

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Protecting the Gorge Since 1980

Winter 2014 Newsletter

Inside:

Victory on Coal!

Page 4



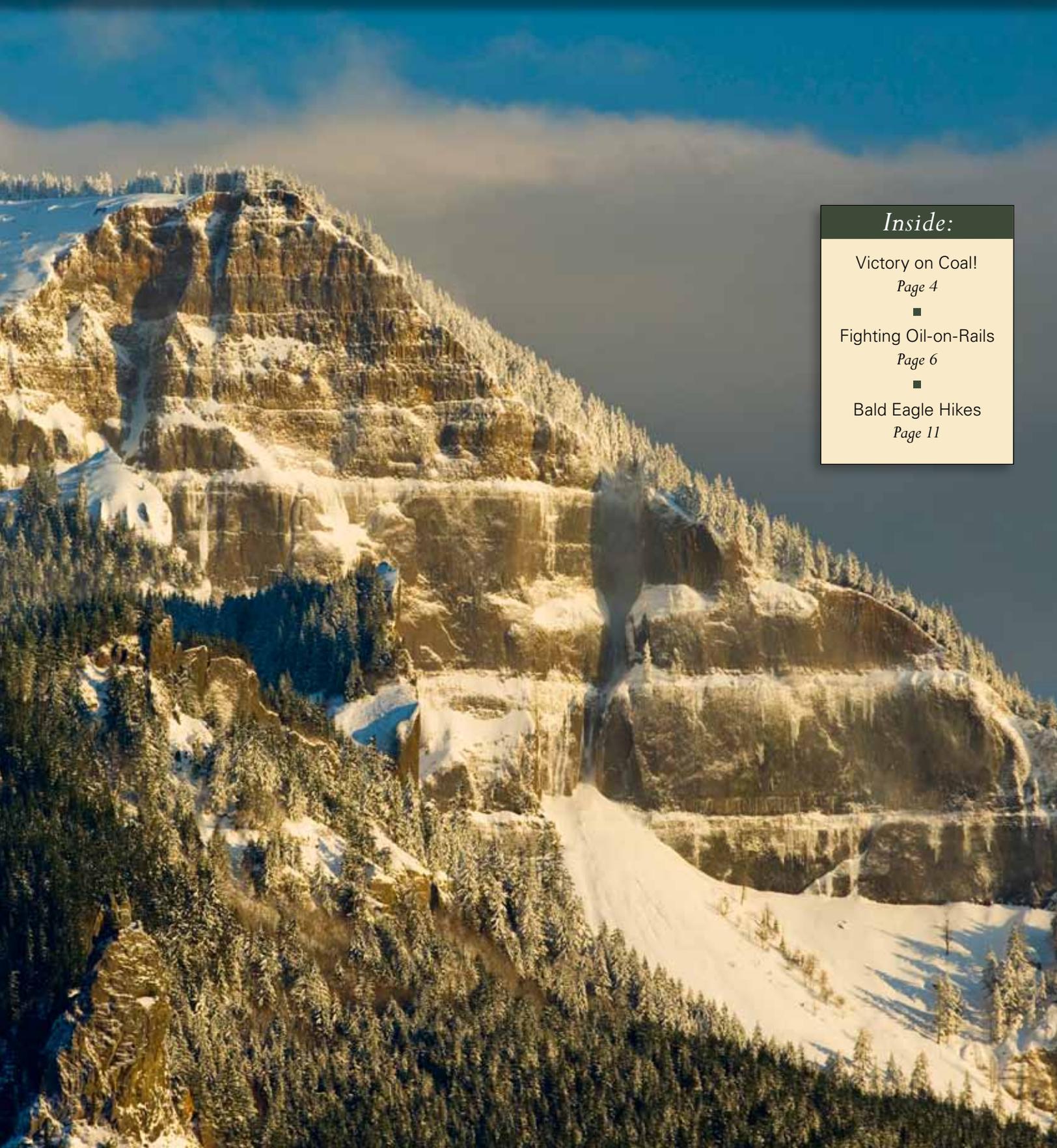
Fighting Oil-on-Rails

Page 6



Bald Eagle Hikes

Page 11



Friends of the Columbia Gorge

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



Take Action!

