

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Protecting the Gorge Since 1980

Winter 2018 Newsletter



Protecting Wildlife and Wetlands

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Founder Nancy Russell, 1932-2008

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Weyerhaeuser clearcut near Hood River.
Photo: Peter Cornelison

Take Action Now

This summer, our members received alerts about Weyerhaeuser’s plans to clearcut 250 acres of forestland just east of Hood River, Oregon. More than 1,500 people have now submitted petitions to Weyerhaeuser opposing these destructive and unnecessary plans. Unfortunately, Weyerhaeuser has continued clearcutting that area, and they show no signs of stopping. The company’s cumulative clearcut near Hood River is the largest clearcut proposed at one time in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area’s history.

Even worse, this issue extends well beyond this single property. Weyerhaeuser owns 4,500 acres of timberland throughout the Scenic Area, and due to variations in zoning and regulations, the vast majority of their land is exempt from Scenic Area protections. Although Weyerhaeuser’s properties are not subject to special rules requiring sustainable forest practices, those rules and guidelines do apply in other

places in the Scenic Area and are detailed in the Gorge Commission’s management plan. Weyerhaeuser could – and should – voluntarily apply these standards to all their properties within the Scenic Area, to protect the highly sensitive and unique resources of the Columbia River Gorge.

Contact Weyerhaeuser today

Weyerhaeuser will only volunteer to do the right thing if they feel ongoing pressure from the public. Write a personal letter to Weyerhaeuser’s CEO, Doyle Simons, to express your concern for preserving the National Scenic Area by employing sustainable forest practices. Ask him to work with Friends to develop more responsible, sustainable forest practices for their land in the Columbia Gorge.

Send your letter to:

Doyle R. Simons, President and CEO
Weyerhaeuser Company
220 Occidental Ave. South
Seattle, WA 97104

Stay Connected with Friends

Monthly Enews Keep updated on Friends’ work, upcoming events and news, volunteer efforts, ways to get involved and more. Sent the fourth Thursday of the month.

Hiking Enews Receive biweekly updates on Friends’ guided outings, trail alerts, best seasonal hikes, and other hiking related news. Sent March through July and September and October.

Action Alerts Stay updated on conservation threats to the Gorge and how to take action. Sent one to three times per month.

Stewardship Enews Receive announcements to sign up for work parties on our land trust properties and public lands, related tips, stories, and events. Sent every four to six weeks.



gorgefriends.org/subscribe



@gorgefriends

Director's Letter

One of the most challenging jobs I have witnessed in my 20 years with Friends is that of the executive director of the Columbia River Gorge Commission. The person in that position must work effectively with two governors, two state legislatures, and six counties, plus numerous stakeholders like Friends. The commission director guides staff and the commissioners through both land-use permitting and big-picture planning.

Congress, along with the Washington and Oregon legislatures, made the Gorge Commission executive director position challenging because it is so critical. At stake is one of the country's most precious resources. So it gave the director authority beyond even the Gorge Commission itself. While the commission hears land-use legal appeals that can drag on for months, the director has the sole authority to act

immediately when enforcing the rules of the National Scenic Area. This includes investigating violations of the rules, initiating enforcement actions, and even issuing stop-work orders to halt violations.

Over the past several years, the various executive directors of the Gorge Commission have moved further and further away from those enforcement responsibilities, when in fact that role is needed more than ever. Our lead story (see page 4) outlines the problem we face today: a massive quarry operating without a permit and moving more than 200 trucks a day in and out of the quarry, adjacent to a wildlife refuge. This is just one example of several egregious violations occurring in the National Scenic Area with no response by the commission executive director.

The current Gorge Commission director, Krystyna Wolniakowski, needs to act. I respect Krystyna. She has been a fresh voice for the commission: passionate and hard-working with a deep appreciation for conservation and the Gorge itself. During her three years, she has worked to rebuild relations with Tribes, county officials, conservation groups, and local residents. She has worked to increase agency funding and is rebuilding a diminished staff. But we



Photo: Richard Kolbell

are at a moment in time where she must reclaim the power of her position and use her enforcement authority to stop these massive violations.

While Friends supports increased funding for the Commission, current funding is adequate to enforce against major violations. It's a matter of reprioritizing funding to enforce Gorge protection laws. Only when the Gorge Commission is recognized as a steady protector and enforcer of Gorge rules will the agency be able to build the support needed to ensure it remains robust and well-funded to protect this landscape for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Gorman".

