

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

Fall 2003 Newsletter

17 Years of Protective Land Acquisition

Reshaping the Columbia Gorge



preserving scenic areas

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

Most people consider public land in the Columbia Gorge a given. We are able to enjoy one of the most spectacular spring wildflower shows in the Gorge at Catherine Creek. We can walk and bike the Historic Columbia River Highway from Hood River to Mosier through the famed Twin Tunnels. We can watch migrating swans, ducks and geese at Franz Lake and Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuges.

Before 1986, all of the lands mentioned above were privately owned and not accessible to the public. It is difficult today to imagine that 17 years ago there were virtually no public lands east of Hood River in the Gorge. Since the passage of the National Scenic Area Act in 1986, more than 35,000 acres of land have been purchased and brought into public ownership.

Land acquisition provides the public with recreational opportu-

nities, and also limits potential development conflicts. The whims of public agencies notwithstanding (see Executive Director's letter, page 2), public ownership provides the most permanent form of land protection within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project

As we approach the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commemoration, perhaps the greatest legacy we can leave to the next generation is the continued transfer of lands from willing private sellers into public ownership. That's exactly what the Friends' Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project is designed to do.

With Friends' encouragement, over the past two years the U.S. Forest Service has purchased more than 1,600 acres of land. One parcel of particular significance is a likely Lewis & Clark campsite adjacent to Major Creek in Klickitat County, Washington, across the Columbia River from Oregon's Memaloose State Park. Other important purchases have included the 300-acre Chenoweth Table outside of The Dalles and 99 acres along the Historic Columbia River Highway between Mosier and Rowena.

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This view of the Major Creek landscape, seen from the Memaloose State Park Overlook along the Historic Columbia River Highway, has been preserved through a 2003 Forest Service acquisition in 2003.

photo: Barbara Robinson

INSIDE
Special Holiday
Gift Insert

Executive Director's Letter

In the early 1950s, concerned citizens, outraged over private logging alongside Gorge trails and waterfalls, launched a campaign to "Save the Gorge." The result of that effort was the purchase, transfer and donation of thousands of acres of private land into public hands. It also awakened the public to the fact that the Gorge's beauty was not secure. Twenty-five years later, Gorge lovers banded together to push for a National Scenic Area. But the final bill that created the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area contained a loophole allowing logging to continue in the Gorge.

Fortunately, the first Forest Service manager of the National Scenic Area decided that federal lands in the Gorge should be off limits to logging. He believed the Forest Service must be held to the highest standard in preserving the scenic and natural resources of the Gorge. That standard has been held unchallenged until now.

The Forest Service's National Scenic Area office is now considering weakening that standard and others. Proposed rule changes could eliminate limits on the size of clearcuts on private and state lands. Further, they would allow logging on lands designated "Open Space" if the primary purpose of logging is not commercial (though of course one of the purposes could be commercial), and would lift the Forest Service's 17-year prohibition on commercial logging on publicly owned federal lands.

Timber interests will play the "forest health" card to promote these changes, and say that their commercial windfall from this "forest health" effort is appropriate. We disagree. The Forest Service can conduct effective thinning for the sake of the forest without a commercial motivation. Their 2002 thinning project on Burdoin

Mountain which addressed the thick oak stands that presented a legitimate fire danger is a good example. Friends' staff reviewed that project and was impressed with the commitment to protect scenery and habitat while lessening fire danger. Had commercial interests been part of the equation, it would have been a very different story.

Commercial logging on state and private lands is already a problem in the Gorge, with clearcuts shaving the hillsides along the Pacific Crest Trail, a National Scenic Trail. To compound this situation by allowing logging on federal lands strikes at the very heart of Gorge protection.

A half century ago, irresponsible logging in the Gorge set the campaign for Gorge protection in motion. It is ironic that today we are still haunted by the ghosts of the past.

Sincerely,



Kevin Gorman
Executive Director

Mission Statement

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

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

—Adopted November 20, 1997



Citizen Involvement Update

Friends' Outreach & Volunteer Happenings

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

Great Success at Bridal Veil

Friends volunteers have made amazing progress in our stewardship efforts at Bridal Veil State Park. With help from youth groups and workplace volunteers (REI, LaCrosse Footwear, etc.), our stalwart team has transformed a viewpoint long obscured by invasive species into a showplace.

