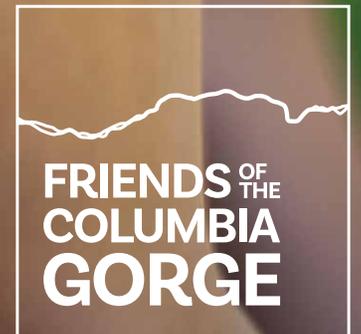


July 2020 – June 2021  
**ANNUAL REPORT**



# Board Reflections



I was born into the Pacific Northwest wide landscapes and mountain views, with the smell of land changing seasons, and working alongside my family on our ranch in Eastern Washington. I knew when I moved here to Oregon that these landscapes are where I wanted to make a difference. I am in awe of the geological swath of the Columbia Gorge and the lasting space it captures in people's hearts.

We likely all relate to the uniqueness of the Gorge land and ecosystem. But we need common efforts to bring us together, and increasingly now. Land and conservation of land can potentially do that unifying work because it is not about us as individuals but it is about something bigger—land conservation that speaks to generational legacy and hope for the future. The work of Friends of the Columbia Gorge brings us together around place, this place many of us consider home—plants, animals, rocks and minerals, fungus, and micro bacteria living in reciprocity of a place all call home.

My husband and I are raising three kids here. Parenting is full of self-reflection, humility, unbridled stop-you-mid-stride in wonder, but nothing is as tender as parenting, which has deepened my commitment to caring for the natural world. I think of the dormant seeds, the unfurling of pine pollen, the regeneration of forest floors, the wood wide web of mycelium intertwining under my feet as I take my kids hiking up Hamilton Mountain near Stevenson, Washington. This is generational interconnectivity, this exploration of connecting myself, and subsequently the

next generation to the natural world and the synchronicity of connection I feel back. Simply, I believe in nurturing the Gorge, it nurtures us. And as a Friends board member, I also feel it's critical that our organization promotes both the interconnectedness between generations and ecosystems, and the interdependence of nature and urban settings.

For the last year, our board of directors has looked inward to examine our own board culture, practices, systems of power, and leadership with a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective. We are bringing open hearts, unknowing, a re-learning attitude, vulnerability, and an ever tilt toward listening. Our DEI work will be interwoven and integral to our vision moving forward. It is beyond time to prioritize this ongoing organizational shift, which is critical so that everyone feels welcome in the Gorge and a part of our conservation impact together.

*Jen Lovejoy*

Jen Lovejoy, Board member  
Friends of the Columbia Gorge

# Persistence to Improve Gorge Protections Pays Off, Despite the Pandemic

By spring 2020, Friends of the Columbia Gorge and its allies were making the final push to advocate for significant revisions to the National Scenic Area Management Plan, which had been updated only once since its original adoption 30 years ago. In April alone, more than a dozen outdoor events were scheduled to educate and engage the public about the need to improve the plan and ensure better Scenic Area protections. The call to action: write or provide verbal testimony to the Columbia River Gorge Commission—the regional government entity responsible for reviewing and revising the plan—before June 30, when the window for public comment would close after an arduous, four-year process.

Then COVID-19 hit, shuttering most of Oregon and Washington and eliminating nearly all in-person gatherings.

“We had to completely pivot to online events,” said Friends Field Representative Peter Cornelison, based in Hood River, Oregon. Friends also relied on its existing virtual public engagement tools, such as webinars and action alerts, disseminated via email and social media

channels. Cornelison explained, “It was a learning process for everyone, but ultimately, hundreds of activists and citizens responded and provided compelling public comment remotely.”

On October 13, 2020, the Gorge Commission voted to adopt an updated plan that, in addition to other mandates, will: limit urban expansion; require the development of a climate action plan; prohibit the destruction of wetlands; increase the size of protective stream buffers for critical salmon habitat; improve development standards to protect scenic views; limit new dwellings in forest zones to reduce fire risks; improve standards protecting agricultural lands; expand mining restrictions; and require the creation of an equity lens to guide future decision making.

Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, Friends has been able to adapt and increase its reach by offering multiple ways in which its members and the public can participate in protecting and preserving this national scenic treasure.

