

# Elk Valley Rancheria, California



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Board of Supervisors,  
County of Del Norte

August 28, 2025

Dear BCRAA Members and County Board of Supervisors:

The Border Coast Regional Airport Authority (“BCRAA”) was formed to manage the Del Norte County Regional Airport, also known as Jack McNamara Field (“Airport” or “CEC”), as a regional asset serving northwestern California and southern Oregon. The BCRAA operates under a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) structure that includes county, city, and tribal members, ensuring cooperative management and oversight.

The BCRAA was established as a California Joint Powers Authority to centralize governance of the airport. This structure was chosen due to the airport's regional importance, with communities on both sides of the California-Oregon border depending on its services.

The founding members of the BCRAA in 2007 included the County of Del Norte, City of Crescent City, and the Elk Valley Rancheria, California (“EVR” or the “Tribe”). The BCRAA was established to identify opportunities to improve the safety and services of the Airport.

Since then, the JPA has been amended and restated in 2010 and again in 2012 such that the JPA now includes:

- Del Norte County, California
- Crescent City, California
- Elk Valley Rancheria (Tribal Government)
- Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation (Tribal Government)
- Curry County, Oregon
- City of Brookings, Oregon

The Airport dates back to 1942 when it was constructed jointly by Del Norte County and the Civil Aeronautics Administration. During World War II, it





operated as Naval Outlying Field Crescent City under lease by the U.S. Navy. Following the war, it transitioned to civilian use, with early commercial services beginning in the 1950s.

In the early 2000s, discussions began to create a formal regional airport authority to better coordinate Airport operations and secure Essential Air Service (EAS) funding. The BCRAA was officially established as a JPA in 2007, assuming operational management through a 50-year master lease agreement with Del Norte County (the “County”).

In 2009, the Tribe developed a Long-Range Transportation Plan to assess current and future Tribal transportation needs. Within the plan, the Tribe recognized the importance of aviation to serve the Tribe’s economic, social and recreational needs. The Tribe witnessed a steady increase in the number of persons using services at the Airport and understands that future economic developments such as the proposed Casino Resort project depend on successful and timely expansion of airport facilities. To assist the local community in fulfilling this need (as able), the Tribe has included both Washington Boulevard and Dale Rupert Road in the IRR Inventory in order to assist with Airport access in the future. The Tribe has also outlined the proposed developments as listed in the 2005 Del Norte County Aviation Capital Improvement Plan which included the construction of a new entrance road to the airport (Loop Road).

Runway Safety Area (“RSA”) improvements were identified as an immediate need to meet then-current FAA design standards. If the Airport’s RSAs were not brought into compliance by December 31, 2015 the Airport would lose its certification to operate as a commercial facility, thus terminating passenger airline service. The loss of commercial service would have resulted in significant economic harm to the region, including Del Norte and Curry County residents, businesses and governmental entities.

The RSA project included improvements to and development of Loop Road, and environmental studies and mitigation measures as required by law. To assist the local community in the completion of at least a portion of the RSA and related improvements project, the Tribe contributed to the BCRAA \$100,000 of Tribal Transportation Program (“TTP”) funding for the completion of environmental review and permitting documents necessary to complete the Loop Road development.

EVR is one of the original members of the BCRAA and has and continues to support the Airport as a transportation hub of regional significance. To that end, EVR has made financial contributions and commitments to the BCRAA,





which helped jump start Federal Aviation Administration funding for the Airport and has helped the Airport's improvement.

In 2019, the new airport terminal opened, which now houses the BCRAA's administrative offices, airline ticketing, and TSA screening facilities.

### **Current Situation**

The BCRAA is governed by a board of representatives from each of the JPA member jurisdictions, including public-at-large members. The board meets monthly to review operations, airline services, and strategic planning. The authority oversees the airport's operational contracts, safety measures, and infrastructure development.