Citizens protest dangerous fuel schemes. Photo: Peter Cornelison

Protect the Gorge from Coal and Oil!

Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber went on record twice this year to declare his opposition to coal exports through the Pacific Northwest.

Another success for the environment came in late summer, when the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) denied Ambre Energy's long-running request for a removal-fill permit for the Morrow Pacific coal terminal on the Columbia River at the Port of Morrow.

The DSL's decision was a huge victory for our coal campaign, leaving only two potential terminals of the original six proposals. But that doesn't mean we can let down our guard.

Now we face a potentially even greater risk: massive increases being proposed for oil-by-rail through the Columbia River Gorge.

We need to stay ahead of the curve so we can stop these dangerous proposals in their tracks.

Please write to Governor Kitzhaber today and thank him for opposing the transport of dirty coal through the Columbia River Gorge. Then ask him to remain consistent in his commitment to public safety and the environment, by officially opposing dangerous oil trains and new oil terminals.

Governor Kitzhaber

Attn: Citizens' Representative
160 State Capitol / 900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047
503-358-4852
www.oregon.gov/gov/Pages/ShareYourOpinion.aspx

Citizen Action Makes the Difference! www.senate.gov or www.house.gov
Your voice is vital to Gorge protection. Let Congress hear from you.

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www.wyden.senate.gov/contact

Sen. Jeff Merkley, (202) 224-3753
www.merkley.senate.gov/contact

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www.murray.senate.gov/email/index.cfm

Sen. Maria Cantwell, (202) 224-3441
www.cantwell.senate.gov/public

Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, (202) 225-3536
Rep. Derek Kilmer, (202) 225-5916
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Email your **Congressional Representative** by logging on to www.house.gov/writerep

Cover photo: Table Mountain, north of Bonneville Dam. Photo: Peter Marbach / petermarbach.com

Kevin Gorman, left, and Washington Governor Jay Inslee at the WWRC breakfast.



Director's Letter

This past September, two women from a small town in the Columbia Gorge stood in front of 700 conservation activists and state officials in Seattle to present a shared vision for their community and the Gorge. One of the speakers works for the Port of Camas-Washougal and the other for Friends of the Columbia Gorge, organizations with seemingly disparate agendas, and their unified voices caught the Seattle audience's attention.

Renee Tkach, *Gorge Towns to Trails* project manager with Friends, and Kim Noah, finance director of the Port of Camas-Washougal, both moved to rural Washougal, Washington, ten years ago. But their paths never crossed until recently, when Friends member Larry Keister saw the potential synergy between the Port and Friends.

The Port had purchased a rare piece of Columbia riverfront property and was interested in developing a park and trail but needed to find funding. Larry introduced Kim to Renee, who encouraged the Port to pursue funding through the Water Access Grant program of Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP).

The Port's Waterfront Revitalization Project received top priority among fifteen applicant projects for state funding through WWRP. Then, with help from Renee's contacts, the Port also secured a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service, to assist in planning and public outreach efforts.

The nearly \$700,000 grant from WWRP will enable the Port of Camas-Washougal to create a water access park for nonmotorized watercraft, and will

also help connect a park trail eastward to the Washougal dike trail and Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge. The one-mile trail and river access route will eventually serve as a western gateway for the *Gorge Towns to Trails* network of trails around the Gorge.

The unique partnership between Friends and the Port of Camas-Washougal was highlighted in Seattle at the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition's 25th Anniversary breakfast on September 23. Many of Washington's political leaders, including Governor Jay Inslee, were present as Renee and Kim explained how a conservation group and a port have joined together to make a community a better place to live, work, and play.

With the recent revitalization efforts of its downtown area, Washougal is embracing its Gorge gateway status. We look forward to Washougal one day serving as a launching pad for a world-class trail system wrapping around the Columbia Gorge.