Kevin Gorman, Executive Director
kevin@gorgefriends.org

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.



Illegal Quarry Threatens Gorge Resources

Gorge Commission staff not enforcing Scenic Area rules

Nathan Baker, Senior Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org

For the past year, illegal mining in eastern Clark County, just inside the northwest boundary of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, has been harming Gorge lands, waterbodies, and wildlife, as well as the surrounding community, on a daily basis. An unpermitted rock quarry, located just north of Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge, is one of the largest and longest-running land use violations in the 32-year history of the National Scenic Area.

The property, located on SE 356th Avenue in unincorporated Clark County and owned by the Zimmerly family, has a

history of mining-related violations. For example, during a brief mining effort in the mid-1990s, Zimmerly illegally discharged millions of gallons of sediment-laden mining runoff into nearby Gibbons Creek and Steigerwald Refuge, destroying endangered salmon habitat and harming other natural resources.

Zimmerly was fined nearly \$200,000 by the Columbia River Gorge Commission and Washington Department of Ecology for causing this devastating environmental damage. Afterwards, mining on the property was curtailed and was completely discontinued from 2004 on.

Mining without permits

In October 2017, Zimmerly's new tenant, the Nutter Corporation, once again began mining, crushing, and hauling rock from the property, and began using an unpermitted drainage ditch to discharge mining runoff onto adjacent property. Neither Zimmerly nor Nutter ever attempted to obtain the required land use approvals for resuming mining operations. A prior land use decision, issued by the Gorge Commission's executive director in 1993, had previously approved mining on the property, but that approval expired long ago under its own terms, when the mining was discontinued.

Above: Unpermitted rock quarry above Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

Endangering the community

As soon as the mining resumed in 2017, nearby residents and landowners immediately complained of excessive noise, massive dust clouds, dangerous truck traffic, and polluted runoff coming from the quarry. The unpermitted mining also poses a serious threat to the nearby Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge, where a multi-million dollar enhancement project is now underway to restore salmon habitat.

Over the past year, the unpermitted mining operation has hauled hundreds of truckloads of gravel and dirt per day along SE 356th Avenue, threatening the safety of families who live on this narrow and otherwise quiet residential street, as well as hundreds of schoolchildren who attend the nearby Columbia River Gorge Elementary School and Jemtegaard Middle School. In July, the safety risks posed by the mining were brought into sharp focus when a fully loaded gravel truck lost control of its brakes while coming down the hill from the quarry and crashed into the BNSF train tracks at more than 60 mph, destroying the tracks and blocking train traffic for more than twelve hours.

Despite repeated pleas for action from hundreds of citizens, the staff of the Gorge Commission have not carried out their enforcement responsibilities under the Scenic Area rules, thus allowing the quarry to keep operating with impunity. The Commission's executive director could shut

A quarry truck was mangled after crashing across BNSF rails at high speed.

Photo: Sean Streeter



down the mining immediately by issuing a simple stop-work order. Yet, for more than a year, the Commission's director and staff have not taken action.

Abdicating responsibility

This abdication of enforcement responsibilities is all the more disappointing given that the Gorge Commission's executive director has already stated that the current mining is violating both the Scenic Area rules and a 1997 legal settlement between the Commission and Zimmerly. Under the Commission's rules, the director is required to initiate enforcement whenever she concludes that a violation is occurring.

The lack of enforcement by Gorge Commission staff is not limited to the Zimmerly property, but appears to be broad and systemic. In 2016, the Gorge Commission removed references to land use enforcement from the Commission's mission statement on its website. Since then, the Commission's director has not initiated any land use enforcement actions anywhere in the National Scenic Area. These changes send the wrong message to Gorge landowners—that the Gorge Commission staff will no longer enforce the Scenic Area rules, leaving Gorge residents who are harmed by violations to suffer the consequences.

In the Zimmerly case, Clark County, to its credit, did attempt to enforce the Scenic Area rules. However, Clark County's enforcement powers are significantly weaker than those of the Gorge Commission. Ultimately, a Clark County hearing examiner concluded that mining on the Zimmerly property appears to be lawful under the Gorge Commission director's outdated 1993 land use approval. The hearing examiner also concluded that it is now up to the Gorge Commission to explain whether that 1993 approval is still in effect. Yet for the past year, the Commission's director has been unwilling to answer that question.