“Overall, the revised management plan is a victory for the Gorge, its communities, and endangered or threatened species such as salmon,” said Michael Lang, Friends’ conservation director. “These improvements would not have come about without the unrelenting advocacy of Friends, our allies, and especially Gorge residents, young and old, who have stepped up for Gorge protection time and time again.”

Autumn fields near Mosier, Oregon, seen from Coyote Meadow above Catherine Creek. Photo: Debbie Asakawa





# Water for Warm Springs Partnership

For more than two years, the people of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs—Oregon’s largest reservation—have lacked consistent access to clean drinking water and water pressure. As a result, more than 60 percent of the community cannot regularly shower, do laundry, drink from the tap, or provide adequate water for livestock or crops. The cause? A series of breaks in the reservation’s main water lines, where needed repairs and upgrades would cost an estimated \$200 million.

“We wanted to figure out how to provide assistance and what role to play, while also

respecting tribal sovereignty and following the lead of The Tribes,” said Friends of the Columbia Gorge Executive Director Kevin Gorman.

In October 2020, Friends, along with seven other leading Pacific Northwest conservation organizations, formed the Water for Warm Springs Campaign. The coalition partnered with The Tribes, the Warm Springs Community Action Team, and Seeding Justice (then known as the MRG Foundation)—a nonprofit social change organization that had established The Chu’ush Fund in August 2019 to address this need. The fund accepts donations from individuals and

foundations, which are then transferred directly each month to Warm Springs residents to assist with their emergency health needs.

“Through our collective megaphone, we could reach out to people and build awareness about the immediate crisis, while also raising money for the fund,” Gorman stated. “Jointly organized webinars, social media, and press outreach have been key.”

Friends and its allies have also helped advocate at both the state and federal levels for policy solutions to aid the reservation in addressing its underlying infrastructure problems and restore a reliable water system. Friends, for instance, has urged the public to write to U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley to support passage of the Western Tribal Water Infrastructure Act, which would authorize \$30 million annually for tribal water projects in Oregon.

“This would be the best long-term solution,” Gorman noted. “Sustainable access to clean drinking water is a fundamental human right, as well as essential to the future of the Warm Springs community.”



Above: A Warm Springs worker loads a water tank for community delivery.

4 Right: A community member takes inventory of bottled water donations. Photos: Leah Nash

# Outdoor Education Programs Find a Way

In June 2021, 20 eighth graders from northeast Portland's St. Andrew Nativity School, which serves youth of color from low-income and marginalized communities, boarded two busses, and headed east. Their destination: the historic Vista House at Crown Point, where they would begin the *Great Gorge Wahoo!* For almost a decade, Friends has partnered with St. Andrew to bring students to the National Scenic Area.

"Some of these kids had never visited the Gorge before," said Friends Community Engagement Specialist Natasha Stone, who organized and also attended the all-day field trip. "Their excitement was palpable."

Upon arrival, the group met retired Oregon State Parks Ranger and Friends Land Trust trustee Kevin Price, who provided a talk at the Vista House and then led a hike at nearby Latourell Falls. "As a Black man, Kevin connected with the kids and imparted a sense of their belonging in the outdoors, too," Stone noted.

Next, the kids visited Thunder Island in Cascade Locks, where they met Rikeem Sholes, a local biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and co-founder of PDX Climbers of Color. Among the topics Sholes discussed were what it takes to become a biologist, salmon migration up and down the Columbia and the importance of cold-water habitat, and how he



The 2021 *Great Gorge Wahoo!* class, out in the field. Photo: Nick Wiltgen

pilots a drone to survey salmon spawning nests or, as he said, "to spy on fish. Any time a kid sees a drone, it doesn't really matter what you're doing with it, they think it's cool," he explained.

In autumn 2020, when the pandemic prevented in-person gatherings, Sholes made two virtual presentations to St. Andrew 7th graders about his career in conservation and fish biology, which resulted in an animated Q & A session. "The kids were so curious about Rikeem's work, we barely had time to answer their dozens of questions," Stone said with a smile.