Eighteen months ago, six-foot high blackberry thickets on the upper loop trail completely blocked access to the bluff. Today, a magnificent, unobstructed view across the river to Cape Horn welcomes visitors. A path leads out to the viewing area, where sightseers can

picnic and enjoy the beauty of the Gorge's scenic vistas.

As invasive ivy and blackberry were removed, some areas were replanted with wild ginger, penstemon, Nootka roses, and other native vegetation. Even small children helped tend the young plants during this year's unusually dry summer, carrying water to each of the carefully mulched starters.

Today, visitors at Bridal Veil are greeted by a sign acknowledging Friends' volunteers, whose efforts have transformed the viewpoint. Even with plenty yet to be done, our volunteers have plenty of reason to be proud of their Bridal Veil success. ■



Children carefully tended newly planted native species during the summer.

Photo: Kevin Gorman

Helping at Bridal Veil

After



Before



Invasive blackberry (above) completely choked off this view of Cape Horn (left) from Bridal Veil State Park. Friends' volunteers have cleared the bluff of blackberry and replanted with native plants.

Photos: Diana Karabut

Come out and volunteer!

Stewardship projects are the second Saturday of every month, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Directions to Bridal Veil from Portland metro area: Take I-84 to Exit 28 (Bridal Veil). Stay on the exit road to the stop sign at the Scenic Highway. Turn right and continue one-half mile. Bridal Veil will be on your right. ■

Stewardship activities are great team-builders for work groups, church groups, and community and youth organizations. We can easily schedule a project to fit your calendar if your group would like to help in the Gorge. Call 503-241-3762 x103 for details.

For more information, contact Betsy at 503-241-3762 x103, betsy@gorgefriends.org, or Cathy in our Hood River office, at 541-806-0438, cathy@gorgefriends.org. Check www.gorgefriends.org for the upcoming schedule. ■



Conservation and Legal Program Highlights

In the Courts and in the Field...

By Nathan Baker, Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org
and Joanie Thomson, Field Organizer, joanie@gorgefriends.org

Plan Review Coming to a Close

The Columbia River Gorge Commission has finished the preliminary stage of its first-ever review of the 1992 Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Plan. But even as the Gorge Commission winds down its review of the Plan, the Forest Service has announced that it will review a number of additional topics this fall.

Gorge Commission Considers Final Topics

On October 14, the Commission considered two final Plan Review issues: "uses allowed without review" and a new "expedited review" process. Both of these issues relate directly to cumulative impacts.

The Gorge Commission staff's initial report on these topics proposed weakening many Gorge protections. For example, the staff proposed doubling the size of new buildings allowed without any review, without regard to their number, color, or location.

Through the public comment process, the Gorge Commission received many remarks opposing that recommendation, and in fact speaking in support of maintaining or strengthening these protections. Comments from Friends' members and other Gorge protection activists combined with Friends' diligent efforts to prevent some of the worst proposals from being adopted.

In the coming months, the Commission staff will prepare a final draft of the revised Management Plan and present it to the Gorge Commissioners for final adoption. The final adoption hearing will probably occur in the winter of 2003. If adopted, the revised Plan will be forwarded to the Secretary of Agriculture for concurrence.

Once the "full package" of Plan revisions is prepared, Friends will carefully evaluate it for consistency with the National Scenic Area Act and will continue to participate in the public process. Continued public comments urging strong protections during this process will be crucial.

"The Gorge Commission staff's initial report on these topics proposed weakening many Gorge protections."

Friends' email updates and alerts will keep timely information flowing on these critical issues in the coming months.

Increased Logging Threatens SMA Resources

The Forest Service is currently reviewing portions of the Management Plan that protect the Special Management Areas (SMAs). Much of the review will focus on rules that protect SMA resources from the adverse effects of timber harvests.

Congress designated the SMAs for special protections because of their unique and sensitive resources. Under the National Scenic Area Act, the management, utilization, and disposal of timber within the SMAs must not harm scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Accordingly, the Management Plan contains prescriptions for logging designed to protect wildlife and plant habitat, scenic views, open space lands, and other SMA resources.

