

# Illinois Valley Airport gets a big helping hand from FAA

Jason McMillen

IVN Contributing Writer

Larry Graves, manager of Josephine County's Airports Department, recently secured a handful of federal grants from the Federal Aviation Administration through their Airport Improvement Program which, in total, is worth upwards of \$6 million dollars. Between the two grants acquired specifically for the Illinois Valley, simply labeled grant seven and eight, more than \$2 million dollars will be spent improving the aging runway lighting system and eventually replacing the part of the tarmac where aircraft are parked.

"It's about a three inch thick document," Graves said, highlighting the difficulty of acquiring these federal grants. Graves assumed the position as manager about six years ago and has reportedly been working towards

acquiring these grants since 2012. He was both the grant writer and administrator and also had to travel around the state defending his grant applications and make numerous presentations to regional transportation commissions.

Since Josephine County could not produce the hundreds of thousands of dollars necessary to match the grant's mandatory 10 percent, Graves also had to pursue state grants. Luckily for cash strapped counties across Oregon, the state government recently created the Critical Oregon Airport Resource grant program which is specifically designed to supply money to those who've acquired federal grants but don't have the funds to match it.

Although the current runway lighting system at the Illinois Valley Airport still functions properly, Graves said that it's barely adequate for pilots to land at night. According to his estimates, the low-voltage edge lighting

system is now around 50 years old and it's also been decades since any paving work was done. The parking tarmac, now essentially disintegrating, is considered a safety hazard because rocks and gravel can be picked up by propellers, potentially causing damage to aircraft.

Since the Smokejumper Base was declared a historic district, the Airports Department must follow the rules set by the State Historic Preservation Office. These rules will unfortunately prolong the parking tarmac's reconstruction for a few years. However, the lighting improvements at the Illinois Valley Airport are estimated to be completed by the end of the year.

Copeland Paving won the contract and as such will be the primary contractor responsible for the organization and execution of work. However, they will undoubtedly be using subcontractors and materials from local

suppliers so some of the money will, according to Graves, trickle down to the community.

When Graves first assumed his managerial position six years ago, he said that the Illinois Valley Airport looked more or less abandoned and that he was only assisted by a single part-time worker. Since the Airports Department is forced to run similarly to a private enterprise, meaning they have to raise their own funding and cannot rely on county money, Graves had to make serious changes in the way the department operates. The department now has a full staff of three full-time workers and can adequately perform all the duties that it's supposed to perform like clearing debris and providing regular and timely maintenance where possible.

"My staff is awesome," Graves said, "I can't do this alone. Having them on board has improved the airports exponentially."

# Governor Brown, state police chief stand up for marijuana

Andrew Selsky

Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon's governor and the head of the state police defended the state's legal marijuana industry in letters to U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has been hinting at a crackdown on states such as Oregon that have legalized pot in defiance of federal law.

Gov. Kate Brown noted Tuesday in her letter that Sessions' earlier letter to her referenced a draft report from the Oregon State Police that concluded a lot of Oregon's marijuana was being diverted to other states.

Brown and Oregon State Police Superintendent Travis Hampton said that draft report was invalid and had incorrect data and conclusions.

Brown said new laws in Oregon, including tracking all pot grown for legal sale from seed to store, will help cut down on diversion into the black market. Brown noted that she also recently signed into law legislation that makes it easier to prosecute the unlawful import and export of marijuana products.

Governors of Alaska and Washington state also recently pushed back against the Trump administration and defended their efforts to

regulate the marijuana industry. Alaska Gov. Bill Walker wrote to Sessions earlier this month asking the Department of Justice to maintain the Obama administration's more hands-off enforcement approach to states that have legalized marijuana.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee said the attorney general made claims about the situation in his state that are "outdated, incorrect, or based on incomplete information."

The governors of Oregon, Colorado, Washington and Alaska wrote to Sessions and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin in April, warning that altering the Cole memorandum, which restricts federal marijuana law enforcement in states where pot is legal, "would divert existing marijuana product into the black market and increase dangerous activity in both our states and our neighboring states."

Sessions, however, then wrote to congressional leaders, opposing an amendment that prevents the Justice Department from using appropriated funds to interfere with states' medical marijuana.

Oregon Democratic Rep. Earl Blumenauer, who co-wrote the amendment with California Republican Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, told The Associated Press recently that Congress is becoming more pro-marijuana, and that more legalization will tamp down the black market.

"The more that we go down the path of legalization, regulation and taxation, diversion

becomes less and less of a problem," Blumenauer said.

Brown told Sessions in her letter that Oregon's medical and recreational marijuana industry has raised over \$60.2 million in revenue and created over 16,000 jobs.

She said her staff looks forward to continuing its work with Session's office and his representative in Oregon "to end black market marijuana operations, and to provide mutual education and support of our legal and regulated marketplace."

Follow Andrew Selsky on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/andrewselsky>.



Governor Kate Brown

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