

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

Winter 2003 Newsletter



Victory for Klickitat Trail Supporters

WA State Parks lifts closure, retains ownership of trail

By Tiffany Kenslow, Field Organizer, tiffany@gorgefriends.org

Klickitat Trail proponents applauded a late January decision by the Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission that lifted a temporary closure of the stunning 31-mile Klickitat Trail that extends from Lyle to Dalles Mountain Ranch in Washington. The Commission also voted to retain ownership of the trail indefinitely.

Both the State Parks' decisions came despite Parks' staff

recommendations to the contrary. These decisions are significant victories in a nine-year effort to open this trail for public use. Last fall, without a public process, Washington State Parks Director Rex Derr moved to "temporarily" close the trail to public use, bowing to political pressure from a few disgruntled property owners. The director's attempt to muffle conflict backfired, inadvertently galvanizing

local trail supporters.

On the heels of this closure, trail supporters formed a new organization, the Klickitat Trail Conservancy, and began organizing supporters to attend public meetings, write letters to Washington State Parks, and educate the public about the tremendous opportunities that the trail presents. Washington State Parks Commissioners were so impressed with the group's efforts, they also directed the State Parks staff to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Klickitat Trail Conservancy for trail maintenance and support of the Klickitat Trail.

To demonstrate their long-term commitment to the trail, the Klickitat Trail Conservancy has committed to raising \$5,000 to assist Washington State Parks over the next several months with interim management of the trail.

The Klickitat Trail is poised to become an outstanding recreational opportunity in Klickitat County, in large part due to the accomplishments of the newly founded Conservancy. Their efforts began in earnest in early November when Washington State Parks called a public meeting in Lyle, WA regarding the Klickitat Trail. More than 200 people attended the meeting, with

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enhancing recreation

The Klickitat Trail meanders along the Wild & Scenic Klickitat River for 16 miles before heading south into the remote Swale Canyon.
photo: David Melody



INSIDE
Spring Hiking Brochure
includes Friends' Gorge
Hiking Weekend

Executive Director's Letter

In these wet, dreary days accompanied by uncertain times, I look to some unassuming Gorge residents as role models to keep my spirits up. No, I'm not talking about the local residents standing up for the Klickitat Trail (see cover story), though these folks are indeed an impressive lot. I'm talking about the 800 varieties of wildflowers in the Columbia Gorge, including the 15 species that exist nowhere else in the world.

Gorge wildflowers should not be taken lightly. They are a hardy bunch, as resilient as they are beautiful. Despite rain, wind and occasional snow, millions of Gorge wildflowers are setting the stage for a glorious spring show. Look for the highlights in our enclosed hiking brochure.

As I write this, the grass widows of Catherine Creek are poised to display a brilliant purple carpet, with a few adventurous souls already showing their stuff. Yellow bells will soon be riding the coat-tails of the widows, presenting a veritable bloomfest in early March.



These wildflowers remind us of an important lesson. It is easy to stand tall and push forward when the sun is out, the air is warm, and life is easy. But the true test of character comes when conditions are not ideal, when the cards are stacked against you, and it is easier to look down than up.

The political climate and economic realities facing the Columbia Gorge are affecting, and will continue to affect, every aspect of our work. Our disconcerting present seems to overwhelm any hopeful future. While our staff and board look forward to spring, at the same time, we are well aware that we are in the midst of "winter" in regard to our issues. So like the wildflowers, we plow ahead in less-than-ideal conditions. Tiffany Kenslow will soon head to Washington, D.C. to lobby our Congressional delegation for more public land acquisition funding as part of our Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project. And with Tiffany consumed in land acquisition, we've hired a second Gorge field organizer, Joanie Thomson, to deal specifically with the Gorge Commission's plan review process.

I hope our "winter" of efforts will provide Gorge lovers with future protections as dependable as the Gorge's own magnificent spring wildflower show.

Sincerely,

Kevin Gorman
Executive Director

*Brilliant
balsamroot
and blue lupine
light up the
eastern gorge
in springtime.*

photo: Diana Karabut

Mission Statement

Friends of the Columbia Gorge shall vigorously protect the scenic, natural, cultural and recreational resources within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

We fulfill this mission by ensuring strict implementation of the National Scenic Area Act; promoting responsible stewardship of Gorge lands and waters; encouraging public ownership of sensitive areas; educating the public about the unique natural values of the Columbia River Gorge and the importance of preserving those values; and working with groups and individuals to accomplish mutual preservation goals.