The Forest Service could use its review to strengthen the Management Plan's protections of these important resources. However, most of the proposals under consideration would actually lower the standards and allow

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Weakened protections for thousands of acres of forest land in the Special Management Areas (SMAs) would open the door to increased clearcuts like this one in the National Scenic Area.

Photo: Friends of the Columbia Gorge photo archives

Friends' Staff Engage Gorge Residents

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

Active citizen participation is crucial to maintaining strong Gorge protections. Friends staff in Hood River is reaching out to encourage citizen involvement, answering questions on key issues, researching answers if they are not readily available, supporting citizens as they engage in the complex issues related to the Gorge, and providing opportunities for action.

In late September, members of the Gorge recreation community and other interested parties were invited to a gathering at the Hood River home of Friends board member Christine Knowles. Friends founder Nancy Russell presented background information about the Scenic Area Act. Executive Director Kevin Gorman outlined Friends' efforts to expand recreational opportunities in the Gorge, pointing out Friends' programs and interests regarding outdoor activities. The occasion also presented an opportunity for Friends staff to learn which issues and concerns are uppermost on Gorge residents' minds, whether recreational opportunities, commercial development, or land use issues.

Friends' efforts to promote strategic public land acquisition have been central to expanding recreational opportunities throughout the Gorge. Many popular public trails, such as Catherine Creek, are the result of Friends lobbying Congress for land acquisition funds and working with the Forest Service and other groups to support public ownership of critical landscapes.

Friends provides practical support for citizen activism and acts as a valuable resource for Gorge residents and Gorge enthusiasts who are taking action to keep the Gorge liveable, accessible, and beautiful, today and tomorrow. For more information, contact Joanie Thomson and Tiffany Kenslow in Friends' Hood River office at 541-386-5268. ■



Congressman Brian Baird (right) and another cyclist enjoy a bike ride along the Klickitat Trail sponsored by Friends of the Columbia Gorge and the Klickitat Trail Conservancy.

Photo: Kevin Gorman

Get connected

To stay informed about Gorge issues, subscribe to our "Gorge Activities & Updates" email list. This is a great tool for staying up-to-date on issues, and to connect with Friends' activities in the Gorge. You can subscribe on our website at www.gorgefriends.org. Or post Betsy at betsy@gorgefriends.org to be added to the list. ■

Conservation and Legal Program Highlights Friends Protects Resources...

(continued from page 4)

increased logging at the expense of Gorge resources.

For example, one proposal would open up lands zoned for open space protection to new timber harvests under the guise of "forest health." Another proposal would gut most of the forest protection standards and replace them with a handbook of "optional guidelines." Yet another proposal would undermine a recent

Friends court victory by exempting forest practices from review any time a timber operator claims the land to be logged would be used for agriculture at some later time.

The web address where Forest Service proposals can be tracked at www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia. Or email Friends' Conservation Director Michael Lang for more information at michael@gorgefriends.org. ■

Take action now!

Let the Forest Service know you oppose any plans to weaken the SMA forest practices guidelines.

Direct your comments urging strong protections for forest lands in the Special Management Areas to:

Daniel Harkenrider, Area Manager
Columbia River Gorge
National Scenic Area
902 Wasco Avenue, Suite 200
Hood River, OR, 97031

Or email your comments to dharkenrider@fs.fed.us. ■



Funding Gorge Protection

Development Director's Report

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

Friends' Conservator Party Celebrates the Gorge

More than 80 members of the Friends of the Columbia Gorge conservancy, donors who make an annual gift of \$1,000 or more, gathered for an early October evening of great food and conversation at Friends' annual Conservator Party.

The event was held at the home of board member Spencer Dick and his wife, Mary. With perfect weather as a backdrop, members enjoyed the Dicks' beautiful gardens and celebrated our accomplishments of the past year.

Spencer Dick, a direct descendant of Henry Biddle, recounted the story of Biddle purchasing Beacon Rock in 1915 to prevent it from being quarried for use as a jetty in Astoria.

