

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Protecting the Gorge Since 1980

Summer 2011 Newsletter

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Friends of the Columbia Gorge

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Link to us on Twitter and Facebook
from our website: www.gorgefriends.org

The proposed wind turbines at Whistling Ridge would be highly visible from the Gorge.

Photo simulation: GeoDataScope, Inc.



Take Action Today!

Oppose the Whistling Ridge Project

The Whistling Ridge Wind Energy Project would consist of up to 50 turbines, each up to 426 feet tall, on a ridge above the City of White Salmon, adjacent to the National Scenic Area. Almost all of the proposed turbines would be highly visible from the Columbia River Gorge.

The project would degrade views from the Columbia River, Interstate 84, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, the cities of Hood River and White Salmon, and the Historic Columbia River Highway. Located on forested land inside a designated "Special Emphasis Area" for the northern spotted owl, the project would likely harm eagles, hawks, bats, and the already imperiled spotted owl.

The Whistling Ridge project is proposed at a time when the region is already so saturated with new wind projects that the Bonneville Power Administration is having to sharply reduce these projects' output to avoid overloading the regional energy grid.

Project construction would disrupt Gorge communities. Main thoroughfares serving Underwood, Mill A, and White Salmon would experience major traffic delays. Local businesses, farms, and wineries that rely on tourists and visitors would suffer – all for a project with a maximum capacity of only 75 megawatts, and whose energy would almost certainly be sold to California.

Numerous groups and public agencies, including the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service, have recommended substantial modifications to the project, but the project proponent, SDS Lumber, has refused to entertain these changes.

The irreplaceable natural beauty, wildlife, and communities of the Columbia River Gorge must not be sacrificed for an energy project that the Northwest does not even need.

Citizen action makes the difference!

Your actions for Gorge protection are crucial to our success.

To oppose Whistling Ridge, please visit www.gorgefriends.org/whistlingridge to sign our online petition today:

"We, the undersigned citizens, oppose the Whistling Ridge project adjacent to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. We believe that wind energy should be an important part of the Northwest's energy future, but poorly planned projects like Whistling Ridge should not be allowed."

Cover photo: The view from Birkenfeld Ridge of Table Mountain and Mount Hood.

Photo: Jozsef Urmos / Panojoe.urmos.net

Director's Letter

Give someone the benefit of the doubt, the theory goes, and they will do the right thing. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work out that way.

More than a decade ago, Geoff Thompson decided to open the View Point Inn in Corbett as a restaurant, even though commercial activities on the site were not allowed. So Thompson pursued the restaurant as a non-profit to train developmentally disabled adults for restaurant work, serving real food to paying guests. Multnomah County gave Thompson the benefit of the doubt and approved the application, but soon regretted it. Few disabled workers were trained, liquor was served without a license, business hours extended late into the evening, and huge events with loud music led neighbors to protest.

The County shut down the Inn, but Thompson came back. This time, Thompson argued that making the View Point Inn a commercial dining and wedding facility was the only way to preserve its historic character, as he would

use its profits to repair the building.

The Gorge Commission was asked to amend its management plan to allow commercial activities at historically significant sites. Friends was concerned by the amendment, but seeing the writing on the wall, recommended that the Commission create strict accountability measures to ensure the restoration work actually occurred.

Instead, the Commission created rules that assumed a best-case scenario that Thompson would abide by his word. He didn't. According to the *Gresham Outlook*, Thompson drew a \$25,000 monthly salary and lived a lavish lifestyle, but did not make all the required repairs. In June, Thompson filed bankruptcy, apparently owing \$2.8 million, including a federal tax lien and several state tax liens. Nearly 30 former employees are suing for back



Photo: Sandy Wright

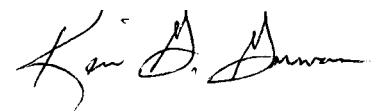
wages. Then in July, the decrepit roof caught fire, a roof Thompson had pledged to replace. Because Thompson had let the building's insurance lapse, the fire cost employees their jobs and threatens the future of the historic building itself.

The tragedy of the View Point Inn is punctuated with a scarring fire, but the smoldering began years ago when the Commission put sympathy ahead of logic. Like it or not, Gorge protection

Friends of the Columbia Gorge works to ensure that the beautiful and wild Columbia Gorge remains a place apart, an unspoiled treasure for generations to come.