Friends also partnered with Jemtegaard Middle School in Washougal, Washington, for a special, one-day, springtime program in which 85 students participated in June. Highlights included a nature treasure hunt on Gibbons Creek Trail, and an interactive educational game called, "Guess What Tree You Met."

Stone hopes that these fun and upbeat outdoor experiences will cultivate an enduring connection to the Gorge, and open additional pathways for the students into the natural world.

# The Dust Settles over Illegal Mining, for Now

On May 10, 2021, Friends Senior Staff Attorney Nathan Baker spent his birthday in a seven-hour virtual hearing, which ran past midnight, fighting to protect Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge and the surrounding community from the impacts of unpermitted gravel mining.

The Clark County land use hearing that evening was just the latest round in a nearly four-year

dispute over a property in the western Gorge owned by a company called ZP#5 LLC, controlled by Judith Zimmerly. For two decades, the former mining site sat idle, losing its status as a legal mine. Then, in 2017, it was leased by the Nutter Corporation, which initiated mining operations without first seeking any Clark County or National Scenic Area permits.

Nutter also began illegally hauling thousands of tons of gravel and fill daily, six days a week, down a once quiet neighborhood road, where local residents' lives were suddenly disrupted by as many as 200 massive trucks per day barreling past their homes.

“The neighborhood kids could no longer walk or ride their bikes on the street, or they might have been killed,” said Baker. “The situation was horrifying.” Plus, mining at the site could harm nearby natural resources and wildlife, as it had in the late 1990s, he explained, including in a new section of the Steigerwald Refuge known as Upland Oaks, which now abuts the Zimmerly property to the south.

Originally protected by a local conservation-minded family, Upland Oaks provides the refuge with rare oak woodland habitat, which benefits migratory birds, squirrels, pollinators, and other species. The property was acquired by Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust in 2018 as part of its *Preserve the Wonder* campaign, then transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in February 2019.

## Lack of enforcement

Beginning in early 2018, Friends worked with local citizens to urge both Clark County and the Gorge Commission to enforce the National Scenic Area regulations and stop the unpermitted mining.





“Over several years, Zimmerly ignored at least 10 notifications from government agencies that their operations were unlawful and must cease immediately,” said Friends Conservation Director Michael Lang. “Unfortunately, the Gorge Commission staff have failed to follow through on their enforcement responsibilities. So, the fight has been left up to Friends and the community against the deep pockets of the mining industry.”

Rachel and Zachary Grice own a home situated on two acres along the mine’s illegal haul route. “Oftentimes, we could not even go outside on our back deck or walk the trails in our own yard due to the constant noise and dust from the truck traffic,” said Rachel, who home schools her four children, now ages 11 to 15. Their classroom is 30 feet from the road, with

large windows facing toward it. Teaching and learning against an ever-present backdrop of loud trucks had become increasingly stressful and distracting for Rachel and the kids. Rachel continued, “Nathan Baker reached out and gave us a voice. He has been such a great communicator in helping us understand the law and our legal options.”



**Above:** The Grice family, on the road in front of their house.

Photo: Cate Hotchkiss

**Left:** Trucks from the quarry filled the residential road daily.

Photo: Friends of the Columbia Gorge

In 2019, after many hours of hearings, the appointed Gorge Commissioners agreed with Friends that the mining was, in fact, unlawful without the required land use permits. By July 2020, the entire operation had finally gone quiet.

### Next steps

The Clark County land use hearing that began on May 10 was continued for two additional sessions and is currently on hold, but it may resume this fall. As part of this process, Friends and allies are pushing for the preparation of a full environmental impact statement before any ruling on whether mining may occur at the site. The decision-making process will take at least several more months—possibly years—and appeals could follow thereafter, Baker explained.

In the meantime, the Grice family will continue to enjoy dining on their back deck and taking walks with their two dogs along the road, as they have for more than a year now, and, of course, opening their windows any time of day to the soothing sounds and scents of nature.

# New Properties Bring Broader Perspectives

For years, Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust Director Dan Bell had been eyeing a rare gem: a four-acre plot in the heart of the stunning Catherine Creek recreation area near Lyle, Washington. “As one of the last private properties amid 4,000 acres of protected public lands, it held the potential to expand preservation efforts, and enhance the space’s overall accessibility,” Bell said.