An engineer, Henry Biddle built the path that leads to the top of the monolith. When the Biddle family offered Beacon Rock to the state of Washington for a park, the state refused the gift. When the state of Oregon stepped forward to accept, Washington reconsidered and today Beacon Rock is a landmark destination for hikers, campers, and vacationers from all over the world.

Friends founder Nancy Russell discussed her personal preservation efforts in the eastern Gorge, where she recently sold a 108-acre property near Lyle to the Forest Service. Situated along Major Creek, this land is considered likely to have been an actual Lewis & Clark campsite. Over the years, Nancy arranged removal of



From left to right: Hosts Spencer and Mary Dick with guests Friends Board Member Missy Ryan and Elizabeth Brooke at the Conservator Party.

photo: Ken Denis

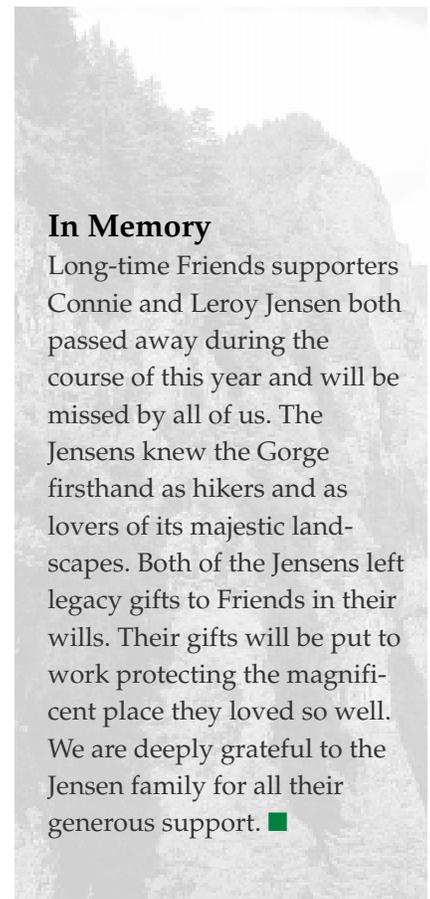
two houses, several outbuildings, and a swimming pool from the property, and had the land re-contoured and planted to return it to a natural state before selling it into public ownership. ■

Show off the Gorge!

Be sure to check our holiday gift brochure. Friends' clothing items, calendars, books and CDs make great holiday gifts, so place your right away. Additional items are available online through our "Gorge Store," at www.gorgefriends.org. Happy Holidays, everyone! ■

Year 'Round Giving

Your gift can support Friends throughout the year with a monthly electronic funds transfer, or a convenient payroll deduction through Earth Share of Oregon. Check www.gorgefriends.org, or call Ron Shoals at Earth Share of Oregon, 503-223-9015. ■



In Memory

Long-time Friends supporters Connie and Leroy Jensen both passed away during the course of this year and will be missed by all of us. The Jensens knew the Gorge firsthand as hikers and as lovers of its majestic landscapes. Both of the Jensens left legacy gifts to Friends in their wills. Their gifts will be put to work protecting the magnificent place they loved so well. We are deeply grateful to the Jensen family for all their generous support. ■

17 Years

(continued from page 1)

This good work is a tribute to the expert land-acquisition staff assembled by the Forest Service. Just five years ago, the program was stuck in the mud: plenty of funding, plenty of offers, but the Forest Service could not complete the deals (see chart). That situation has changed. Now the major challenge is funding.

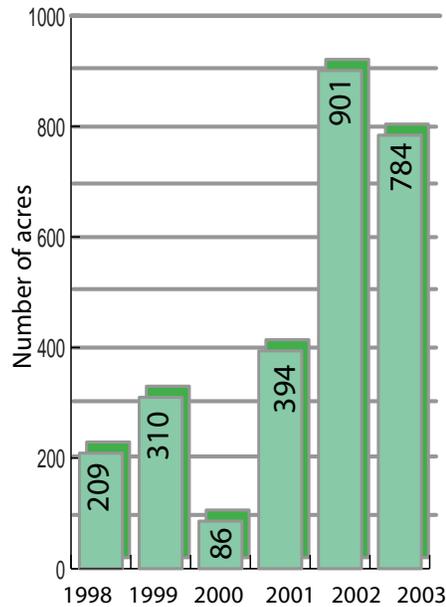
The Clock Is Running Out

Prospects for federal funding to support Gorge land acquisition in 2004 are bleak. The current President's budget for next year includes only \$1 million, despite the U.S. Forest Service indicating that \$15 million is needed to adequately protect the landscapes.