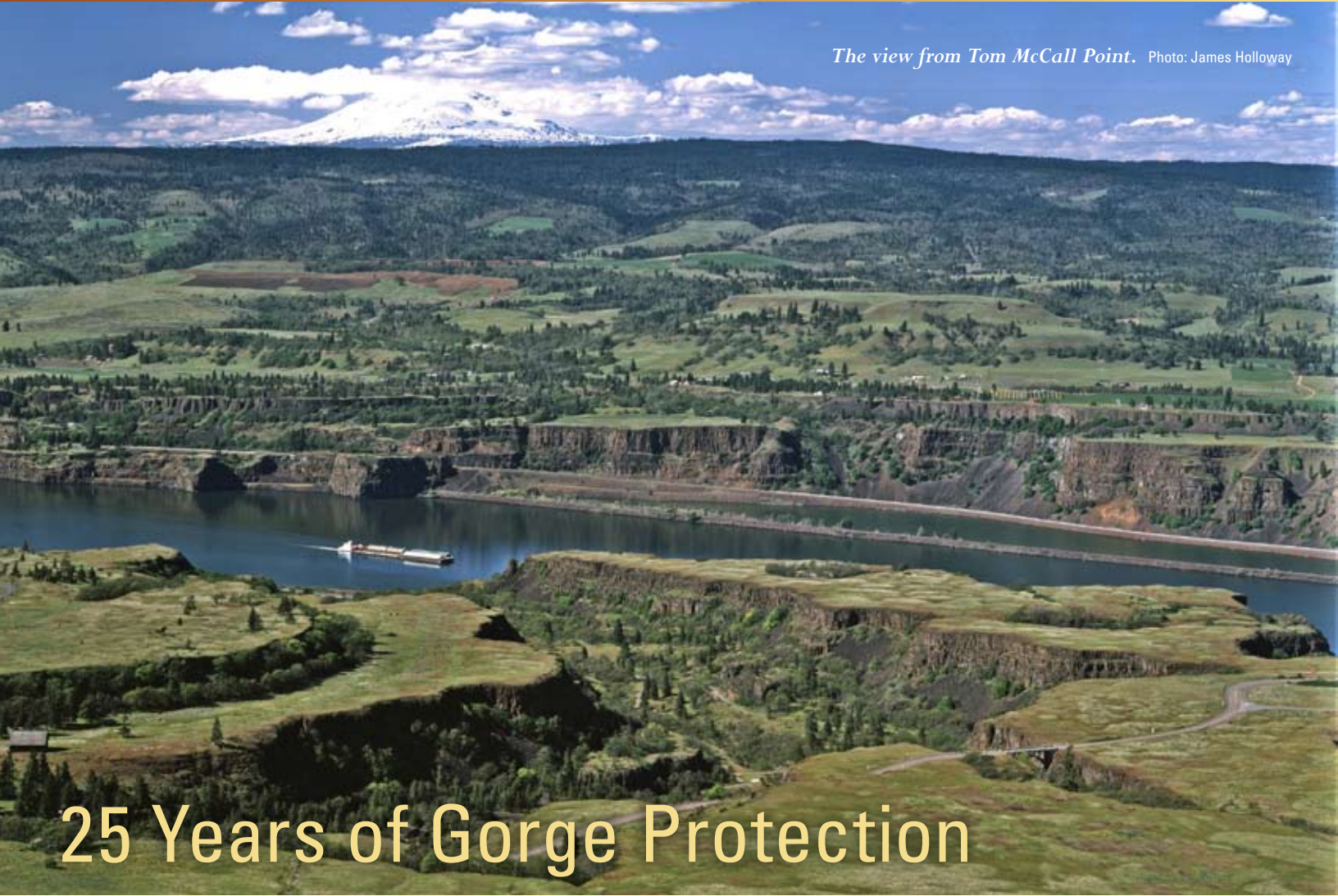
rules must assume worst-case scenarios – strong rules and oversight could have led to a different conclusion for the View Point Inn. I can only hope this saga informs future decision-makers that while there is nothing wrong with hoping for the best, we must always plan for the worst.



Kevin Gorman
Executive Director
kevin@gorgefriends.org

The View Point Inn was seriously damaged by fire in July. The building was uninsured and is unlikely to reopen.

Photo: Rick Ray



25 Years of Gorge Protection

Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

In November 1986, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area was created by Congress with strong bipartisan backing and broad public support. This groundbreaking legislation mandated that the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational values of the Gorge be protected, while encouraging urban areas in the Gorge to flourish. This year marks the 25th anniversary of this tremendous achievement.

