 professionally trained emergency medical and fire responders, along with partnerships with local fire agencies, watershed organizations, and county and state emergency management partners.

Because the valley is geographically isolated and mobile phone service is largely unavailable, the organization also serves as an important communication hub, helping residents, volunteers, and partner agencies stay connected and informed.

Regular community meetings and preparedness events can bring together over 250 participants, reflecting the strong involvement of residents who work together to strengthen the valley's safety and resilience.

A significant portion of the Row River Valley population consists of older adults who have chosen to age in place in this rural community. Census data for the Dorena area shows a median age of

approximately 50–52 years, with an estimated 35–40% of residents age 55 or older. Many live on fixed incomes and rely on volunteer emergency responders and neighbor-to-neighbor support networks to maintain safety and independence. The valley is also home to a notable number of military veterans, many of whom have chosen to remain in the community after their service.



The two permanent stations will protect emergency apparatus, support medical response, and strengthen wildfire protection for the watershed and surrounding forests. A recent KLCC news article and our website are included below for reference on our Main Station: [KLCC news article](#) and our website: <https://rowrivervalley.org/>.

Thank you for giving your time to learn more about our community. It is our hope that you will see us not merely a community needing a fire station, but understanding what drives us, our personal goals, and our hope to keep this beautiful Oregon valley safe and protected for generations.

Thank you for fighting with us to protect this valley. Your efforts are greatly appreciated!

Warm regards,

Handwritten signature of Kathleen Istudor.

Kathleen Istudor
Executive Director
Row River Valley Community Partnership
PO Box 4 | Dorena OR 97434
541-946-2068

Handwritten signature of Reta Cochrane.

Reta Cochrane
Board President
Row River Valley Community Partnership
PO Box 4 | Dorena OR 97434
541-285-2642