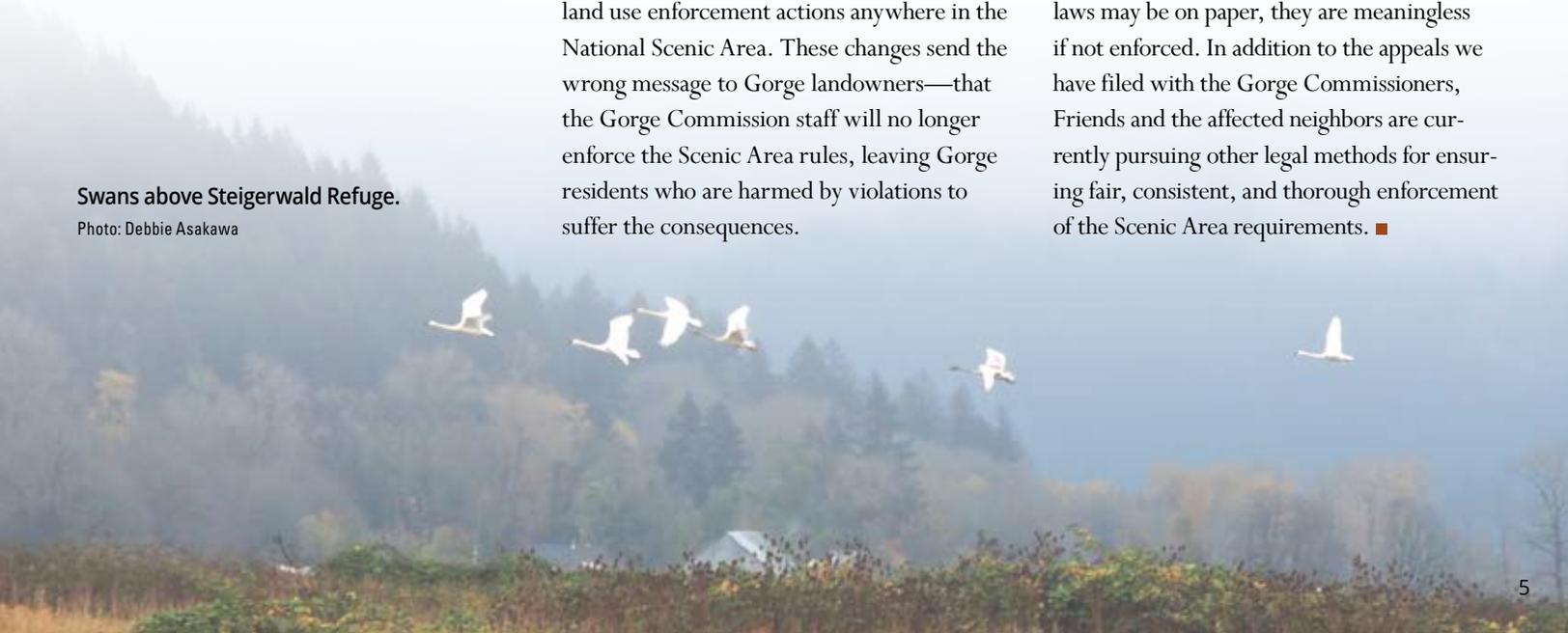
Friends appeals

Friends of the Columbia Gorge has joined with a dozen Clark County residents and landowners in appealing the Clark County hearing examiner's decision. Our appeals will be heard in 2019 by the 12 appointed commissioners who serve on the Gorge Commission.

This case is a stark reminder that, regardless of how strong land use and environmental laws may be on paper, they are meaningless if not enforced. In addition to the appeals we have filed with the Gorge Commissioners, Friends and the affected neighbors are currently pursuing other legal methods for ensuring fair, consistent, and thorough enforcement of the Scenic Area requirements. ■

Swans above Steigerwald Refuge.

Photo: Debbie Asakawa



Gorge Panel Looks at Climate Resilience, Fossil Fuel Transport, and Mining

Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

In September, the Columbia River Gorge Commission adopted several motions directing commission staff to expand its review of the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Specifically, those motions directed staff to include climate resilience and several additional topics supported by Friends of the Columbia Gorge in their review and possible revision of the plan.

