

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

NEWSLETTER: SPECIAL EDITION

319 S.W. Washington Street, Suite 301, Portland, Oregon 97204

Telephone: (503) 241-3762

Management Plan Insult to National Scenic Area

Call to Action

Dear Friends:

The Permanent Management Plan that will implement the National Scenic Area Act is scheduled for adoption this October. After careful review of the Final Draft Plan, we are dismayed by the weakening of natural and scenic resource protection that has occurred in the last few months.

This is a critical time. We must act immediately to let the Columbia Gorge Commission know that this approach to Gorge protection is unacceptable. Those who oppose the Management Plan and the National Scenic Area have been out in full force at public meetings and hearings, and they have left their mark. The Commission needs to hear from all of us who care about the long term protection of the Gorge. Without our voices further weakening will occur.

Your action will give the Gorge Commission the support they need to stand strong. Local interest has been served. Public interest must now be heard. Our membership has long been committed to the task of Gorge preservation and we urge you to renew that commitment by taking the time needed to make your concerns known.

*Please take a few minutes to read the **ACTION ALERT** information inside this newsletter, and to make a pledge to voice your concerns in a letter to your legislators and to the Gorge Commission. This may be our last chance to have an effective impact on the Permanent Management Plan that will benefit generations to come.*

Thank you! You are an essential part of our success. We couldn't do this work without your wonderful and generous support.

Sincerely,



GOVERNOR GARDNER'S OPPOSITION THREATENS COLUMBIA GORGE

The Governor of Washington has taken a negative position toward the National Scenic Area Permanent Management Plan throughout the planning process. Governor Gardner was a strong supporter of the National Scenic Area legislation, so his opposition calls into question his original leadership and concern for Gorge protection.

In 1984, while campaigning for Governor, Booth Gardner issued a press release urging Congress to "act quickly to protect the Columbia River Gorge from uncontrolled development." He stated that federal management "would give a neutral and independent perspective for this interstate, shared resource."

Since that time, Governor Gardner has lost his own neutral perspective along with his protective vision of the Gorge's future. He has surrendered his leadership to development interests. One example of this is his choice of the Department of Community Development (D.C.D.) to represent the state in the management plan process.

The D.C.D. has shown no interest in the primary purpose of the National Scenic Area Act: to protect the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge. The second part of the Act, addressing economic development, is not co-equal in purpose, and is subordinate to the primary purpose of protection. Yet, the D.C.D. has only shown interest in economic development, often to the detriment of other values.

Those who care about long term Gorge preservation must act now to remind the Governor of his promise in 1984 when he urged Congressional protection for the Gorge. Write or call the Governor today. He needs to hear from you.

Governor Booth Gardner
Office of the Governor
Legislative Building, AS-13
Olympia, WA 98504
(206) 753-6780

ACTION ALERT

DEADLINE September 24, 1991

In July the U.S. Forest Service and the Columbia River Gorge Commission released the Final Draft Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. **Your voice is critical to ensure that the Plan provides the necessary protection for this national treasure.**

The deadline for submitting your comments is September 24, 1991. Please call the Friends of the Gorge office if you have any questions, 241-3762.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Commission has considerably weakened the protection for natural resources in its Final Draft Plan. The Commission is proposing to allow existing and ongoing agriculture without regulations, including grazing. This would allow all agriculture except new cultivation in areas containing natural resources. Grazing is known to destroy riparian area vegetation, degrade water quality, add to erosion and significantly harm fish habitat. The buffer zones created by the Commission to protect such areas as wetlands and rare plant communities are no longer protected from agricultural practices.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Urging adequate protection of wetlands and other natural resources by regulating grazing and other agricultural practices in buffer zones.

WETLANDS

The first goal for wetland management is to "achieve no overall net loss of wetlands acreage and functions." On the surface this sounds like an appropriate approach to wetland conservation. However, in the Final Draft Plan, wetlands in the General Management Areas (GMAs) can be developed. By a "no net loss" standard, the Gorge Commission envisions allowing development in wetlands if artificial wetlands are created to replace those impacted and destroyed. Wetlands are critically important ecosystems and studies have shown that more than half of artificially created wetlands fail. In contrast, no activity can destroy or alter a wetland in the Special Management Areas (SMAs).

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Urging the GMA wetlands be given the same protection as the SMA wetlands.

AGRICULTURE AND FOREST LAND

An important aspect of the National Scenic Area Act is the protection guaranteed to forest and agriculture lands. In the Final Draft Plan, the Commission will allow new dwellings on lands designated A-2 (small-scale agriculture) or F-3 (small woodland) regardless if they are necessary to the management of these resource lands. Unnecessary dwellings will contribute to the deterioration of productive lands and encourage urban sprawl.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Insisting that the Plan only allow a dwelling in resource-based lands if it is necessary for the management for agriculture or forest purposes.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -The 20 acre minimum lot size for A-2 is too small. Fragmentation of these resource-based lands will increase pressure for non-resource based residential development

The Final Plan allows non-federal forest lands in the Special Management Areas (SMAs) to be clear-cut. Clear-cuts cause significant impacts to all the resources guaranteed protection in the National Scenic Area Act. They have tremendous effects on habitat and scenic qualities and accelerate erosion.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Urging that clear-cuts be prohibited on all forest lands within the Special Management Areas.