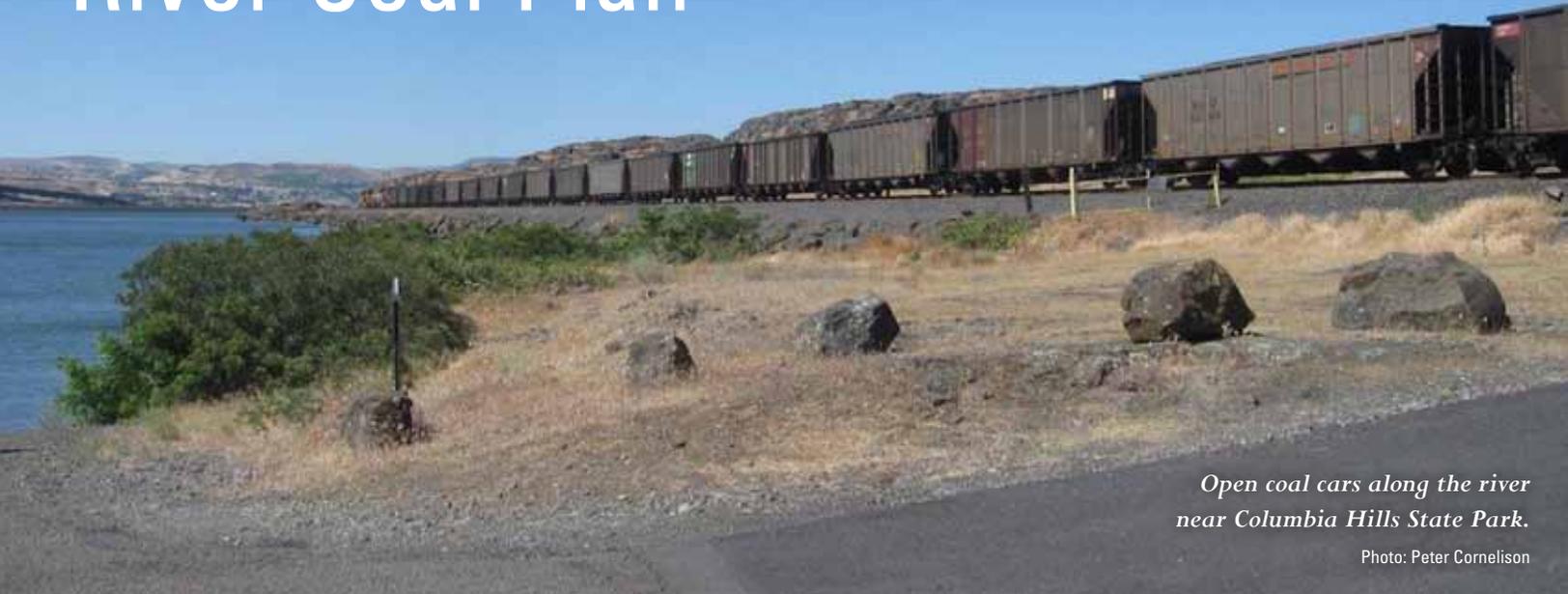
Kim Noah and Friends' Renee Tkach, right, addressed the WWRC gathering.

Photos: Danny Ngan

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.

Oregon Blocks Columbia River Coal Plan



Open coal cars along the river near Columbia Hills State Park.

Photo: Peter Cornelison

Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

This summer, the Oregon Department of State Lands, or DSL, issued a landmark decision denying Ambre Energy’s application to build a coal terminal on the Columbia River in Boardman. The DSL found the project to be inconsistent with protection, conservation, and best use of the state’s water resources, and further asserted that Ambre failed to provide sufficient analysis of alternatives that would avoid harming tribal fisheries.

The two-and-a-half-year review of Ambre’s proposal conducted by the DSL included three comment periods, and the DSL generously granted eight timeline extensions for Ambre to provide information critical to the review. Ultimately, however, the Department found that the project would harm Oregon’s water resources and fisheries.