The directive came after thousands of public comments, including hundreds from Gorge residents, that urged the commission to review and strengthen Gorge protection rules, especially considering the effects of climate change. For the past 18 months, public comments have implored the commission to enact stronger rules that would restrict mining and quarry operations; limit the proliferation of commercial uses; eliminate bonus lots and dwellings on resource land; zone more lands for protection as open space; address rail expansion and fossil fuel transport; and update development standards to anticipate growing impacts of climate change, such as increasing intensity of fire activity.

Thus far, the commission staff has focused instead on relaxing and streamlining development review in the Scenic Area and allowing more land uses and developments on Scenic Area lands. A recent commission staff report prioritized the importance of being responsive to landowners and county planners, failing to acknowledge the overwhelming majority of public comments calling for stronger protections and building climate resilience.

In response to the report, the Gorge Commission approved several motions, with no opposition, directing staff to address land-use concerns raised by the public. These motions are a testament to the commissioners' responsiveness to the public's concerns.

Key issues include:

- **Fossil fuel rail transport:** Examine plan revisions to address impacts from coal and oil trains.
- **Mining and quarries:** Review and update rules for new mines and the expansion of existing mines to better protect resources.

- **Commercial uses:** Determine whether commercial uses and development outside of exempt urban areas are harming Gorge resources.
- **Cluster developments and density bonuses:** Address concerns that allowing bonus lots and additional dwellings in excess of density limits undermines resource protection. Evaluate whether bonus lots and dwellings should be deleted from the Management Plan.
- **Accessory structures:** Strengthen size limitations on residential accessory buildings and prohibit their use as additional dwellings.
- **Climate change:** Review and revise zoning, land use, and development standards to adapt to the likely impacts of climate change.

The Gorge Commission and the U.S. Forest Service will continue their review of Gorge protection rules through 2019 and the public will have many more opportunities to weigh in on Gorge protection priorities. Please sign up now to receive our action alerts at gorgefriends.org/subscribe. ■



Autumn at Ruthton Point.

Photo: Warren Morgan



The Future of the Historic Columbia River Highway

Kevin Gorman, Executive Director, kevin@gorgefriends.org

As the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) considers reopening the final section of the Historic Columbia River Highway affected by the Eagle Creek fire, a bigger consideration regarding the old highway is also underway. ODOT is working on a congestion and transportation safety plan for the section commonly known as Waterfall Alley. In recent years, this area has seen significantly more traffic, impacting the visitor experience as well as residents who live along the highway. Options such as increased public transit, vehicular restrictions, and flaggers at congested pedestrian crossings are all on the table.

While the Historic Highway does not carry more traffic than a typical state highway, it is a scenic highway used and enjoyed by millions of people making many stops, parking roadside, and crossing the road to view treasured, scenic destinations. Reducing congestion is

a primary concern in the the waterfall area, but transportation decision-making over the past several years has not always focused on that goal.

The Gorge Express program has added buses into the mix, but buses alone do not relieve congestion. The pilot project proposed this past summer (and currently on hold) to restrict a section of the Historic Highway to one-way traffic with one lane dedicated to vehicles and the other lane reserved for cyclists and walkers is creative and innovative. However, there is no evidence that it will actually relieve congestion. Friends of the Columbia Gorge has encouraged ODOT to hold off launching any pilot project until it can provide some assurance that the project will actually reduce congestion and improve safety.

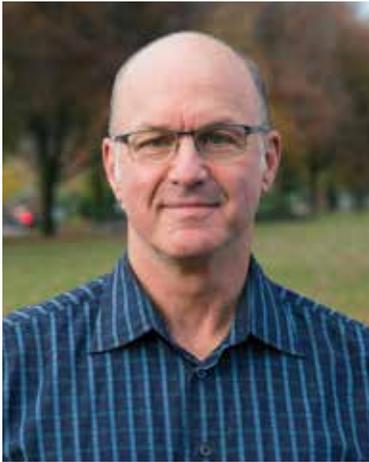
ODOT is also considering the creation of a Gorge transportation management association, or TMA. A nearby example of a TMA is Portland's Explore Washington

Park, which created a uniform parking system and uses the funds generated to support shuttle buses and digital information on parking availability. A Gorge TMA could create a uniform approach to managing traffic flows and parking fees. However, a TMA is simply a shell; its success depends on the goals of the entity and the commitment of all parties to a shared vision.

In the end, the reality is that the Waterfall Alley attracts too many vehicles on the Historic Highway at certain times of the year. Restricting personal vehicles is an idea whose time has come.

