

FRIENDS OF
THE
COLUMBIA
GORGE

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GORGE LATINO CONSERVATION WEEK |

LOOKING BACK AT THE TUNNEL FIVE FIRE |

2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE |

PASSAGES



Welcome to the second edition of Passages, our new look magazine. This publication has gone through numerous evolutions during my 25 years with the organization. In the early days, it consisted of small black-and-white photos. Our editor advised me to always carry a camera in my car for

potential newsletter photos but fortunately, we rarely subjected our readers to my photographic ineptitude. When we introduced color photos to the newsletter years later, it helped bring the Gorge to life for our members. With our annual photo contests, images we never would have been able to capture began to grace its pages.

With Passages, a new era has begun. As you'll notice in this issue, our print publications now come with QR codes, allowing you to access videos or digital articles simply by scanning the code with your phone's camera. It's another opportunity to bring the stories we tell to life.

Passages also expands our reach in other ways. This publication is available in print and digitally, not only in English but Spanish as well. And for those with vision impairments, our articles can be heard in English and Spanish audio at gorgefriends.org/passages.

All of this may seem like a lot of effort for one publication. But it's not. I am always amazed at how much value our members place on this magazine. How many people tell me they read each edition cover to cover. How many people remember letters I wrote a decade ago. This publication is a connective thread between our mission and the individuals who have supported it for decades and continue to do so today.

That's why we're adding digital components to it and making it bilingual to reach more people. The only way the Columbia Gorge will be preserved for future generations is if we can continue to share the story of protection and preservation with more and more people. So please consider sharing this magazine with someone you know who cares about the Gorge. Or go online and share our digital version. While your support is making a real difference, the Gorge could use some more friends.

Kevin Gorman, Executive Director



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Willamette Week's Give!Guide is an annual effort to raise funds for local nonprofits, and Friends is honored to be part of it! A key goal of the campaign is to encourage people 35 and under to give back to the community and build a culture of active citizenship. Give!Guide provides fun and exciting incentives to all donors so visit GiveGuide.org by December 31 to win prizes and take advantage of \$45,000 in matching funds that will double your impact on Gorge protection.

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GIVE!GUIDE DONATION

Horsetail Falls © Kyle Rosso

A SHARED VISION TAKES SHAPE AT CAPE HORN

SINCE COMPLETING CRITICAL LAND ACQUISITIONS AT CAPE HORN AND CATHERINE CREEK IN 2020, FRIENDS HAS BEEN INVESTING IN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION AT THESE NEW LOCATIONS.

IN EARLY 2021, AS WE SHIFTED OUR FOCUS TOWARD CREATING A LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE PROPERTIES, WE BEGAN TO IMAGINE HOW THESE SPACES COULD BECOME ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE OF VARYING ABILITIES, AGES, AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS TO CONNECT WITH NATURE IN THE GORGE. OUR CONVERSATIONS BROUGHT TO LIFE A VISION OF A COLUMBIA GORGE “OPEN TO ALL.”

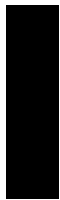
THOSE DISCUSSIONS WERE THE CATALYST OF FRIENDS’ RECREATION ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE, CALLED THE **GORGE ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT.**

NOW, CAPE HORN TAKES CENTER STAGE.

**Text by
Frances Fischer**



Land Trust Preserves Manager



WAITED ON A THANKFULLY CLOUDY AUGUST morning as about 20 people I had only seen on a screen spilled out of cars and vans to greet each other warmly on the sloping hayfields of the Cape Horn Preserve. The Gorge Accessibility Project (GAP) Steering Committee was coming together to celebrate the wrap-up of a yearlong

effort to design the site plan for future development of a fully accessible recreation area alongside the Cape Horn Trail. There were hugs and laughs as we enjoyed a meandering tour through the property and finally made our way behind the house to the amazing view up the Columbia River, where we stood full of awe and joy. The group looked out at the shining river below, the slim summer stream of Multnomah Falls, and the remnants of the Eagle Creek fire with bits of green now peeking out from the charred grey swaths. This was the first opportunity that most of this group had to visit the preserve and take in the magnificent view that we will one day share with everyone.

