

Where Resilience Begins: People, a Shared Purpose, and Community

Impact and Synergy from CMCA's Support of Governor Kotek's Plan for a Resilient Oregon (PRO)

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Helen Keller once said: "Alone we can do so little; together, we can do so much." This article, written for our community, brings this quote to life by highlighting CMCA's work to strengthen community resilience and the mutual benefits of nurturing bonds with neighboring communities. Most importantly, it celebrates the volunteers who worked tirelessly, the neighbors who stepped up when called, and the quiet dedication that makes our community stronger every day.

Context

CMCA is one of 48 community-based organizations (CBOs) competitively selected in September 2025 to support the development of Governor Kotek's Plan for a Resilient Oregon (PRO). The CBOs represent five regions across the state. Set for a September 2026 release, the PRO is a people-centered and comprehensive resilience strategy designed to help communities facing disparate risks adapt to, recover from, and thrive after both natural and human-caused disasters. Funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery, the PRO will inform decision-making by Oregon's executive and legislative branches during the 2027-2029 biennial budget cycle, ensuring that funding aligns with community priorities and considers Oregon's unique cultures, histories, and hazards.

Between September 2025 and August 2026, CMCA can earn up to \$20,000 through participation in monthly virtual Northwest regional resilience forum meetings (required) and by hosting up to two optional community engagement events. The CMCA PRO Lead, Grant-making Lead, and Board Member, Miriam Fultz, oversees all CMCA PRO activities, including contract administration. To date, CMCA has received or has invoiced for \$16,000 for the successful completion of two CMCA-hosted and PRO-sponsored community engagement events (January and February 2026), ongoing monthly CMCA participation in forum meetings, and the submission of required meeting deliverables. Miriam also attends all monthly PRO statewide forum meetings to better understand the PRO and to learn about what others are doing (optional). All funds earned by CMCA will be used to expand the capacity of the Cape Meares Emergency Operations Center (EOC) (a.k.a., "the Conex Box" or the "Cape Meares Resilience Hub"). This investment aims to strengthen community resilience to disasters of all types and scales, including natural and human-caused events. CMEVC executes the emergency preparedness mission of the Cape Meares Community Association (CMCA), a nonprofit and public benefit corporation registered in Oregon.

The Power of Volunteerism, Partnerships, and Collaboration

At its heart, this story is about volunteers who worked tirelessly for our community and the neighbors who showed up when asked. In November 2025, we established the focus of the January and February 2026 PRO-sponsored community engagement events, identified dates, reserved facilities and contacted potential speakers and panelists. Much of the work involved turning our big ideas into reality, which often meant daily phone calls and emails with state and community sponsors and partners and with those who maintain community calendars. Anyone who has helped plan large community events knows that the details multiply exponentially as the big day approaches. In addition, we worked with the PRO Team in the Governor's Office to identify the deliverables for each event (e.g., resilience definitions, photographs, survey responses, raw data files) and to ensure that CMCA met all contractual requirements, including insurance.

Throughout the winter, we developed plans, agendas, and flyers, collaborated with event partners on logistics, distributed materials, wrote newsletter articles, and secured audio-visual equipment. Most days, the email and text exchanges were flying back and forth as we honed each detail. We also worked with our event partners to develop advertising strategies, leaving no stone unturned. For the January event, our emergency preparedness counterparts in Oceanside and Netarts spread the word in their communities, and we wrote articles for the Cape Meares Newsletter.

For the February Event, the scope of our work went beyond our corner of the world. We wrote a press release that was published in the *Tillamook Headlight Herald* (January 27, 2026, Page B2), posted on the *Tillamook County Pioneer* website, included in the Tillamook County Library newsletter, and uploaded to the Tillamook Chamber of Commerce Community Calendar. In addition, we attended two Rotary club meetings with our event partner (TEVC) and released a shorter version of the press release that appeared in various Tillamook-focused Facebook groups, on the Tillamook PUD marquee, and on a KTL radio spot. Others provided valuable support, including the Cape Meares Fencepost author extraordinaire, Ellen Steen (see the Fencepost articles in the *Tillamook Headlight Herald* between November 2025 and March 2026). The Tillamook County Citizens Corps Council (TC4), a volunteer and emergency-focused coalition of nine communities, helped CMCA spread the word across the county—we appreciated seeing the smiling faces of our TC4 colleagues at both events.

Planning Realized: Gathering the Voices of Cape Meares Residents and Beyond

CMCA held the first of two PRO-sponsored community engagement events on January 24 (Oceanside Community Club) and on January 25 (Barbara Bennett Community Center). This hybrid event (in-person, ZOOM) featured the documentary "Rumblings: Preparing for Cascadia" (2025), an interactive PRO-focused exercise ("Resilience is..."), and a lively question-and-answer session with a panel of experts, including Randy Thorpe (Director, Tillamook County Emergency

Management), Chief Jeff McBrayer (Netarts-Oceanside Rural Fire Protection District), and Jeff Gilbert, Western Oregon Regional Emergency Coordinator, ODHS Office of Resilience and Emergency Management (ODHS/OREM). Community members from Cape Meares, Oceanside, Netarts, Bay City, Nehalem, and South County provided 133 definitions of the term “resilience.” A panel member expressed amazement at the attendance (>133 across both days, in-person and ZOOM). For this event, CMCA earned \$5,000 (after submitting all required documentation).