We must recognize that the steadily increasing volume of vehicles on the Historic Highway in the Waterfall Alley is unsustainable. Ideas for paid parking, shuttle buses, and a transportation management association should come with a serious exploration of limiting non-local vehicles on parts of the highway at certain times of the year. ■

Photos: Brandon P. Davis



Don Friedman



Frances Ambrose



Sophia Aepfelbacher

New Faces and Fond Farewells

Paige Unangst, Finance Director, paige@gorgefriends.org

Friends of the Columbia Gorge is excited to welcome Don Friedman to our board of directors. Our newest board member, Don will serve a three-year term on the 19-member board. Don brings skills from his time as president, CEO, and general counsel for a benefits solutions company as well as experience serving on the boards of pear and Northstar.

In June, we welcomed Frances Ambrose as a part-time, short-term employee to assist in the land trust accreditation process. Frances has an educational background in ecology and conservation biology and worked as a field organizer with Forward Montana Foundation. With the accreditation application now submitted, Frances has shifted her efforts to our GIS projects.

In the membership and philanthropy department, this summer we saw the departure of our development director, Sandy Wright. We wish Sandy well in her next ventures, and we're happy to announce the promotion in September of Pam Davee to director of philanthropy, where she will oversee the department.

Sophia Aepfelbacher joined us in early September to take on the responsibilities of membership coordinator, formerly Kate Harbour's position. Kate is now our part-time grant writer while she pursues a master's degree. Sophia returned to her roots in Oregon after receiving a degree from Fordham University, followed by several years honing her fundraising skills at Columbia University. As one of the 153 hikers trapped when the Eagle Creek fire ignited last year, she brings a unique perspective to protecting and preserving the Gorge.

We said goodbye in September to event coordinator Ingrid Nylen, who came on board in March 2017 to help plan and implement fundraising events for our *Preserve the Wonder* land campaign. Her eye for detail and superb planning skills will be missed but she has promised to return to volunteer with Friends now that the campaign has ended.

Farewells were also said to Ali Smith, who joined us in February 2018 as trailhead ambassador coordinator. Ali took the one-trailhead pilot program of 2017 to a 10-trailhead program this year, with 94 volunteers educating the public over a four-and-a-half-month season. She worked wonders for this highly effective and popular program and we wish her well. ■



Trailhead Ambassador volunteers educating hikers at Cape Horn and Multnomah Falls trailheads this past summer.



Photo: Brandon P. Davis



Photo: Friends of the Columbia Gorge archive

Trailhead Ambassadors A Vital Role during Hiking Season

Maegan Jossy, Outreach Manager, maegan@gorgefriends.org

From Earth Day weekend to Labor Day, friendly volunteers greeted hikers at 10 of the most popular trailheads in the Gorge and on Mount Hood. As trail conditions changed and more fire-affected areas were reopened, the need for up-to-date information was critical. Volunteers also answered questions about parking passes, hike alternatives, and trail hazards, and provided information on Leave No Trace ethics.

The Trailhead Ambassador program is a collaboration between Friends of the Columbia Gorge, the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance, Oregon State Parks, and the U.S. Forest Service. The goals are multifaceted: to reduce trailhead and trail congestion, decrease search and rescue incidents,

improve visitor experiences, diminish the spread of invasive plant species, and encourage responsible hiker ethics, including using a boot brush before and after hiking.

Over the season, 94 volunteers logged over 1,800 hours and engaged with some 23,000 visitors at Dry Creek Falls, Latourell Falls, Multnomah Falls, and Starvation Creek Falls in Oregon, and at Dog Mountain and Cape Horn in Washington.

At the busiest site, Trailhead Ambassadors visited with more than 400 people in a single six-hour shift. As one ambassador wrote, “I was fully engaged with visitors from 8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. I loved feeling like I was making a difference.”

Why do ambassadors volunteer? One wrote, “It has long been my belief that people will do the right thing on the trails if they are informed and understand the negative impacts.” Another said, “Since I don’t feel physically capable of helping with trail restoration right now, the Trailhead Ambassador program was the perfect choice for me.” Even Smokey Bear paid a visit to various trailheads throughout the summer.

The benefits of this program are ongoing and we hope to see a positive change in hiker preparedness over the long-term. As one Trailhead Ambassador noted, “If our help prevented one lost hiker, it was worth it.” And that’s a win.