The decision

In a statement issued on the day of the decision, DSL director Mary Abrams

said, “[This] permit application has taken hundreds of staff hours to review . . . From reading more than 20,000 public comments to carefully analyzing technical documents and plans, this application has been scrutinized for months. We believe our decision is the right one, considering our regulatory parameters laid out in Oregon law . . . ”

Conservation and recreation groups, tribal nations, Columbia Gorge communities, elected officials, and health care professionals lauded the decision as a victory for the protection of Oregon’s rivers and communities.

Tribal leaders from the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) publicly applauded the decision. According to Carlos Smith, CRITFC chair and a member of the Warm Springs Tribal Council, “This decision is one that we can all celebrate. It reaffirms the tribal treaty right to fish and is in the best interest of the Columbia Basin’s salmon populations and our communities.”

At issue

Ambre Energy, an Australian company with questionable finances, had proposed transporting as much as 8.8 million tons of coal per year by rail from Wyoming’s Powder River Basin to the Port of Morrow on the Columbia River at Boardman, to be loaded onto barges. From there, the coal would have doubled barge traffic on the river as it made its way downriver. At a Columbia River loading dock at Port Westward, near Clatskanie, Oregon, the coal would have been loaded onto ocean-going vessels bound for Asian power plants.

Predictably, Ambre Energy, the Port of Morrow, and the state of Wyoming have filed appeals in an attempt to overturn the permit denial and force Oregon to export the coal. Wyoming and Ambre claim that Oregon violated the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution by impeding interstate and international commerce and did not have the right to deny the coal terminal. Taken to its logical conclusion, that claim would mean that an unlimited

amount of coal could be shipped through Oregon for export and Oregonians would have no power to stop it.

To have legal standing to appeal the DSL decision, a concerned party other than the applicant must have commented on the proposal at some time during the three comment periods that DSL provided. However, Wyoming never commented on the project, and thus its appeal was denied due to lack of standing.

Wyoming Governor Matt Mead and his legal team are very likely reviewing the situation and planning their next move. Friends hopes they will come to their senses and respect the desire of Oregonians to protect the Columbia River and Gorge communities from coal exports.

Defending Oregon's decision

To defend Oregon's decision to deny the permit, Friends and our allies Columbia Riverkeeper and the Sierra Club intervened in the case. The intervention responds to appeals filed by Ambre and the Port that

Conservation and recreation groups, tribal nations, elected officials, and health care professionals lauded the decision as a victory.

would force Oregon to export coal by overturning DSL's landmark permit denial. Friends and our allies are represented by Earthjustice and CRAG Law Center.

While Oregon's decision to deny the terminal marks the beginning of the end for this proposal, appeals of the decision could take years to resolve. If the DSL maintains its decision in this round of appeals, the coal proponents may then take their appeal to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

On the horizon

Two major coal export proposals affecting the Columbia Gorge remain in play. Ambre Energy and Arch Coal have a pending proposal to export 44 million

tons of coal annually by rail through the Columbia Gorge to a terminal in Longview, Washington. In addition, the Gateway Pacific proposal of Peabody Coal and SSA Marine would export 48 million tons per year from Cherry Point, Washington – coal that would also be transported by rail through the Gorge.

Draft environmental impact statements for both of those projects are due for release in late 2015. While the projects should be reviewed and denied based on the facts and the law, Oregon's decision to deny Ambre's Morrow Pacific terminal in Boardman bolsters our resolve to protect the Columbia River Gorge from becoming the coal chute of the Pacific Northwest. ■



Natural and cultural resources throughout the Columbia Gorge are affected by coal debris and dust.

Photo: Angie Moore

Responding to Oil-by-rail Threats to the Gorge

Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

The Pacific Northwest is experiencing an unprecedented upsurge in transport of oil by rail. Most, if not all, of this oil is highly volatile Bakken crude oil, which is being transported through the Columbia Gorge in oil tank cars that have proven prone to rupturing and exploding in the event of accidents. Even the safer oil tank cars currently coming into production are known to rupture at speeds above 25 miles per hour.