CMEVC, in collaboration with the Tillamook Emergency Volunteer Corps (TEVC), hosted our second PRO-sponsored event, “Let’s Get Ready to Rock and Roll,” at the Tillamook County Library on Saturday, February 21. With this hybrid event, we supported TEVC’s inaugural community-focused event while also supporting PRO development. Residents from Portland, Nehalem, Manzanita, Rockaway, Garibaldi, Bay City, Trask, Tillamook City, Cape Meares, Oceanside, Netarts, Hebo, Pacific City, and Tierra Del Mar attended this event, which featured Steven Eberlein, Director of Organizational Resilience at Ethos Preparedness in Portland, Oregon. His presentation, *Before the Ground Shakes: How to Prepare for the Cascadia Earthquake*, captivated the audience and provided useful tips that are easily accomplished. The panel members for the question-and-answer session included Mary Faith Bell, Tillamook County Commissioner and Chair, Jeff Gilbert, Randy Thorpe, and Sheriff Nick Troxel, Chief of Police, City of Tillamook. Many thanks to Major Deborah Maynard and the cadets, cadet sponsors/parents, and active adult members of the Tillamook County Composite Squadron, Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Cadet Program. They arrived early and supported the entire event, from setting up chairs to helping attendees during the event.

CMEVC Asked, Community Members Stepped Up!

CMCA encountered a challenge with the February event: to earn the full amount (\$5,000), CMCA needed more PRO survey responses. Because we did not want to leave PRO funds on the table, we asked for the help of Cape Mearesians on MeWe and through personal phone calls. From 2:00 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. on Sunday, February 22, we started and moderated four ZOOM-based viewings of the recorded February 21 in-person event with a final showing on Monday, February 23. Across the five viewings, we exceeded our survey response goal of 105 by two, which means that CMCA submitted 107 survey responses to Governor Kotek’s PRO Team. To all in Cape Meares who stepped up to view the event and contributed their lived experiences on the PRO survey: THANK YOU. Because of your time and contribution to your community, CMCA—and YOU—earned the full amount (\$5,000) for the February event. Words cannot convey our gratitude.

Some Key Takeaways

But...dear readers, the story is about more than these important accomplishments. Through our work, CMCA strengthened relationships with other communities in Tillamook County, with each other, and with our emergency preparedness colleagues beyond Cape Meares. Based on the feedback CMCA has received thus far, people who attended the January and February events are

taking those first baby steps toward increasing their personal resilience like building personal go-bags and increasing the amount of rice, beans, nut butters, and water stored in their homes.

As all in Cape Meares continue their personal journeys toward optimal levels of resilience and emergency preparation, we offer some food for thought here:

- (1) You are your own first responder. First responders will not save you when Cascadia strikes and the inevitable tsunami arrives in Cape Meares.
- (2) Your neighbors are your second responders. Form relationships with your neighbors so that you can help each other with routine problems AND during emergencies.
- (3) Emergency preparedness and strengthening the resilience of all in Cape Meares takes a community, whether one is a resident, property owner, short-term rental property owner/manager, or visitor. Here is a goal: to build an enduring culture of preparedness and resilience in Cape Meares—one that promotes the ability of all people to withstand, adapt to, and to recover from natural and human-caused disruptions of any magnitude.
- (4) Stay informed! Sign up for state, county, and local alerts (see the Cape Meares website @ <https://capemeares.org/emergency-preparedness/> for more information).
- (5) Attend one of the CMEVC emergency preparedness drills and the annual Great Oregon Shakeout in October each year. Practice will help you break through the “mental freeze” that often occurs right after emergencies.
- (6) Consider how you might contribute to your resilience and that of your fellow community members. What are your interests and special skills? How much time do you have? Find your neighborhood captain (start here: <https://capemeares.org/emergency-preparedness/map-your-neighborhood/>). You might be surprised at how a few hours of your time multiplies the efforts of others.
- (7) As a community, we need to build on this energy. What can you do to help?

Overall, CMEVC volunteers gained experience that will benefit future CMCA efforts. Our work reaffirms what we already know: preparing Cape Meares for disruptions, regardless of the type or magnitude, requires the input and support of the community.

Thank You

As we reflect on CMCA’s accomplishments, we are reminded that the heart of our community lies in the people who show up, lend a hand, and work together for the common good. From tireless volunteers to neighbors who answered the call, and partners and sponsors who offered guidance and resources, every effort made a difference. Delivering two events in a month’s time was both challenging AND rewarding. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped us. We look forward to future collaborations and chances to build relationships and resilience on the Oregon Coast.