As we celebrate 25 years of Gorge protection it is also important to acknowledge the many challenges that ensued after passage of the National Scenic Area Act and recognize the challenges that lie ahead. Friends has been there every time to meet these challenges, defending the laws that protect the Gorge, and we will continue to perform this critical role in the years to come.

First hurdles

After passage of the Act, opponents of Gorge protection regrouped and in 1990 filed the first legal challenge to the constitutionality of the Act. Federal courts upheld the Act's constitutionality, finding it within Congress' powers to protect an interstate region of such national importance.

The Scenic Area Act and its Management Plan have withstood several claims of unconstitutional takings of private property, when appellants were unable to demonstrate deprivation of the economic use of their property. This is due, in part, to "safety valves" in the Act and its implementing rules ensuring that private property retains beneficial economic use. In addition, opportunities for compensation or

relief have been available for property owners whose lands lie within the more protected Special Management Areas.

Applying the standards

The Management Plan allows for ample development within the Scenic Area, thereby ensuring that property owners have opportunities for economic use of private land. Since 1986, more than 1,300 dwellings have been approved within the Scenic Area, outside urban area boundaries. Friends' analysis of buildable lands in the Scenic Area concluded that under existing rules up to 1,800 more dwellings and supporting development could be approved. However, permit-issuing agencies must require all new developments to protect scenic landscapes and avoid sensitive wildlife habitats.

Even with the Act, Gorge protection is assured only if responsible agencies dutifully apply protection standards and enforce them in the case of violation. When agencies fail to enforce the Act, significant damage can result. One notable example is the case of the infamous Bea House. In 1996, Skamania County issued a permit for a modest house and outbuildings, stipulating 31 conditions of approval relating to size, location, building materials, and other factors. The landowner violated half of those conditions, constructing an enormous house on the most visible spot on the property and illegally removing all screening trees.

The case took several years to resolve. Finally, the Gorge Commission, Skamania County, and the landowners reached a settlement that required reducing the size of the house and planting numerous screening trees. Today the house is barely visible.

Cumulative effects

The National Scenic Area Act requires new development to avoid cumulative adverse effects that degrade the scenic beauty and natural heritage of the Gorge. Yet, to date, a comprehensive evaluation for the cumulative effects of development has never been done. While the Act requires that projects avoid cumulative adverse effects, neither the Gorge Commission nor the counties evaluate these effects, even though they routinely approve new developments.

In 2004, Friends of the Columbia Gorge challenged the Gorge Management Plan for this ongoing failure to protect against cumulative adverse effects. The Oregon Supreme Court agreed with Friends and ordered the Commission to adopt relevant standards. In response, the Commission sidestepped the court's directive and adopted weak cumulative effects guidelines that fail to meet the court's requirement. Friends has appealed the Commission's new guidelines to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

Challenge and commitment

Perhaps the biggest challenge to Gorge protection lies ahead. The Gorge Commission has increasingly favored more development at the expense of the exceptional resources of the Columbia Gorge. Expanding commercial development – even approving a destination resort within the Scenic Area – has taken precedence over the mandated obligation to protect and enhance the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources of the Gorge.

The courts have afforded the Gorge Commission significant latitude to interpret the National Scenic Area Act, and in this

context, two possibilities for improving Gorge protection emerge. Those charged with appointing commissioners (governors of Oregon and Washington, and the six Gorge counties) can prioritize Gorge protection by appointing strong conservationists to the Gorge Commission. And the Scenic Area Act itself can be improved to better fulfill the Congressional intent of protection.

In the years ahead, the need for advocacy will remain high, and this much is certain: in every instance, continuing public vigilance and broad public support will be key to ensuring that protection for the Columbia Gorge remains strong far into the future. ■



Exceptional scenic beauty and strong protections have made the Columbia Gorge one of National Geographic's Top Ten sustainable destinations in the world.

Photo: Ken Denis



The Best of Burdoin

Kate McBride, Land Trust Manager, kate@gorgefriends.org

Burdoin Mountain is prized for intact oak woodlands, outstanding recreation opportunities, and expansive Gorge views that stretch from Mitchell Point to the Columbia Hills. Located just east of White Salmon, Washington, the mountain rises between the arid eastern Gorge landscapes and the forests and waterfalls to the west.