Inadequate response plans

Existing spill response plans are inadequate and fail to comply with both federal law and the most basic level of environmental protection. A Burlington Northern Railway hazardous materials manager is on record telling a group of concerned citizens in the Gorge that, if an oil spill occurred in the Columbia River, the emergency response would be to let the oil float downriver to the dams and attempt to collect it there.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge is taking several steps to ensure that the rapid growth of oil transport by rail through the Gorge does not continue to escalate. Further, we want confirmation that existing oil trains are designed and operated in a manner that protects the outstanding resources of the Columbia River Gorge and its communities.

Legal action

In September, Friends and the Center for Biological Diversity (Center) filed a notice of intent to sue the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard for their failure to require that the Northwest Area Contingency Plan (the federal plan for responding to rail accidents and oil spills) complies with requirements of the federal Endangered Species Act to ensure protection of endangered salmon. In early November, the agencies responded by initiating consultation with federal fish and wildlife agencies,

which is the first step for protecting imperiled species.

Friends and the Center also filed comments on federal rulemaking aimed at improving rail safety and oil spill response plans. Friends called for an immediate ban on unsafe DOT 111 tank cars; transition to the safest possible tank cars, with standards requiring that those cars operate only at speeds known to be safe from rupturing; requirements for the railroads to notify the public of any shipments of Bakken oil exceeding 35,000 gallons per train, and development of rigorous “Comprehensive Oil Spill Response Plans” for the transport of “High Hazard Flammable Trains,” such as trains carrying Bakken oil.

In October, Friends mobilized members and supporters to attend a rail safety hearing in Olympia, Washington, to speak out for the need to halt unsafe transport of Bakken oil through the Columbia Gorge and our communities. Nearly a thousand citizens showed up

to send a strong message to Washington Governor Jay Inslee that we are counting on him to prevent the Columbia River Gorge from being transformed into a dangerous pipeline for crude-oil-by-rail. ■



Citizens rallied in Olympia to protest oil transport in the Pacific Northwest. Photo: Peter Cornelison

Unzoned forest lands in the center of this photo are open to unregulated residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Photo: Jozsef Urmos / panojoe.urmos.net

Washington Supreme Court Will Hear Skamania Zoning Case

Nathan Baker, Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org

For only the third time in Friends' thirty-four year history, we now have a case pending before the Washington Supreme Court. The two prior cases involved the Bea house in 2000 and the Whistling Ridge Energy Project in 2013.

The new case involves Skamania County's failures to adopt zoning for thousands of acres of unzoned, forested lands and protect these lands for forestry uses. Most of the affected lands are located just north of the National Scenic Area, in eastern Skamania County.

Skamania County has failed to take several actions required by state law. First, the County is required to periodically review its designations of commercial forest lands. Second, the County is required to adopt development regulations consistent with its comprehensive plan. Finally, the County is required to adopt zoning for all of its lands.

Despite these mandates, nearly 15,000 acres of privately owned forested lands in Skamania County remain completely unzoned and undesignated as

forest lands. The County's failure to zone these lands leaves them open to large-scale residential, industrial, commercial, and other uses, without any review under the County's zoning ordinance.

In 2012, Friends and Save Our Scenic Area sued Skamania County in Superior Court, seeking a court order requiring the County to comply with applicable state law. However, the Superior Court dismissed the case, concluding that our claims were "time-barred."

On appeal, the Court of Appeals reversed that result, noting that the County had been formally engaged in a zoning process from 2007 to 2012, and that Friends sued as soon as the County abandoned that process.

The Washington Supreme Court will now review the case and decide whether Friends may proceed with its claims against Skamania County. Friends will defend the Court of Appeals' decision and will continue to advocate for Skamania County to zone and protect its forest lands for forestry uses. ■



Fire in the Gorge

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

This past summer the land trust experienced a first in its nine-year history: a windswept wildfire that engulfed its newest Oregon property, called Mount Ulka.