Then, over Memorial Day weekend in 2020, the parcel was listed for sale. Given the current competitive real estate market, Bell and his team wasted no time submitting an offer.

While closing on *that* purchase, Bell was presented with another unexpected opportunity:

the option to secure 50 acres, a combination of two adjoining ownerships abutting the upper Cape Horn trail system in Skamania County.

“I have been working with land trusts for more than two decades, and chances like these are few and far between,” Bell said. “And I knew our window could be short.” By mid-December, Friends’ land trust had acquired both properties.

While located on opposite ends of the Gorge, the land trust’s new parcels possessed similar attributes: river views, road access, and relatively level terrain—ideal for designing spaces usable by all people, regardless of ability level or age.

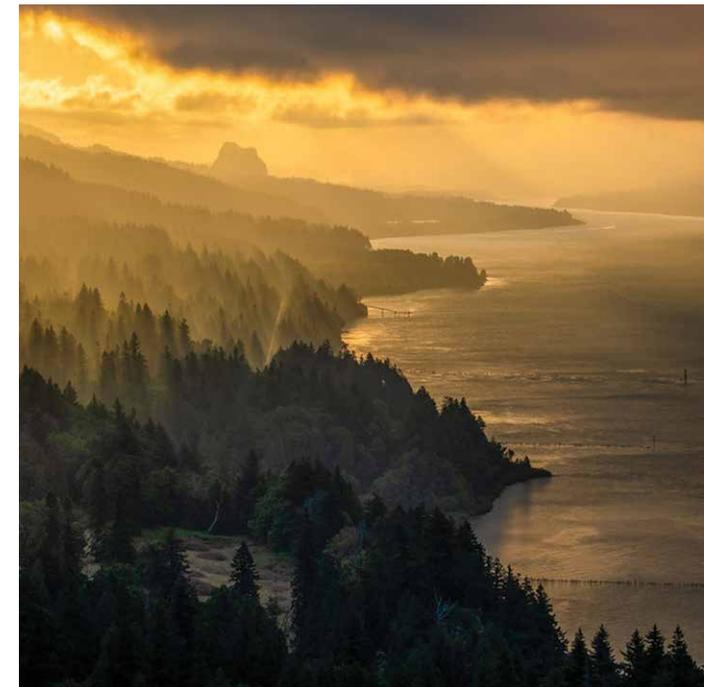
**Above:** Oregon Spinal Cord Injury Connection Founder West Livaudais explores Catherine Creek on a Gorge Accessibility Project site visit. Photo: Mika Barrett

**Right:** A sunrise at Cape Horn. Photo: Cate Hotchkiss

“Most trails in the Gorge traverse rugged, hilly landscapes, and are often out of reach for many groups, such as people with disabilities, young children, and elderly folks,” noted Mika Barrett, Friends accessibility project manager. “The natural wonders of the Gorge should be welcoming and accessible for all.”

To that end, Barrett is spearheading a recreation planning process through spring 2022 to engage a diverse coalition of stakeholders in reimagining and redesigning the new spaces. They will tackle interrelated issues, such as habitat conservation and restoration; inclusion and gathering areas; and universal access principles.

Barrett hopes the outcome could serve as a model for how land managers, both public and private, can better protect and steward vital lands across the Gorge and beyond, by inviting everyone to share in the bounty of the great outdoors.



# Uplifted by Eagles

## Friends and Partners' Virtual Public Engagement Efforts Soar

In late autumn 2020, Friends Outdoor Programs and Communications Specialist Melissa Gonzalez realized that the organization could not offer its annual bald eagle-viewing hikes as COVID-19 surged. That's when she began brainstorming virtual alternatives.

"In addition to hosting a webinar, we wanted to produce a video featuring high-quality footage of the eagles in their natural habitat and celebrate the birds' winter migration to the Columbia Gorge," Gonzalez said.

To that end, she contacted U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Park Ranger Amber Tilton at The Dalles Lock and Dam to ascertain whether filming at that location was possible. Tilton was already planning a region-wide "2021 Virtual Eagle Watch" with multiple partners and welcomed Friends' participation. "By combining our efforts," said Tilton, "we would be able to reach a larger audience and connect more people to nature."