In June, Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust purchased 10 acres that comprise all the best of Burdoin. With sweeping views of the Gorge to the east and west, much of the property boasts relatively pristine oak woodlands that provide outstanding habitat for sensitive species, including the western gray squirrel and Lewis's woodpecker. A photo taken from the property is featured on our enclosed Fall 2011 hiking brochure.

The Burdoin parcel is surrounded on three sides by Forest Service land covered by hiking and mountain-biking recreation

plans. Under existing Gorge protection rules, as a 10-acre parcel situated in one of the most protected zones in the Gorge, the property would not be eligible for a



Burdoin's oak woodlands provide excellent habitat for western gray squirrels (Sciurus griseus).

Photo: Courtesy of Creative Commons

dwelling. However, a small rustic cabin was constructed prior to passage of the National Scenic Area Act, so dwelling

status was "grandfathered in." Most recently the cabin was occupied by owners who lived very lightly and maintained the land in its natural state, but a future owner could have dramatically expanded the little cabin to an oversized house with a heavy footprint on the land and a negative impact on scenic values.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust has established four priority areas for protection, including Burdoin Mountain, Mount Pleasant, Cape Horn, and Memaloose-to-The Dalles. Property ownership at Burdoin reflects a checkerboard of public and privately owned land, but thanks to protective zoning in the Scenic Area, the landscape is largely unspoiled.

Our long-term goal for Burdoin is to protect the scenic and natural resources of this property while allowing light recreational use. Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust will closely monitor the delicate balance between those purposes in the years to come. ■

Middle school students in Friends' program volunteered on a stewardship project, hiked at Gibbons Creek, and sketched native plants.

Photo: Ann Campbell / Annscreativephotography.com

Kids in the Gorge

The Vic Clausen Youth Program

Maegan Jossy, Outdoor Programs Coordinator, maegan@gorgefriends.org

This June, 213 sixth grade students in Washougal, Washington ended the school year by participating in a special program. Working with the Washougal School District, Friends of the Columbia Gorge invited all Washougal sixth graders to take part in two days of educational outdoor activities sponsored by our Vic Clausen Youth Program.

Eight hundred middle school students have participated in our youth program since 2008. This year, students spent a day at Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge, working alongside teachers and experts, learning about habitat restoration, then turned to nature exploration on a hike along Gibbons Creek trail. The second day, held at Beacon Rock, included a quiet drawing activity, wildlife habitat games, learning about the adventures of Lewis and Clark, and learning how to identify tree species in the Gorge.

The Vic Clausen Youth Program was established in 2008 with a generous gift from Friends member Phyllis Clausen to honor her late husband. Dedicated Gorge protection advocates and Vancouver residents, the Clausens wanted to ensure that the next generation of Gorge residents appreciate all that is special about the Columbia Gorge and understand the importance of protecting it.

To learn more about this program or to volunteer, contact Maegan Jossy, maegan@gorgefriends.org or 503-241-3762 x103. ■



Photo: Michael Horodyski

"New" Face at Friends

Friends of the Columbia Gorge is delighted to welcome Renee Tkach back on staff. Renee is returning in a new role, as Project Manager for our new "Gorge Towns to Trails" program, or GT2T, after spending the past year working for the Hells Canyon Preservation Council.



Photo: Jeremy Bechtel

A Cape Horn resident, Renee's enthusiasm for the Gorge and the people who love it make her a perfect match for the GT2T project. Whether on trails or rivers, her love of the outdoors is contagious. You can connect with Renee on the trail this Fall, and learn more about how Friends is working to promote hiking opportunities in the Gorge!



Settlement with PGE Benefits Gorge Air and Environment

Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

Gorge residents and visitors alike can soon look forward to cleaner air in the Columbia River Gorge, thanks to a legal settlement that Friends of the Columbia Gorge and other conservation groups recently entered into with Portland General Electric.

The settlement agreement successfully concludes a campaign by Friends and our allies to clean up and shut down PGE's coal-fired power plant at Boardman, Oregon, including a federal lawsuit filed in 2008. The agreement establishes a \$2.5 million fund for environmental restoration and clean energy projects, further reduces acid-rain-causing pollution from the Boardman plant, and requires the plant to cease burning coal by December 2020

through a court-enforceable decree. This outcome is a win for the environment, human health, and special places like the Columbia River Gorge.