Our 164-acre Mount Ulka property sits on the eastern point of Sevenmile Hill, high above The Dalles. The property was right in the path of the Rowena blaze on August 6 that scorched more than 3,600 acres.

The land trust bought Mount Ulka and a .6-mile trail easement last fall, envisioning that the property will eventually support a trail system between The Dalles to Mosier and Hood River.

Several weeks after the fire, Friends' staff and a few intrepid members trekked up to assess firsthand the fire's impacts on the landscape.

Fire is one of nature's best clean-up and restoration tools, and the landscape had

indeed been cleaned up, but restoration was already underway. Grass had burned off 90 percent of the property, but new shoots were emerging and robust wildflower fields are likely in spring.

The oaks on top of Sevenmile Hill were burned but not charred, and amid the burnt brown vegetation, fresh green growth was already sprouting. Fire cleaned out dead wood and younger oaks, whose thin bark cannot withstand flames. In short, the fire naturally achieved the goals set for most forest-thinning projects.

As we hiked that day, our longtime member and hike leader Barbara Robinson, who lives in Rowena, noted, "We will never have fire suppression in the east Gorge because we have hot, dry summers, dried-out vegetation, inaccessible terrain, and high west winds that take the fire up, down, or anywhere

else very fast. The best we can do is accept and prepare. But the oaks are ready. They don't need our help."

The Rowena fire offered a stark reminder of the value of the National Scenic Area. If Sevenmile Hill were dotted with five- or ten-acre residential sites, many more homes and people – especially firefighters – would have been in harm's way. Because of Scenic Area requirements and Forest Service acquisitions, most of Sevenmile Hill is undeveloped and was simply allowed to burn. That decision enabled firefighters to focus their efforts on protecting people and property elsewhere.

Friends will continue to work with a photographer and videographer who filmed the burn and will return in successive years to document the area's natural restoration. ■

Great Gorge Wahoo!

In October, for the fourth consecutive year, seventh-grade students from Saint Andrew Nativity School enjoyed a *Great Gorge Wahoo!* field trip to the Columbia Gorge.

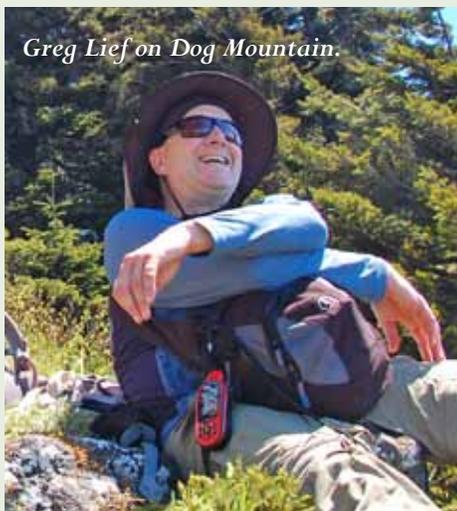
Students on this annual outing learn about the amazing and diverse landscape so close to their home. Students watch salmon spawning at Eagle Creek, stroll with a park ranger and learn about pictographs at Columbia Hills State Park, and hike on our land trust property to view traces of the ice age floods that shaped the Gorge.

The *Great Gorge Wahoo!* is a Friends-led outdoor education program sponsored by the Matthew Winthrop Memorial Fund, set up by our members Loring and Margaret Winthrop to honor their late son's passion for protecting the environment. ■

Maegan Jossy, Outreach Manager, maegan@gorgefriends.org



Students from Saint Andrew Nativity School. Photo: Maegan Jossy



Greg Lief on Dog Mountain.

Photo: Cheryl Hill

Greg Lief Benefit Piano Concert

Saturday, February 7, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Classic Pianos, 3003 SE Milwaukie

Join us for an evening of wonderful music that supports Gorge protection. Concert pianist Greg Lief – who is also an outstanding Gorge photographer – will present a repertoire stretching from classical composition to American ragtime.