Next, Gonzalez reached out to Sean O'Connor, founder of Story Gorge, a Hood River-based visual production and media education social

enterprise. A couple of weeks later, on a cold, mid-January morning, O'Connor—accompanied by Tilton—set up his heavy-duty tripod, and new state-of-the-art camera on the deck of The Dalles Dam. He focused on nearby Westrick Park, where dozens of the raptors roosted and congregated in craggy trees and fished along the Columbia.



O'Connor's mission, as he put it, was to provide a close-up, intimate view of the eagles, and highlight the importance of preserving the species. "I shot the entire film in slow motion, over several days, to really show the birds' behavior and stunning details," O'Connor explained.

By the end of February 2021, Story Gorge's short film had received nearly 1,500 views on Friends' YouTube channel and 20,000 on Facebook and was shared by The Wilderness Society and other conservation organizations and media outlets. In addition, a record 700+ people attended Friends' live webinar.

"I loved seeing how eagles united so many people during difficult times," Gonzalez said. "In the midst of the pandemic, lockdowns, and being separated from one another, this majestic bird spurred new partnerships, and uplifted us all."

# Distanced but Together

Friends of the Columbia Gorge members, volunteers, and activists are the heart and soul of our work. Over the past 40+ years, Friends has brought together a broad and diverse coalition of people who share a common love for the Gorge and want to see it responsibly stewarded and protected for generations to come.

We may be distanced right now, but we're still united in our passion and commitment to protecting the Columbia Gorge. The ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic may have kept us from being together, but it hasn't stopped Friends staff and volunteers from finding ways over the past year to conduct vital, although temporarily limited, stewardship and outdoor youth education activities.

All of us look forward to the day we can resume active field programming, but until then we'll keep working to find creative and safe ways to meet our stewardship and education goals.



Upper right and lower left: Students at the 2021 Great Gorge Wahoo! Photos: Nick Wiltgen  
Lower right: Stewardship volunteers, safely distanced on Upper McCord Trail.

Photo: Friends of the Columbia Gorge



From helping secure vital funds to serving as program volunteers, Friends board members have been essential for decades to the success of our outdoor youth education and stewardship efforts.

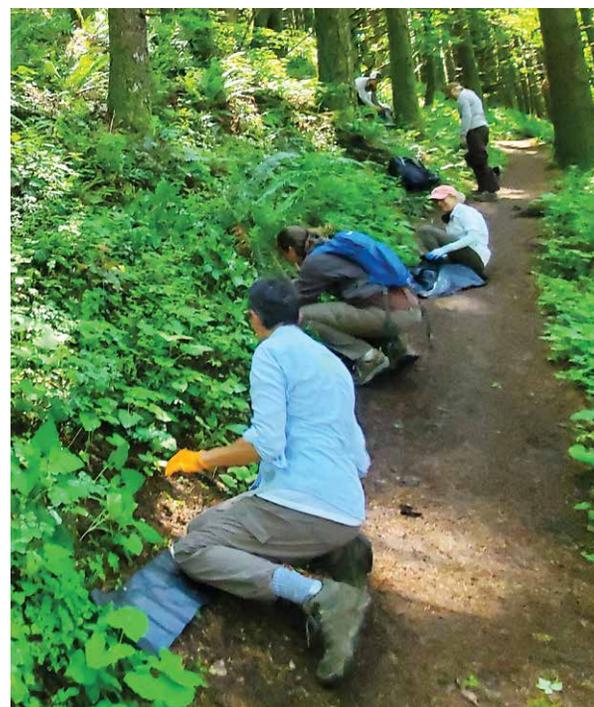
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Upper: The 2021 Great Gorge Wahoo! class, at the Vista House. Photo: Nick Wiltgen | Lower left: Students on the 2021 Explore the Gorge field day. Photo: Micheal Drewry  
Lower right: Socially distanced stewardship volunteers on the Dog Mountain trail. Photo: Friends of the Columbia Gorge



## NORMAN YEON LEGACY CIRCLE

**Friends is delighted** to welcome this year's new members of the Norman Yeon Legacy Circle (names in green). We are honored to add these dedicated supporters to the ever-growing list of donors who have chosen to make Gorge protection a part of their legacy for generations to come.