Visit gorgefriends.org/ambassador for information on next year’s program. ■

U.S. Forest Service Acquires Coyote Meadows

Dan Bell, Land Trust Director,
dan@gorgefriends.org



Coyote Meadows.
 Photo: Debbie Asakawa

Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust has worked with the U.S. Forest Service for years to protect and preserve vital pieces of land in the Gorge. This October, the land trust completed the transfer of Coyote Meadows to the Forest Service.

Coyote Meadows is a visually stunning and ecologically critical piece of land on the Washington side of the Gorge. In the context of the entire Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area, the 7.7-acre Coyote Meadows property may be small, but it

is large in importance and value. The property is completely surrounded by National Forest land and abuts Coyote Wall and the Catherine Creek trail systems, renowned for hiking, mountain biking, and wildflower photography.

Coyote Meadows was purchased as part of our *Preserve the Wonder* campaign. Prior to that, the Forest Service faced persistent challenges between hikers, bikers, and the previous land owners. Old cars, scrap metal, and other trash littered

the property. With the help of volunteers and neighbors, Friends removed and disposed of all the debris so the land could be transferred to the Forest Service.

This acquisition will allow for better protection of a critical landscape by connecting pieces of formerly private and public lands. Going forward, old management headaches are relieved, recreational experiences can be enhanced, and most importantly, public lands in the Gorge just got a little bigger. ■

Special Gifts

July 14, 2018 – October 14, 2018

In honor of Roudi and Medhi Akhavein
 Claire and Zanley Galton

In honor of Debbie Asakawa
 Eric and Hollie Lindauer

In honor of Aspen
 Destiny Covington

In honor of Louisa Borecki
 Linda Borecki

In honor of Gwen Farnham
 George Post

In honor of Kevin Gorman
 Kathleen Karey Reid
 Felice and Ken Denis

In honor of Hollie Lindauer
 Allison Lindauer
 Susan Lindauer

In honor of Dave Lipp and Caroline Park
 Nick Zeller and Aiko Low

In honor of Megs and George
 Russell Senk
 Nell Nutaitis

In honor of Lev Michael
 Meg and Rod Merrick
 Ann Myers

In honor of Alex Montgomery and Ariel Singer
 Ellen Frankle
 Noelwah Netusil

In honor of Katherine Nester and Dave Wolfe
 Steve Anderson

In honor of David Raymond Reichle
 Regan, Andrea, and John Reichle

In honor of John Reichle
 Regan and Andrea

In honor of Tom Rousseau
 Trillium Engineering

In honor of Kathleen M. Welsh
 Erin Moeller

In honor of Gary Young
 Celine Croft

In memory of Warren E. Beecroft
 Cyd Wohlhueter

In memory of Sandra Cohen
 Bruce and Diane Follansbee

In memory of Ebb Chuck Cross
 Ashley Corker
 John Etzel

In memory of Bill and Sadie Duerden
 Barbara Duerden

In memory of Dorothy Lee Franklin
 Jerry and Phyllis Franklin

In memory of Will Gerould
 Kathy Fiskum

In memory of Edith Hartley
 Connie Ettinger

In memory of Piper Jones
 Rick and Michelle Petersen

In memory of Ralph W. Kavanagh
 Janet Kavanagh

In memory of Connie and Stuart McKenzie
 Melody Carlson

In memory of Ruth and Howie Smith
 Barbara Smith

In memory of Alice Wanke Stephens
 Tracy Frankel

In memory of Susan Stevens
 Johnsby Family Fund

In memory of Audrey Underdahl
 Bruce E. Richards
 Wendy Skarstad

In memory of Grace Weinstein
 Leigh Knox

In memory of Matt Winthrop
 Joan Ercolini
 Loring and Margaret Winthrop

Maintaining Momentum after the Eagle Creek Fire

Pam Davee, Director of Philanthropy, pam@gorgefriends.org

On September 2, 2017, one careless decision involving fireworks forever changed the landscape of the Columbia Gorge. The Eagle Creek fire ultimately burned more than 48,000 acres and shuttered more than 140 miles of beloved trails and state landmarks. Over the past century, no single event has had such a shocking effect on the Gorge.

The fire inspired an extraordinary flood of support from people like you, people seeking a way to protect and steward the Gorge. During those first few months, Friends saw our membership base increase by more than 40 percent.

Thanks to this wave of new energy, Friends was able to spring into action, blocking proposed legislation that would

have expedited clear-cut logging within fire-affected areas of the Gorge. We were also able to launch a new public land stewardship program to train and deploy teams of volunteers to areas particularly vulnerable to invasive weeds after the fire.