Tickets will be \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door. Watch for details. All proceeds benefit Friends of the Columbia Gorge. ■

EarthShare Oregon: Give to Friends at the Office

Does your employer offer a charitable giving program? If so, you can make your year-end gift to Friends of the Columbia Gorge through EarthShare Oregon. Your employer may match your gift and co-workers might be inspired to give to Friends, amplifying your contribution.



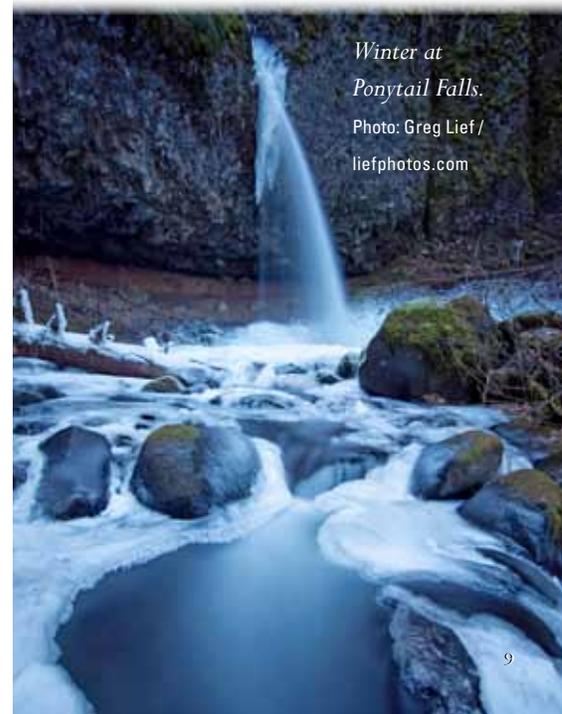
EarthShare campaigns are easy to launch if your workplace doesn't have one yet, and new online-giving software makes donating easy. To learn more about EarthShare giving campaigns, contact EarthShare Oregon at 503-223-9015, or visit www.earthshare-oregon.org. ■

Give a Gift of the Gorge this Holiday Season!

These items make great gifts or stocking stuffers for Gorge enthusiasts. A portion of each sale benefits Friends. Product details and online orders:

www.gorgefriends.org/holidaygifts.

- 2015 Columbia Gorge Calendar by photographer Peter Marbach
- *Curious Gorge* hiking book by Scott Cook
- *Wildflowers of the Columbia Gorge* by Russ Jolley
- *National Geographic* Columbia Gorge Waterproof Trails Map
- Gift Memberships make great stocking stuffers! ■



Winter at Ponytail Falls.
 Photo: Greg Lief / liefphotos.com

Sandy Wright, Development Director, sandy@gorgefriends.org



Our Evening with Friends, in October. Photo: Peter Cornellison

Thank you, Guardians and Conservators

On a beautiful fall evening, Friends' Conservators and Guardians of the Gorge gathered for our annual appreciation event, *An Evening with Friends*. Guests heard presentations from staff about the protection their gifts have supported this year and about challenges and opportunities ahead. Conservators are only 2.5 percent of our membership but contribute nearly 60 percent of our donations. Thank you, Conservators and Guardians! We couldn't keep the Gorge a special place without your generous support. ■

Gorgeous Volunteers

This fall, twenty dedicated Friends volunteers lined the course of the sixty-mile Gorgeous Relay, a one-day running event between Wyeth and the Willamette River. Their efforts directing runners and traffic earned \$2,000 for Friends. Meanwhile, a running team of Friends staff and board members – dubbed “These Angels Never Rest” – participated in the relay and enjoyed the beautiful scenery along the course. ■



Winter view from Cook-Underwood Road. Photo: Lydie Boyer



Creating a Legacy

Earlier this year, a Gorge resident, photographer, and longtime supporter of Friends named Lydie Boyer shared with us why she loves the Gorge and why she felt compelled to name Friends in her estate plans.