Importantly though, since the initial JPA was formed, the County of Del Norte and other participants in the JPA have expressly taken the position that "[b]y entering into this agreement, Del Norte County does not intend to transfer ownership of the land and facilities that make up the airport. Nor does entry into this agreement by entities other than Del Norte County imply a commitment on their part to provide funding for the capital improvement or operation of the airport."

To that end, Article IV of the Joint Powers Agreement provides in pertinent part:

#### **ARTICLE IV FUNDING**

SECTION 4.1 CONTRIBUTIONS NOT REQUIRED: Except as provided in section 4.2, no Participant is or will be required to make contributions to the Authority, except as that Participant may in its sole discretion agree. No Participant is subject to assessment.

SECTION 4.2 ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATING COSTS: For the duration of this Agreement, the County of Del Norte is required to provide annual funding to the Authority at the level of the County's budgeted commitment to support the airport for the fiscal year 2006-2007, subject to reduction only by the consent of the Authority.

EVR understands that the BCRAA does not have sufficient funds to pay advances for contracted improvements to the Airport, in part because federal funds are paid on a reimbursement basis. As such, the County has extended a line of credit to ensure that its airport remains compliant with federal regulations and operational.





The Airport is a critical connection for Del Norte County, providing air service that links the community to regional and national transportation systems. Without necessary repairs, service disruptions or airport closure could isolate the community, particularly affecting tourism, commerce, and emergency services.

Airports support local economies by facilitating business travel, tourism, and trade. If the airport's condition deteriorates, businesses relying on air connectivity could face increased costs or leave the area. This would have a multiplier effect on local employment, tax revenues, and economic vitality. CEC is part of the EAS program, which ensures air connectivity to rural communities. If the airport falls below operational standards due to deferred maintenance, the County risks losing EAS support. Maintaining compliance with FAA standards is essential to continue receiving EAS-subsidized flights.

The federal Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides significant matching funds (often 90-95% of eligible project costs). By finding a way to front the County's share of costs (even temporarily), the County can leverage substantial federal dollars. Failure to meet the reimbursement requirement would mean losing this valuable external funding. Though AIP grants are traditionally reimbursement-based, there may be exceptions for small rural airports. The County and BCRAA could jointly advocate for special consideration or expedited payment schedules at the federal level, especially if EAS is potentially in jeopardy.

The Airport is essential for emergency medical flights, disaster response, firefighting operations, and law enforcement. Lack of maintenance could compromise the ability to support these services, posing risks to public safety.

The Tribe suggests that the County temporarily fund repairs through internal borrowing (e.g., interfund loans) or by issuing short-term notes, which would later be reimbursed when FAA or other grants pay out. Alternatively, the County or BCRAA could issue Certificates of Participation (COPs) or small-scale bonds backed by future airport revenues or lease payments, providing upfront capital. Further, the County might seek to partner with a local bank or credit union to establish a line of credit specifically for FAA-reimbursable projects. Interest costs could be minimized by immediate reimbursement once grant funds are released.

We also understand that the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division of Aeronautics might provide funding or other state emergency infrastructure grants, which can sometimes cover upfront costs or match federal funds.





Other alternatives might include reviewing and adjusting hangar fees, landing fees, or concession agreements, if any, to improve cash flow for operations and maintenance.

### **Conclusion**

The Border Coast Regional Airport Authority remains a critical regional asset for Del Norte County, southern Oregon, and surrounding communities. Continued investment and proactive planning are necessary to ensure that the airport meets FAA standards, maintains Essential Air Service, and supports regional economic growth. Leveraging partnerships with tribal governments, local jurisdictions, and federal/state programs will be vital to overcoming current financial constraints.

By pursuing a combination of interfund loans, bonds, state grants, and strategic partnerships, the County and BCRAA can continue to access federal reimbursement funds and avoid the significant economic losses associated with a decline in airport services. Ongoing collaboration among JPA members and stakeholders will help secure the Airport's future as a cornerstone of regional transportation, tourism, and emergency response infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Dale A. Miller  
Chairman, Elk Valley Rancheria,  
California  
Vice-Chairman, BCRAA