Since the fire, Friends has been working with Gorge community leaders to reorganize management of the century-old trail system, encourage public transit use, and contribute to the economic development of local communities.

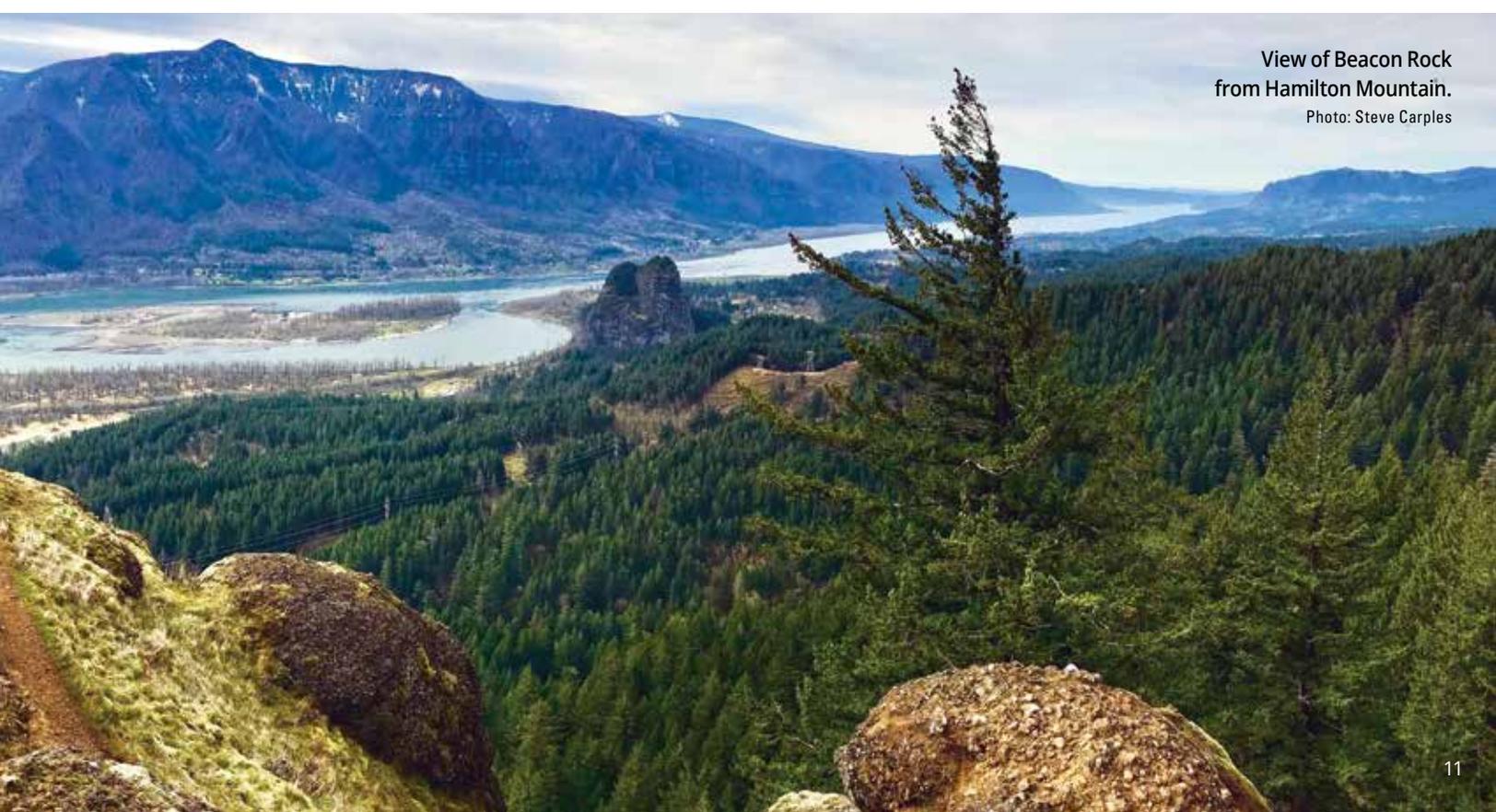
There are still many decisions to be made that will affect the Gorge for decades, and many of the efforts launched last year can only succeed if we see them through. Recognizing how critical it is that Friends maintain momentum in the years ahead, one of our most ardent

supporters generously offered to match renewal gifts made by anyone who became a member in the aftermath of the Eagle Creek fire, up to \$50,000.