We are sad to announce the passing of several generous donors who made Friends a part of their estate plans and whose gifts made remarkable work possible during the past very challenging year. Roger Durgin, Bonnie Garlan, Susan Hammer, Robert and Dori Jones, Jayne Lebsack, and Jerry Reich will all be remembered for their magnanimous contributions that helped to protect, preserve and steward the Gorge.

We are humbled by the intentions and gifts of all of our Norman Yeon Legacy Circle members. The Gorge will remain a vibrant, living place for future generations—wondrous, wild, and open to all—thanks to our legacy members' visionary support.



Winter on Dog Mountain. Photo: Stephen Hatfield

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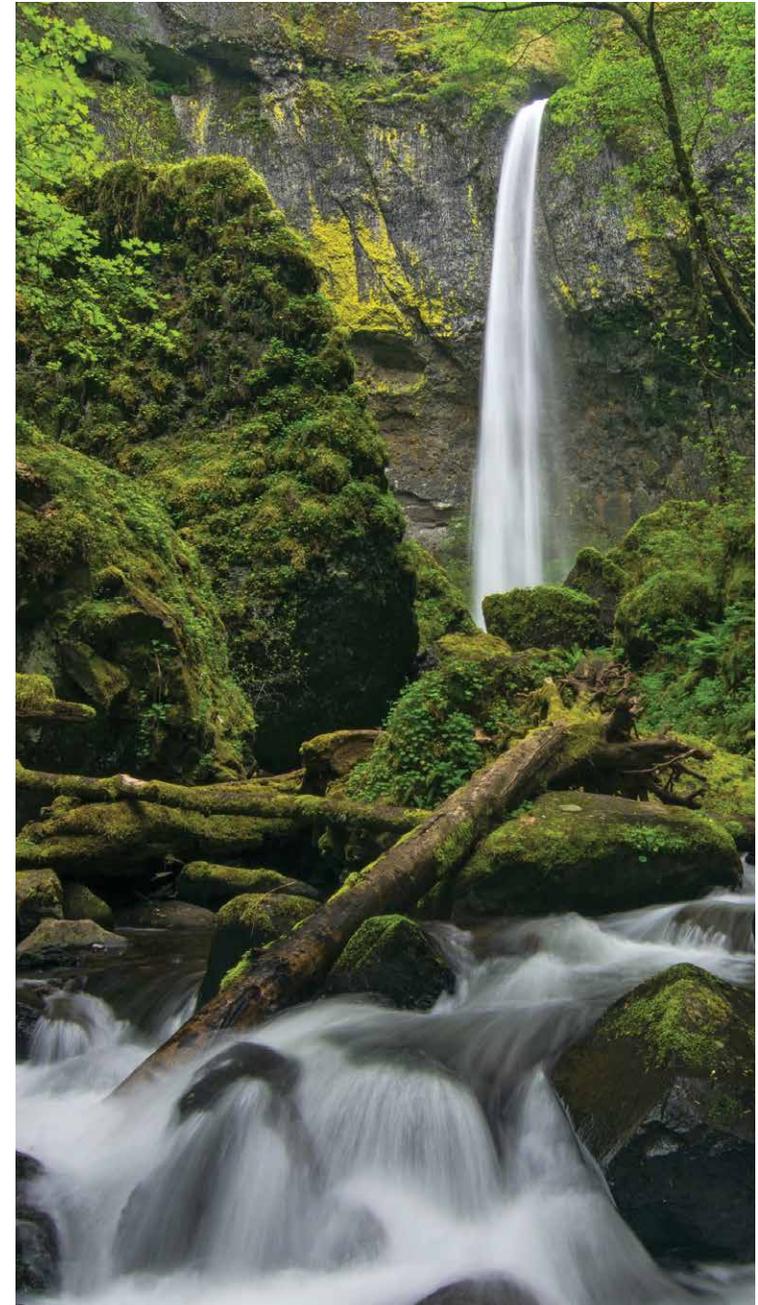
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Elowah Falls. Photo: Holly Pederson

# Member-driven Conservation

Though we may be the tools for much of this work, the ownership is all yours. The annual support provided by our members funds advocacy, education, stewardship, community engagement, and all of our work to protect the Gorge.