OPEN SPACE

The National Scenic Area Act requires the Commission to "Designate lands suitable for protection and enhancement of open spaces." The Commission has reduced the Open Space designation from 11,649 acres to 5,710 acres. The Open Space designation was dropped from 19 areas, including Doug's Beach containing cultural resources, Columbia Hills and Hood River Mountain containing natural and scenic resources. The effect of this is to open up sensitive lands to development. Most of these areas will now be designated agriculture or forest lands. These designations allow significant impact to the resources. For example, forest practices may now be permitted in areas with rare plant communities.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Urging them to reinstate the 5,939 acres originally proposed as Open Space to protect the resources, whether in public or private ownership.

SCENIC RESOURCES

The Commission has significantly relaxed its regulation of quarries. When the Act was written it was recognized that many adverse impacts to the land result from quarries and other mineral developments. This is why quarries and other mineral developments are types of pre-existing activities not protected under the Act. Quarries can be shut down if inconsistent with the Act. In the Preliminary Draft Plan, no new quarries were allowed if visible from key viewing areas. Existing quarries could continue only if their operation was fully screened from all key viewing areas. In the Final Draft Plan the Commission is currently proposing that only those quarries within three miles of key viewing areas must be fully screened.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Asking that the protection of scenic resources in regard to quarries be restored to the specifications stated in the original proposed Draft Plan.

At present nothing in the Key Viewing Area or Landscape Settings Section of the Plan can be used to deny a proposed development which is otherwise consistent with the other provisions of the Plan. For example, if a development is consistent with all provisions of the Plan but breaks the skyline or a bluff, cliff or ridge as seen from a Key Viewing Area the development cannot be denied.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Urging the Commission to give scenic resources the same protection the other resources received in the Plan. This is the National Scenic Area.

RESIDENTIAL MINIMUM LOT SIZES

Many of the counties are requesting a reduction in the minimum lot sizes in residential areas. Virtually all existing lots, no matter how small, in areas designated residential would be entitled to a dwelling. The number of new residential dwellings the Final Draft Plan is proposing (1,000+) is more than adequate to meet present needs. In addition, there are 13 Urban Areas, totalling 28,500 acres, which are exempt from any of the restrictions of the Management Plan.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Urge them not to further reduce the minimum lot sizes in residential areas.

COMMERCIAL DESIGNATIONS

Many of the counties feel there should be additional commercial development within the National Scenic Area. There are thirteen Urban Areas within the National Scenic Area which are exempt from any restrictions of the Management Plan. Commercial development should be encouraged within the urban areas and rural centers, as this is where true economic benefit will occur for these communities.

WRITE THE COMMISSION -Expressing the need to restrict commercial development to urban areas and rural centers. Urban sprawl is the Gorge's #1 enemy.

Send your comments to:

*Richard Benner, Executive Director
Columbia River Gorge Commission
P.O. Box 730
White Salmon, WA 98672*

We would also appreciate a copy of your comments for our files, please send to :

*Tamra Lisy, Education Outreach Coordinator
Friends of the Columbia Gorge
319 S.W. Washington, Suite 301
Portland, Oregon 97204*



Under the Draft Management Plan, clear-cuts, such as this recent eye-sore west of Hood River, can be expected on non-federal forest lands in the S.M.A.s. Alternative harvest methods should be required. And the most sensitive lands should be purchased with funds authorized in the Act.

MISSION STATEMENT

Friends of the Columbia Gorge shall vigorously protect the scenic, natural, cultural, historic and recreational values of the Columbia River Gorge, encourage compatible economic development within the urban areas, and educate people about the Gorge in order to gain the public support necessary for effective implementation of the National Scenic Area Act.

Staff

Paulette Carter Bartee
Executive Director
Gary K. Kahn
Kristen Pecknold
Land Use Counsel
Tamra Lisy
Education Outreach Coordinator
Helen Ehelebe
Bookkeeper/Office Assistant
Marna Moore
Receptionist/Clerk

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Friends of the Columbia Gorge
P.O. Box 40820
Portland, Oregon 97204-0820

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It is crucial that the Gorge Commission hear from YOU

If time does not permit you to write a personalized letter, please use the statement of support below adding your name and address.

CUT HERE

Richard Benner, Executive Director
Columbia River Gorge Commission
P.O. Box 730
White Salmon, WA 98672

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the many hours of hard work. The preparation of the Draft Management Plan has been difficult and the development pressures continue to threaten sound protection. Please do not forget the protection guaranteed by the congressional mandate in 1986.

I urge you to use restrictions and standards necessary to protect and enhance the natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources of the Gorge.

Regulate agriculture practices within buffer zones to protect valuable natural resources and wetlands.

Use standards that will not allow activities that alter or destroy wetlands.

Commercial development must be restricted to urban areas and rural centers.

Do not further reduce residential minimum lot sizes.

Sincerely,

CUT HERE