The fire may be out, but the Gorge is still vulnerable to slower, less obvious, but no less insidious threats such as fossil fuel transport, logging, and inappropriate development. We're extremely grateful to be able to offer our newer members this matching opportunity. These funds will double their gift and encourage them to stay involved with Friends for the long haul.

Visit gorgefriends.org to learn more about our work in a time of increased fire danger.

Your donations today support our work to protect and steward the Gorge for coming generations. ■



View of Beacon Rock from Hamilton Mountain.
Photo: Steve Carples



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Friends of the Columbia Gorge

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WILLAMETTE WEEK'S

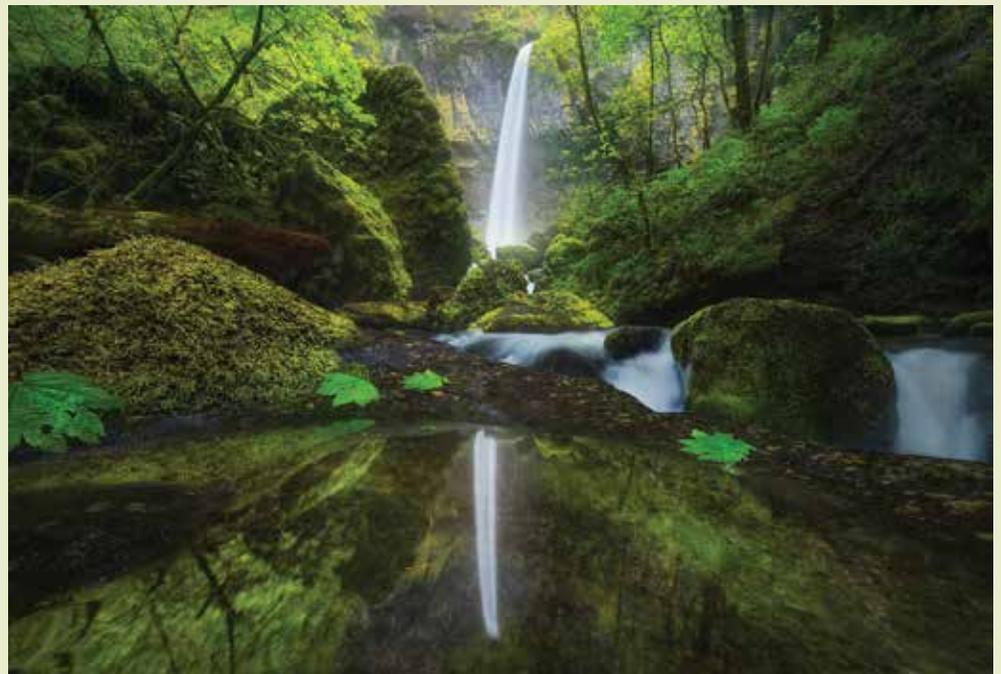
give
GUIDE

Two anonymous donors are matching the first \$50,000 in Give!Guide donations to Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Make your gift go twice as far this year at giveguide.org!

Capturing Gorge Resilience

Friends' annual photo contest returns this fall, organized around the theme of "Capturing Resilience." Photographers are invited to submit Gorge photos in the following categories:

- Cultural
- Scenic
- Wildflowers
- Wildlife
- Youth Photographers (18 years and under).



"Mirror," winner of Friends' 2017 Photo Contest, taken at Elowah Falls. Photo: Matt Meisenheimer

SAVE THE DATE!
39th Annual Meeting & Luncheon

Sunday, April 7, 2019
12 noon – 2 p.m.
Skamania Lodge, WA

Tickets available in February.
gorgefriends.org/luncheon

Last year's photo contest closed in early September, near the time the Eagle Creek fire started, and a record-shattering 500-plus entries were received. The submissions quickly evoked bittersweet memories and emotions, as many beautiful images were taken just days or weeks before the fire erupted and depicted areas that were seriously damaged by the blaze. A perfect example is Grand Prize winner

Matt Meisenheimer's reflective shot of Elowah Falls, above.

Without question, parts of the Gorge do look different this year. But the ageless beauty and inspiring resilience that define the Columbia River Gorge remain.

For full details, visit gorgefriends.org/photo-contest, and submit your entries by December 31.