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A great blue heron landing near the Klickitat River. Photo: Bill Kirkland

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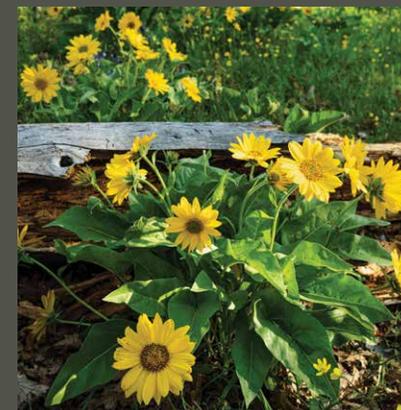
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Friends is incredibly grateful to the 4,048 members whose donations below \$250, added together, contributed \$217,883 to protect the Gorge this year. Every gift makes a difference!

Balsamroot. Photo: Sharon Philpott



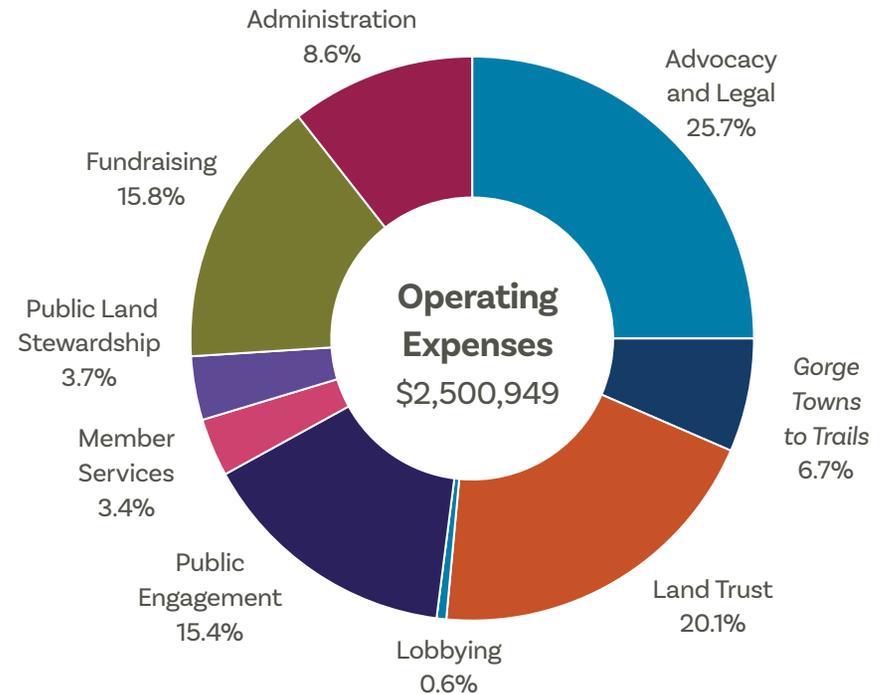
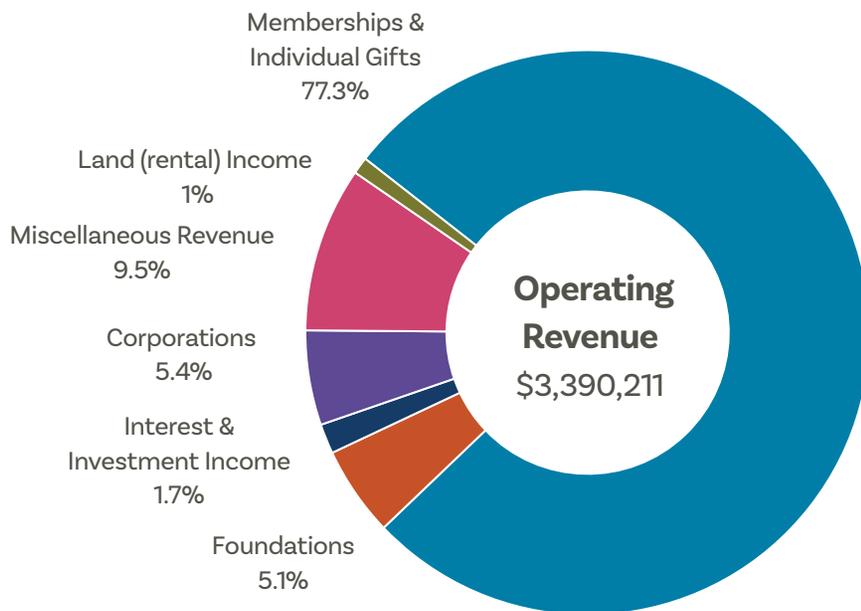
# Financial Report