Pollution from the PGE Boardman plant is a major threat to human health and the environment. The largest stationary source of haze-causing pollutants in Oregon, the plant is responsible for degrading air quality in the Columbia River Gorge, Hell's Canyon, and ten other protected areas. Pollution from coal-fired power plants contributes to heart disease, cancer, strokes, and chronic lower respiratory diseases. The Boardman plant is also the biggest source of global-warming pollution in Oregon.

Friends and allies filed the federal lawsuit after PGE rejected requests for pollution reductions and early closure of the plant. The case was strengthened when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a notice of violation against PGE, citing similar violations as those alleged in the lawsuit. This led to the State of Oregon adopting new rules in 2010 requiring pollution reductions at the plant and a scheduled closure by the end of 2020.

The agreement locks in the 2020



Barrett's Penstemon (Penstemon barrettiae). The settlement agreement creates the Penstemon Fund to reduce air pollution and restore habitat.
Photo: Don Jacobson / Donjacobsonphoto.com

Spring at Memaloose Hills on a good air quality day.

Photo: Ken Denis



Friends Challenges Revisions to Gorge Management Plan

Nathan Baker, Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org

Friends of the Columbia Gorge and several of its members recently filed suit in the Federal District Court of Oregon challenging the U.S. Forest Service's adoption of unlawful changes to the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

The Forest Service's new changes to the Management Plan, adopted in July 2011, apply to the Special Management Areas (SMAs) of the Scenic Area, and mirror earlier changes by the Columbia River Gorge Commission. Both agencies have weakened the Plan by stripping critical resources like air, plant habitat, and land (including geological resources and soil) from the Plan's definition of "natural resources." The agencies also adopted new provisions that fall far short of the Scenic Area Act's mandate to protect natural and cultural resources from the cumulative adverse effects of multiple projects over time.



unrelated changes in July that strengthen the protections for lands within the Special Management Areas. These changes were required by a 2008 federal court order obtained by Friends and a 2010 settlement agreement between Friends and the Forest Service. These changes prohibit several types of uses in the SMAs, including new dwellings on parcels smaller than 40 acres, the expansion of existing commercial and multi-family residential uses, and recreational vehicle campgrounds in areas zoned for semi-primitive recreational use. ■

The Gorge abounds in water resources, including beautiful Rock Creek in Skamania County.

Photo: Greg Lief / Liefphoto.com

closure date in a court decree, which Friends can enforce against PGE even if the state rules change, and further reduces the plant's sulfur dioxide emissions by at least 3,000 tons below the limits set by the state. It also allows the conservation groups to monitor and inspect PGE's pilot studies to establish its final sulfur dioxide limits.

The agreement also requires PGE to pay \$2.5 million into a fund named the Penstemon Fund, after the wildflower found in rocky areas throughout the Gorge. The fund, which will be managed by the Oregon Community Foundation, will provide the following environmental benefits:

- \$1 million for habitat protection and environmental restoration in the Columbia River Gorge;
- \$625,000 for habitat protection and restoration in the Blue Mountains, Hell's Canyon, and the Wallowa Mountains;
- \$500,000 for local clean energy projects, such as solar panels on houses; and
- \$375,000 for community-based efforts to reduce air pollution.

To avoid any appearance of self-interest, Friends of the Columbia Gorge and our partners in the lawsuit agreed that we would not be recipients of any of those funds.

The end of coal-burning at Boardman will be a victory for Gorge residents and visitors, as well as forests, streams, and wildlife. After more than five years of hard work, the settlement marks the beginning of healthier communities and a more sustainable future for the Columbia Gorge. ■

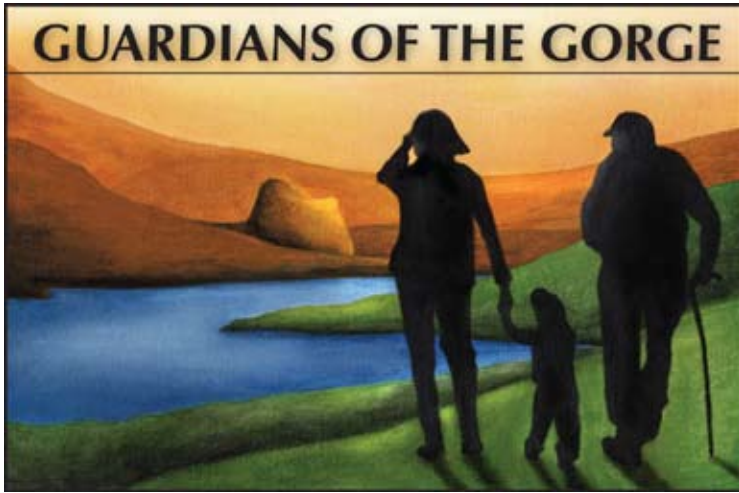
Friends was represented in the Boardman litigation by the Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center and attorney George Hays.