It's impossible to think of a single reason why I love the Gorge - more like a vast explosion of reasons. Steep, forested cliffs, fascinating basalt columns, countless waterfalls, and endless hiking and biking trails and fishing side-streams . . . kiteboarding, windsurfing, paddle boarding, sailing, jet-skiing, kayaking, whitewater rafting . . . the elegant paddle-wheelers that [offer] breathtaking vistas from one end to the next.

. . . Under Friends' stewardship, the Gorge will remain uncorrupted by those who would rather promote its degradation than see its magnificent beauty remain as is.

Legacy gifts like Lydie's ensure that the Gorge will remain a special place to be cherished and enjoyed for generations to come. To learn more about creating your Gorge legacy, contact Pam Davee at pam@gorgefriends.org or (971)634-2036, or visit our estate planning website at www.gorgefriendslegacy.org. ■



Legacy donor Lydie Boyer.
Photo: Warren Boyer

Missa Gaia for the Gorge

Thanks to Portland-area choir director Susan Peck, Friends recently had the honor of co-hosting a presentation of the beautiful Missa Gaia Earth Mass. An audience of more than 250 music and nature lovers were enraptured by this special musical performance celebrating the splendor of the earth. Susan's music and her love of the Gorge raised awareness of the breathtaking beauty of our region and helped raise nearly \$5,000 for Gorge protection. ■

Bald eagle in the Gorge.

Photo: Courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service



Featured Hike:

Bald Eagles in the Gorge!

Easy: 1 mile, 170-ft. elev. gain

Maegan Jossy, Outreach Manager, maegan@gorgefriends.org

Every winter, as many as two hundred bald eagles congregate near the mouth of the Klickitat River. The iconic birds gather here for winter feeding, where salmon and other fish are abundant. While this isn't the only place to see eagles in the Gorge, it is definitely the best. Friends will be organizing several outings in January and February to view these majestic eagles, with help from wildlife biologist Tim Pitz. Equipped with spotting scopes, we'll learn about the bald eagle's life cycle and migratory

patterns, and hear about the successful comeback of this once-listed endangered species. Check dates and register at:

www.gorgefriends.org/baldeagles.

Directions: From I-84 in Oregon, cross the Hood River Bridge to Washington and head east on WA Hwy 14. Travel about 10 miles to Old Hwy 8, near Lyle. Head north on Old Hwy 8 for approximately 1/4 mile to the parking area, which will be on your right, up on the hillside on the east side of the road.



Look for Friends in the *WillametteWeek Give!Guide*, on newsstands now!

Special Gifts

July 25 to October 22, 2014

IN HONOR OF DEBBIE ASAKAWA
SUSAN PALMITER

IN HONOR OF BARBARA BAILEY
KATE MILLS

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Know Your Gorge *A Record Salmon and Steelhead Run*

Record numbers of fish returned up the Columbia River past Bonneville Dam between May and October this year. As of mid-October, more than 2.3 million salmon and steelhead had returned, the highest number since formal counts began in 1938. Even so, the 2014 run is dwarfed by estimates of the millions of fish that the Columbia River system supported during the nineteenth century and earlier.

The returning salmon are mostly hatchery-origin fish, from breeding programs developed to increase the overall numbers of fish in the river. But the run also includes significant numbers of wild species that are listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), such as spring Chinook, sockeye, and steelhead. The ESA requires federal agencies to take action to recover the health of threatened and endangered species.

With multiple factors placing salmon species at risk, it is difficult to pin down the exact elements contributing to this year's record returns. Favorable ocean conditions likely combined with a variety of ESA-mandated efforts, including habitat restoration, regulated harvest, and improved fish passage for both up-stream and down-stream migration, to work in the fish's favor.



Salmon returning to spawn. Photo: Courtesy of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

The record returns are welcome news for commercial and sport fishers, tribal officials, and environmental groups working in the Columbia River Gorge. While one good year does not guarantee

another, the 2014 run provides some reason for optimism that the ESA recovery efforts are beginning to make a difference in restoring iconic Columbia River salmon species. ■