—Adopted November 20, 1997



Citizen Involvement Update

Friends' Outreach & Volunteer Happenings

By Betsy Toll, Volunteer Coordinator, betsy@gorgefriends.org

Hikes and Wildflowers Coming Up Soon!

Last year, hundreds of hikers participated in our annual wildflower hiking series, with record numbers of Gorge enthusiasts out on the trails from March through June.

This spring's hiking program will offer more hikes each weekend, more variety for different levels of hiking ability, and special focus outings as well. More than 55 hikes between March 15 and June 15 are listed in the brochure inserted in this newsletter.

Special members-only hikes, Lewis & Clark Landscapes hikes, birding opportunities, and occasional Sunday hikes will be offered, in addition to the well-loved Saturday wildflower hikes. The expanded spring series will culminate in Gorge Hiking Weekend, June 14 and 15.



Seven-Mile Hill, just west of The Dalles.
photo: Ken Denis

For more information, email hikes@gorgefriends.org, or call Cathy in our Hood River office at (541) 386-5268, or Betsy in our Portland office at (503) 241-3762 x107. Or check out the details at www.gorgefriends.org. ■

Bridal Veil Stewardship Forum

In partnership with Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department, Friends' volunteers are working to remove the invasive ivy and blackberry that are choking out native vegetation and strangling trees at Bridal Veil State Park. Upland, aquatic and riparian wildlife habitat are all threatened by aggressive, opportunistic non-native species such as Himalayan blackberry and English ivy.

Friends organized a project-specific pesticide forum in January for staff, Park representatives, and volunteers. Park Ranger John Cowan (a licensed chemical applicator), Portland Bureau of Environmental Services restoration specialist Darien Santner, and entomologist Caroline Cox of the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides presented a wide range of information on the uses and dangers of toxic chemicals in managing invasive plants.

This constructive discussion, incorporating information, data and experience, confirmed our decision to proceed without use of toxic chemicals in this restoration project.

Our next Bridal Veil work party is Saturday, March 8, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Bridal Veil State Park. Check our website for details and dates of upcoming stewardship activities. ■



Friends Volunteers are working to remove the invasive ivy and blackberry that strangle trees and choke out native vegetation at Bridal Veil State Park.

photo: Diana Karabut

Hike Volunteers Needed!

Our hikes are led by experienced hike leaders affiliated with local hiking clubs. Hike "shepherds" assist the leaders, get hikers signed in at meeting places, lend a hand on the trail, and act as "sweeps". Every hike needs at least one shepherd to help ensure a safe, enjoyable experience in the Gorge.

Shepherding is easy and fun. To volunteer, email hikes@gorgefriends.org, or call Cathy in our Hood River office, at (541) 386-5268 or Betsy in our Portland office at (503) 241-3762 x107. ■



Conservation and Legal Program Highlights

In the Courts and in the Field...

By Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org and Nathan Baker, Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org

Oregonians Oppose a Gorge Casino

In December, Friends of the Columbia Gorge joined with Gorge residents to announce opposition to the construction of a new casino in the Columbia River Gorge and also to release poll results showing that Oregonians strongly oppose a gorge casino.

In a statewide poll conducted in November, Oregonians opposed an off-reservation casino in Cascade Locks by a margin of 53% to 34%. “Strong” opposition (43%)

to a Cascade Locks casino outpaces “strong” support (22%) by almost a 2-to-1 margin.

The Warm Springs Tribes have threatened to build a casino on property east of Hood River held in trust by

the Bureau of Indian Affairs unless the governor allows a casino in Cascade Locks.

While the Tribes’ casino promoters claim a right to build a casino on their isolated 40-acre parcel within the National Scenic Area, significant legal, political and practical impediments make this site impossible to develop. For example, the statewide policy on tribal gaming prohibits off-reservation casinos. Governor Kulongoski should not allow the hollow threat of a Hood River casino to justify changing the state policy on casinos by allowing an off-reservation casino in Cascade Locks.

“The question is not confined to either Hood River or Cascade

Locks,” according to Hood River County resident and anti-casino activist Toni Vakos. “There is another alternative that is gaining momentum statewide and that alternative is *neither* Hood River nor Cascade Locks.”

Casino promoters hope to draw 3 million visitors per year to a Cascade Locks casino, an average of 8,200 visitors per day, equivalent to locating a Six Flags Amusement Park in the heart of the Columbia Gorge. Traffic, congestion and air pollution would dramatically increase. The result would be an explosion of unplanned growth in this small community, leading to efforts to expand the urban growth boundary into surrounding scenic area lands. Perhaps the greatest concern is that it would lead to more off-reservation casinos in the Gorge and across Oregon. ■

We Need Letters and Support

Governor Kulongoski may make a decision on whether or not to allow a Cascade Locks casino in the first few months of his administration. Contact him immediately and urge him to protect the Columbia Gorge from casino development, uphold the current policy of one on-reservation casino per tribe, and deny the proposal for a Cascade Locks casino.