Friends of the Columbia Gorge  
Fiscal Year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

Friends of the Columbia Gorge is very fortunate to have the support and generosity of our donors, volunteers, and activists. While the pandemic has been challenging on many fronts, we are one of the fortunate nonprofits that has been able to shift and continue our work to expand or change our usual programming to meet the ever-changing needs in protecting, preserving, and stewarding the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Consolidated results in fiscal year 2020-2021 show operating income at \$3.39 million and operating expenses at \$2.5 million. The increased income was due to the recognition of the forgiveness of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan in the amount of \$297,200 and a special campaign that raised \$320,662 for our new accessibility project. Although the PPP loan income is recognized in this fiscal year, the cash was received last fiscal

year and spent to sustain all staff early in the pandemic. In addition to operating income, we received \$430,024 in donations to fund the purchase of the Catherine Creek property. Friends also acquired a Cape Horn property that we have held on option to purchase since 1993, and we had the funds in reserve for that acquisition. We successfully transferred a 31-acre parcel known as Cape Horn Vista to the U. S. Forest Service.



A spring view to the west from Mosier Plateau.

Photo: Robert Meyers



Preserves owned by Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust are eligible for property tax exemption, but we paid \$49,543 in county property taxes to help support Gorge communities and schools.

Our \$8.75 million endowments include the Matthew Winthrop Fund for youth education, the Vic Clausen Fund for outdoor youth education, and the Marjorie Abramovitz Fund for land trust activities. Endowments for general operations include the Conservation Director Endowment, the Mary D. and Thomas W. Holman Fund, the Nancy Russell Institutional Fund, and the Barbara Pooley Wilson Fund.

Endowment funds are managed by Ferguson Wellman Capital Management and monitored by Friends’ board finance committee.

### A continuing commitment to accountability and transparency

Friends believes that transparency is essential for ensuring accountability to our members, donors, partners, and the communities we work with. Friends of the Columbia Gorge is a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity and an Accredited Land Trust—a distinction awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

For additional information, including past annual reports, 990s, and other financial statements please visit [gorgefriends.org/accountability](https://gorgefriends.org/accountability).

This is an unaudited financial statement. Friends’ board engages Kern & Thompson, LLC, to perform an annual independent audit.

### Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

	June 30, 2021	June 30, 2020
Land and related assets	\$10,441,901	\$7,363,937
Cash and investments	\$12,119,270	\$13,026,348
Other assets	\$139,733	\$160,907
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$22,700,904</b>	<b>\$20,551,191</b>
Liabilities	\$149,624	\$388,808
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>\$22,551,280</b>	<b>\$20,162,383</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$22,700,904</b>	<b>\$20,551,191</b>

# FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

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A view from Cape Horn.  
Photo: Cate Hotchkiss

**Since time immemorial**, the Columbia Gorge has been a mixing bowl of a diverse array of people, cultures, traditions, backgrounds, and beliefs. This is still true today.

That's why Friends of the Columbia Gorge joined community leaders across Oregon this year to advocate for legislation to reduce bias crimes and incidents on public lands and state waterways. The bill had strong legislative support and was signed into law by Gov. Kate Brown in June.

Thank you to everyone who wrote letters, testified, and worked to support this effort. Public lands in the Gorge and across Oregon should be places where the wonders of nature can be enjoyed by all without fear of intimidation, harassment, or acts of hate.

