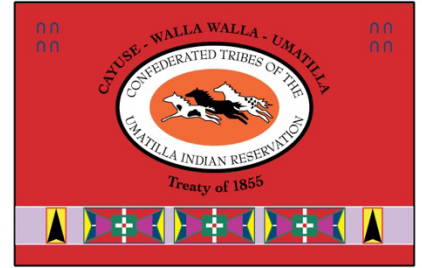


# Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation



46411 Timine Way  
Pendleton, OR 97801  
541-276-3165 • CTUIR.org

## PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Travis Snell • 541.429.7394 • [travissnell@ctuir.org](mailto:travissnell@ctuir.org)

### CTUIR Looks to Expand High-Speed Internet Via USDA Grant

MISSION, Ore. – The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) is looking to contract out services that will eventually expand the reservation’s broadband internet coverage thanks to a \$250,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant.

U.S. Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden recently announced the grant award, which will allow the CTUIR to inventory assets that can provide broadband services and create an affordable rate structure to households. The funding also allows for sufficient reserves to ensure the system remains updated and maintained.

“I was very pleased, and the reason these are very important dollars is because they will provide the funding so we can contract out to get some services done that are absolutely critical to the future operation of how we are going to run our broadband network,” Bruce Zimmerman, CTUIR Economic and Development tax administrator, said.

Zimmerman said his team has developed proposal requests for studies and analyses and anticipates releasing them within 30-60 days so contractors can provide the needed information. He said once contractors are on board their work would begin immediately.

“Our goal is to really have this wrapped up by the end of the year,” he added. “But this is not a construction grant. This is strictly a technical assistance grant to provide us with the detailed information that will allow us to efficiently operate the system.”

The goal for expanding broadband on the reservation is to provide internet service to all CTUIR governmental operations and business enterprises as well as households.

“We are trying to provide high quality, reliable service at a very affordable price. We are conscientious of making sure the prices we charge for the services are extremely affordable,” Zimmerman said. “Once we get these technical assistance studies and analyses done then we’re going to really try to roll out to the households. We know where we need our network system to be. It’s just a question of how of do we engineer it and design it with capacity and size to meet current and future needs.”

The increase of broadband services on the reservation is important because modern day living demands high-speed internet access.

“The amount of capacity that each household needs is increasing, and what we have noticed is if you don’t have the infrastructure in place to provide it at a reasonable cost, you’re not going to be able to take advantage of it,” Zimmerman said. “So we are trying to put these households in a position to where they can afford to pay for good, high quality service and fully take advantage of all the opportunities that are available.”

This funding is part of 216 USDA projects nationwide totaling \$772.6 million to benefit more than 1 million people living in remote areas by providing high-speed internet access, clean water and support for rural families, agricultural producers and small businesses.

“Equitable access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet ensures individuals, families and businesses can be connected wherever they are,” Merkley said. “This funding will allow CTUIR to make improvements to the economy, education and quality of life for folks across hundreds of miles of rural Oregon.”

Wyden said just as water is essential for communities in rural areas, access to reliable broadband internet is just as important in this technological age.

“This funding was exactly what I fought for when we corrected the Department of Commerce’s national broadband map just under a year ago and brought historic investments in Oregon’s underserved rural areas. I fought for communities like the Umatilla Tribes then, and I’ll continue to fight for more access to similar resources in the future.”

*The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.*

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Caption: The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is looking to contract out services that will eventually expand the reservation’s broadband internet coverage thanks to a \$250,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture grant. Courtesy Photo