The Forest Service made these detrimental changes despite receiving more than 450 comment letters opposed to the changes, and no comments in support. "It is disappointing that the Forest Service is ignoring its responsibility to protect the special and unique resources of the Columbia River Gorge for future generations," said Friends member and hike leader Jim Chase, who joined the federal lawsuit as a plaintiff.

Friends has also challenged the Gorge Commission's corresponding changes weakening the Plan. That appeal is currently pending in the Oregon Court of Appeals.

The Forest Service also adopted other,

“Do what you can. Use what you have.
Start where you are.” — Arthur Ashe



Sandy Wright, Development Director
sandy@gorgefriends.org

The 25th Anniversary of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area prompts us to reflect on the donors who have done some very heavy lifting for Friends. In recognition of the many individuals who have given annual gifts of \$5,000 or more, we have inaugurated a new giving circle called Guardians of the Gorge.

To thank these special donors and inspire others, Fran and John von Schlegel hosted an intimate dinner in their new West Hills home in Portland. This special gathering inspired \$55,000 in gifts and pledges. Without Fran’s insistence on finding a way to motivate others to give, this event could not have been such a great success.

Our thanks to Fran for sharing her home and her passion for Gorge protection! To learn more about Guardians of the Gorge, call 503-241-3762 x102, or email sandy@gorgefriends.org. ■

Volunteers Make It Paradise

Our annual “Picnic in Paradise” this summer drew nearly 300 members and supporters to our newest land trust property at Mount Pleasant for live music, great views, and a potluck feast.

Kudos to the 30 stellar volunteers who helped in dozens of ways to make the whole event a resounding success. Jess and Todd Snider coordinated kite-making activities, and samples of Gorge goods were provided by Jacob William Winery and The Garlic Lady.



Adventure Awaits

Peter Cornelison, Field Representative
peter@gorgefriends.org

Have you ever wanted to travel up the Columbia River by cruise ship? Well, you’re in luck. Joy and Larry Gohl can help turn your adventurous dream into reality.

In 1995, Joy started Adventure Cruises in Portland, promoting small ship voyages, with Larry’s technical and computer support. In 2006, the Gohls realized their own dream when they bought a home near White Salmon and moved to the Gorge. They love outdoor recreation and the friendly small-town lifestyle, and became members of Friends five years ago. Their online business is thriving and the



Larry and Joy Gohl.

Photo credit: Courtesy of Joy Gohl

Columbia/Snake Rivers cruise they promote brings travelers from around the world to experience the Columbia Gorge.

Joy and Larry frequently speak out in public and write letters supporting Gorge protection. According to Joy, “The Gorge belongs to everyone, as well as to future generations.”



Special thanks to volunteer Jill Downing for tireless help with planning; to the Lambert Street String Band, Josh Ellyson, and Justin Carroll for filling the afternoon with music; and to everyone who pitched in to make it a great day!

Summer fun at our Annual Picnic in July.

Photos: Ann Campbell / Annscreativephotography.com

Cape Horn offers spectacular views.

Photo: James Holloway



The recently completed Nancy Russell Overlook.

Photo: Maegan Jossy



Featured Hike: Cape Horn, WA

Distance: 6.8 mile loop, 1,630-ft. elevation gain

Maegan Jossy, Outdoor Programs Coordinator, maegan@gorgefriends.org

The beauty of Cape Horn has been well known to Gorge lovers for years. But now when hiking the full loop, which is open annually from July 15 to February 1, you'll encounter some changes along the trail. We recently celebrated the dedication of the Nancy Russell Overlook, a great lunch spot with unbeatable views. The overlook honors Friends' visionary founder, who stopped the Rim View Estates subdivision in order to protect this view for all to enjoy.



A new ADA trail leads to the overlook and two pedestrian underpasses will soon eliminate the dangers of crossing Highway 14. Even though this is the newest trail in the Gorge, it is quickly becoming a classic. ■

Directions: Travel from east or west on Washington State Route 14 to milepost 25.4 and turn north onto Salmon Falls Road. A Park & Ride lot is on the right and the trailhead is just across the street.