Governor Ted Kulongoski
State Capitol Building
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4047
(503) 378-4582
(503) 378-4863 fax
www.governor.state.or.us/
governor/mail/mailform.html



Friends board member Rick Ray (l), Conservation Director Michael Lang (c), and Toni Vakos of No Casino hold a press conference presenting opposition to a Gorge Casino.

photo credit: Kevin Gorman

Friends Challenges Unlawful Clearcut

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) approved an illegal clearcut across the Columbia River from Angel’s Rest and located in a Special Management Area (SMA). This clearcut is 30 acres—twice the maximum allowed in the SMAs.

The landowner claims the cleared land will be used for cattle grazing and that there is no limit to the amount of acres that may be clearcut. In approving their application, the DNR violated laws that limit the size of clearcuts, require review for scenic impacts, and protect forest land for forest uses.

Concerned about the precedent this will set for protection of forest resources in the SMAs, Friends has closely monitored this clearcut since it was first proposed two years ago. After the DNR issued its decision, Friends appealed it to the Washington

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“Casino promoters hope to draw three million visitors per year to a Cascade Locks casino, equivalent to locating a Six Flags Amusement Park in the heart of the Columbia Gorge.”

Friends Works to Ensure Critical Gorge Lands are Protected

By Tiffany Kenslow, Field Organizer/Project Manager, tiffany@gorgefriends.org

Federal legislation in 2000 created an opportunity for greater public acquisition of critical lands in the Gorge than previously anticipated. The result was 187 land offers from willing sellers totaling more than 6,700 acres of Gorge landscapes. The Forest Service has three years to make offers to buy these lands or the lands will convert to a zoning that will allow more development and increased logging and mining in the Gorge.

Due to the flood of offers, the Forest Service categorized each parcel as either a high or low priority for purchase. Initially, the Forest Service projected there would be 54 high priorities. Those rated high would have a higher likelihood of being purchased and permanently protected.

Friends provided comments on every offer. Our well researched and

documented comments focused on parcels assigned low priority ratings in the Forest Service draft reports, but which we felt deserved high priority ratings based on resource significance and threats to those resources if the Forest Service failed to make purchase offers.

The information provided by Friends staff and members, fish and wildlife agencies, and other members of the public resulted in a significant adjustment to the number of parcels designated as high priority. This input to the Forest Service helped add another 34 parcels to the originally projected 54, bringing the total to 88 final high priorities. These parcel additions increase the likelihood that another 600 acres of critical lands will be permanently protected for future generations.

“The information provided by Friends staff and members, fish and wildlife agencies, and other members of the public resulted in a significant adjustment to the number of parcels designated as high priority.”

For more information on the final priority ratings, check the Forest Service website at www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia; click on the Section 8(o) link on the left side of the screen.

For more information about Friends' work on Gorge land acquisition, check our Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project website at lewisandclarklandscapes.org, or contact Tiffany at (541) 386-5268 or tiffany@gorgefriends.org. ■

Conservation and Legal Program Highlights

Friends Challenges Unlawful Clearcut...

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Forest Practices Appeals Board. Two adjacent landowners, concerned about impacts to streams, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic resources joined Friends' appeal. Some 7,000 acres of non-federal forest land in the SMAs would become vulnerable if this timber sale is allowed to proceed. The Appeals Board is expected to hear the matter in summer 2003. ■

This clearcut comes right up to the boundary of the National Scenic Area. Friends is currently appealing Washington DNR approval of a similar cut across from Angels Rest, in the Scenic Area.

photo: Michael Lang





Funding Gorge Protection

Development Director's Report

By Jane Haley-Harris, Development Director, jane@gorgefriends.org

Lewis & Clark Author to Keynote Annual Meeting

Friends' Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, March 9 from 12:30 to 3:30 PM at the beautiful Skamania Lodge just outside Stevenson, Washington.

Keynote speaker at the March 9 luncheon will be author Rex Ziak. Rex's new book, *In Full View*, explores the experiences of the Lewis and Clark expedition's final 20 miles of their journey to the Pacific.