Many of the land offers to the Forest Service are approaching a three-year deadline, further jeopardizing the efforts. If the Forest Service does not make offers to purchase these lands within the allotted timeframe, zoning on these parcels will be converted to allow increased development. Without adequate funding to purchase these lands in the next appropriation cycle, many critical Gorge landscapes will become opportunities permanently lost.

With the stakes so high, Friends of the Columbia Gorge has taken an unprecedented step: we've enlisted the assistance of former U.S. Senator Slade Gorton to help us secure future federal funding to ensure the protection of Gorge lands. Former Senator Gorton was the lawmaker behind the special legislation that opened up the opportunity for increased Gorge land acquisition in 2000. In his role as Chair of the Senate Interior Appropriations Committee, he was also instrumental in securing millions of dollars for Gorge land acquisition, including a record eight million in 1998. Gorton is now one of the most influential advocates in the Capitol and has good relation-

GORGE LAND ACQUISITION



Public acquisitions greatly increased following the 2001 legislation and a recommitment from the Forest Service to buy land.

ships with key decision makers. We're very pleased that he continues to be committed to supporting land acquisition in the Gorge.

Your Membership Leveraged

Though Friends of the Columbia Gorge does not buy land or serve as a land trust, we recognize public acquisition as the most effective tool for protecting the Gorge and we work aggressively to ensure land purchases. In fact, membership dollars with Friends are leveraged far beyond the typical land trust. For example, \$10,000 spent to lobby Congress for land acquisition funding can result in millions of dollars for land acquisition coming to the Gorge.

Seventeen years of protective land acquisition have indeed reshaped how we view the Columbia Gorge. With diligence, the reshaping will continue, and our national treasure will keep growing in its value to coming generations.

For more information, contact Tiffany Kenslow at 541-386-5268 or tiffany@gorgefriends.org. Check www.lewisandclarklandscapes.org for maps and photos of the Lewis & Clark Landscapes. ■

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

www.gorgefriends.org

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Captain Meriwether Lewis described the bird in detail in his journal on May 27, 1806, writing, "this bird is about the size of the lark woodpecker or the turtle dove, though its wings are longer than either of these birds. the beak is black, one inch long, rather wide at the base, somewhat curved, and sharply pointed; the chaps are of equal length. around the base of the beak including the eye and a small part of the throat is of a crimson red."

Know Your Gorge Birds in the Gorge

In late fall, hikers and backpackers have headed indoors, and windsurfers are migrating south to Baja, California. It's the perfect season to delight in the winged migration flying into the Gorge for the winter.

November is peak time to see tundra swans return to Franz Lake across the Columbia River from Horsetail Falls. Further east, the area between Catherine Creek and Dallesport fills with practically countless numbers of birds. Last year's Lyle Christmas Bird Count (12/15/02) identified 105 species and more than 8,300 individual birds on that day, including:

- 64 Western Grebes, 3 Belted Kingfishers, and 15 Western Meadowlarks at Catherine Creek;
- 5 Golden Eagles, 2 Northern Pygmy Owls, and 8 Red Crossbills at Silvas Creek (a tributary of the Klickitat River);
- 273 American Wigeons, 2 American Kestrels and 5 Hooded Mergansers at Rowena.

With this year's hardy acorns, bird count leader Bob Hansen believes the 2003 Christmas Bird Counts in the Gorge will break the record for Lewis' Woodpecker sightings. To get involved, contact Bob Hansen at 509-365-2404 or bobhansen@gorge.net, or visit <http://community.gorge.net/birding/>. ■



A bumper crop of acorns may draw record numbers of Lewis' Woodpeckers to Klickitat County in December.

*Photos: Robert B. Forbes/
Audubon Society of Portland*