The ADA Accessible trail at Cape Horn.

Photo: Maegan Jossy

Special Gifts

APRIL 21 – JULY 20, 2011

IN HONOR OF KRISSE BIERNACKI
MILT MARKEWITZ

IN HONOR OF BOWEN BLAIR
MARIE V. HALL

IN HONOR OF JOSE AND TONIA CAMINA
STEPHANIE SIGMON

IN HONOR OF ANNE DEHAVEN
DANIEL AND JESSICA BROWN

IN HONOR OF RYAN AND MARY FINLEY'S WEDDING
WALTER AND VONDA MOBERG

IN HONOR OF SEN. MARK O. HATFIELD
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IN HONOR OF JUDY JACOBS
CHRISTINE STONE

IN HONOR OF GRACE WEINSTEIN
LEIGH KNOX

IN MEMORY OF BRUCE CANNADY
JUDITH AND JOHN PIERCE
SHINAKO AND GARRET TAKATA

IN MEMORY OF OLIVER DALTON
SANDI AND TOM ROUSSEAU

IN MEMORY OF ART GRIFFITH
DR. OLIVER AND MARY ANN MASSENGALE

IN MEMORY OF NED HAYES
MARY AND RICHARD ROSENBERG

IN MEMORY OF WILMER HILL
JOAN HILL

IN MEMORY OF JEANNE NORTON
NATHAN BAKER

IN MEMORY OF PRES. RONALD WILSON REAGAN
DOUGLAS AND BRENDA CHARTERS

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IN MEMORY OF HELEN MCBURNEY RUNNING
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IN MEMORY OF NANCY RUSSELL
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IN MEMORY OF HAZEL SEAVEY
JACK AND CARLIN OZEGOVIC

IN MEMORY OF LENNART SWENSON
SALLY DUCEY AND SUSAN THOMAS



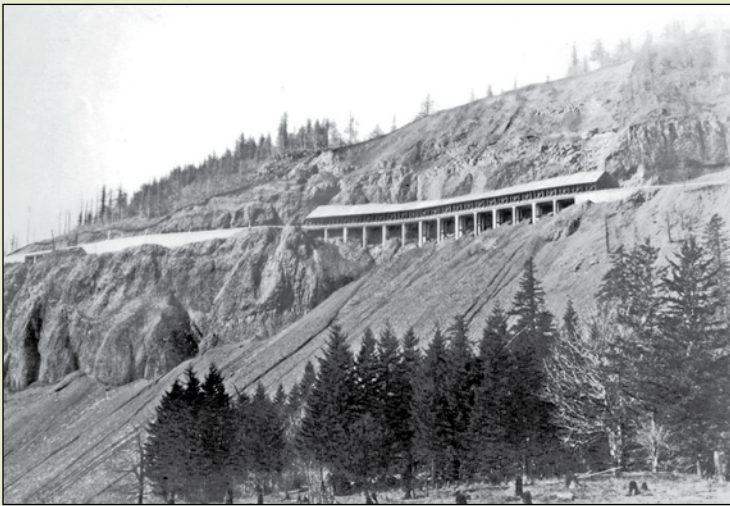
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Know Your Gorge: *Then and Now*

Highway 14 at Cape Horn



Rock Shed on Highway 14 at Cape Horn, circa 1950.

Photo: Courtesy of Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center Museum



Highway 14 at Cape Horn in 2011. Photo: Kevin Gorman

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, established by Congress in 1986, celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2011. To commemorate the occasion, our quarterly newsletters are providing windows to the past, from the 1860s up to the present.

In this installment of “Then and Now,” we highlight what could have been considered the only covered bridge in the Columbia Gorge.

When Washington State Highway 14 was constructed in the 1920s, the section at Cape Horn was the most hazardous stretch on the entire length of the road. The narrow highway seemed

to dangle precariously from the rock face, which posed certain dangers from above and below.

Aside from the road’s perilous height, rocks tumbling down from the steep cliffs above often pummeled the highway. To protect motorists from falling debris, a “rock shed” was constructed, actually a bridge-like roof over the most dangerous stretch of the road.

The rock shed was eventually removed sometime in the 1950s, either for aesthetic reasons or to widen the travel lanes. To minimize rockfall, wire mesh was installed from the road up to the top of the Cape Horn bluff. Today, parts of the Cape Horn trail pass over the wire mesh. ■