A former logger, Rex has been fascinated with Lewis and Clark since childhood. In 1991, with the journals as his guide, he began researching the expedition, tramping the banks at the western end of the Columbia. Rex's book sheds light on the Corps' triumphs and struggles on the north shore, and on the enormous effort and risks endured during the final 20 miles of the voyage.

In Full View received excellent reviews and has become an important addition to the history of the opening of the west. A lover of adventure, in 1992, Rex Ziak won an Emmy award for cinematography for his work at that time on the documentary film, "Tall Ship: High Seas Adventure."

Please be sure to R.S.V.P. to Jane (503) 241-3762 x102 and join us at the annual meeting on March 9. ■

Author Rex Ziak will be the keynote speaker at Friends' Annual Meeting.
photo: Bill Wagner



Show your (wildflower) colors!
Display your love for the Gorge on the trails or around town by sporting something from our great line of all-cotton polos, sweats and T-shirts.

Check our website at www.gorgefriends.org. From the membership page, click on the Gorge Store to see to see the whole line of Gorge wear and more. ■

The board and staff at Friends of the Columbia Gorge want to thank our members from around the nation who have generously supported Gorge protections with membership gifts, donations to special programs such as the Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project, and with gifts and bequests to our endowment. Public support makes protection of this national treasure possible.

photo: James O. Holloway



Victory for Klickitat Trail

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Charles Montange, attorney for Rails to Trails Conservancy, removes fencing that illegally blocked public access along the Klickitat Trail.

photo: Linda Rankin

a strong majority being local residents in support of the trail. In addition to urging the state to retain ownership, many local residents asked State Parks to reopen the trail for public use.

Following the Lyle meeting, the Washington State Parks Commission held a public meeting in Olympia, WA to consider future involvement with the trail. Of the 27 speakers who testified in Olympia, 24 encouraged State Parks to retain ownership and reopen the trail. Half of those who spoke in support of the trail were local Gorge residents.

The U.S. Forest Service testified, requesting that Washington State Parks to retain full ownership of the entire 31-mile corridor for at least one year, to allow the Forest Service to conduct a public planning process for trail management. As recently as last summer, the Forest Service had expressed an interest in managing only part of the trail. Overwhelming public

support of the trail, particularly from local residents, has encouraged them to consider management of the entire trail.

If the State Parks Commission had voted not retain ownership of the trail, ownership would have reverted to the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy does not manage land and would have likely looked to transfer ownership to another suitable entity. If no suitable entity was found, it is possible the Conservancy would be forced to abandon the trail, leading to permanent loss of this unique recreation opportunity.

Klickitat Trail Conservancy member Bob Hanson and Friends executive director Kevin Gorman will lead a Friends members-only hike on the Klickitat Trail in late March. Space is limited. To reserve your spot call Friends' development director Jane Harris at (503) 241-3762 x102. ■

What you can do:

Contact the Forest Service to offer support for the Klickitat Trail. Encourage them to manage the entire 31 miles of the trail. Email the Forest Service at info@fs.fed.us/r6/columbia, or write to:

Dan Harkenrider, Manager
Columbia River Gorge
National Scenic Area
902 Wasco Ave.
Suite 200
Hood River, OR 97031

Talking points and a sample letter are available at www.gorgefriends.org. Contact Tiffany Kenslow at tiffany@gorgefriends.org or (541) 386-5268 for more information.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

www.gorgefriends.org

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503-241-3762

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Grass widows bloom profusely at Memaloose Hills in March (see hiking brochure inside).

photo: Ken Denis

Know Your Gorge

The Columbia Gorge is glorious in Spring!

Fifteen endemic Columbia Gorge wildflowers are plants found nowhere else in the world. From brilliant Poet's Shooting Stars found at Tom McCall Preserve in late March and early April, to cheery Columbia Gorge Daisies blooming at Latourell Falls in mid-June, the Gorge holds treasures unique to its mountains, bluffs, cliffs and trails.

Some of these native blooms are easy walking distance from roadways, like the bright Barrett's Penstemon found in early May along the Historic Columbia River Highway east of Hood River. Others are tucked along rocky trails, such as the rock-hugging little Smooth-leaf Douglasia, on the upper trail to McCord Creek in early April.

More than 800 flowering species brighten the Gorge and delight novice wildflower buffs and seasoned botanists alike. Many of Friends' spring hikes are led by naturalists happy to point out a tiny lavender Marsh Violet, or lead a group through dazzling fields of sunny Balsamroot. Look for the wildflower icons in our hiking brochure.

For much more information, we strongly recommend *Wildflowers of the Columbia Gorge* by Russ Jolley, available at most area bookstores. ■