The day was planned to bring together a group of people who have diverse life experiences but are united in their love for the Gorge and the natural world around them. The GAP Steering Committee has been meeting since



Members of the GAP Steering Committee gather at Cape Horn Preserve in August 2023 to provide feedback on the site plan by architectural design firm Mayer/Reed. © Denise López

2021—mostly virtually—to provide input and feedback on our plans to create accessible and inclusive recreation sites at Cape Horn and Catherine Creek that welcome as many communities as possible. Our August steering committee meeting was planned as an in-person day to connect and see how committee members’ feedback and ideas have culminated in a design. Communities represented in this group include outdoor enthusiasts such as people with disabilities; families with young kids; and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

In addition to the steering committee members, we were joined by representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, landscape architects from Mayer/Reed, and building architects from DAO Architecture. Mayer/Reed and DAO created incredible design plans for

the proposed development at Cape Horn through funding assistance from Washington’s “Planning for Recreation Access” Program.

At long last, after a year of looking at these design plans, maps, and aerial photos on a screen, the group was able to explore Friends’ Cape Horn Preserve and feel the vision coming to life. After the tour, we came together in the empty on-site barn and shared a delicious tamale lunch—which may have been the most popular part of the day—prepared by steering committee member Rita Aguilar Robles. After communing together, the group got down to business poring over the latest site plans and feature designs.

Since May 2022, the steering committee, Mayer/Reed, and representatives from the U.S. Forest Service have



Cape Horn Trail (CHT)
Sendero de Cape Horn

Connection to CHT
Conexión con el sendero de Cape Horn

Restroom Building
Edificio de baños

Connection to Friends' Overlook
Conexión con mirador de Friends'

Maintenance Shed
Galpón de mantenimiento

Gathering Pavilion
Pabellón para reunirse

ex. house
ex. casa

View to Gorge
Vista al Gorge

National Scenic View Corridor
Corredor de vistas del área escénica nacional

ex. barn
ex-granero

Viewpoint Shelter
Refugio del mirador

Connection to Nancy Russell Overlook
Conexión al Mirador de Nancy Russell

Architectural design firm Mayer/Reed worked with Friends staff, the GAP Steering Committee, and U.S. Forest Service representatives to design the proposed future development at Cape Horn Preserve. The design plan contains universally accessible features including a trail system, parking area, bathrooms, a gathering pavilion, and a viewpoint shelter. Ecological restoration of the site will begin in fall 2023 with the goal of beginning construction in 2025. © Mayer/Reed

0' 20' 40' 80'



With upcoming recreation enhancements and habitat restoration at Cape Horn (top) and Catherine Creek (bottom left and right), both sites will eventually be transformed into havens for native wildlife and plants, and accessible recreation hubs for people. (Photos by Cate Hotchkiss, Catherine Creek; and Filipe Lara, Cape Horn)



been meeting virtually and picking apart different iterations of proposed plans for the development of the Cape Horn site. The vision was to create a beautiful, natural, accessible, and inclusive space that could share the wonder of Cape Horn with everyone.

Some key features that blossomed out of these meetings were: a system of loop trails that will connect to the already established Cape Horn Trail; a gathering pavilion for communities to connect; and a viewing structure that would shelter visitors from the unpredictable Gorge weather as they enjoy the awe-inspiring view—the highest elevation accessible viewpoint in the National Scenic Area; and signage in both English and Spanish. All of these features will be fully accessible within universal access standards. Together, we've been striving for something special at Cape Horn.

At the end of the day, we had the answers we needed to wrap up this iteration of the site plan. More importantly, we were able to create community with each other and celebrate the wonderful dedication and vision that our group brought to the Gorge Accessibility Project.

We are still planning and refining this long-term project, so things will change. Faces may change over time, but this vision for Cape Horn will continue.

Take me for instance. Over my five years at Friends, you've heard from me on everything from pollinators to native plants to tribal engagement. I recently moved into a new role with greater responsibility for habitat restoration and recreation access at amazing places like Cape Horn and Catherine Creek.

I am excited to move into this role, working with partners across the Gorge to make the Gorge better than it already is. There are very few accessible public recreation sites in the Gorge and none with a view like Cape Horn. It is an honor to work on a project to share the beauty of the Gorge with more people than ever before and to hopefully inspire a new generation to protect this special place with equity and inclusion in mind. ■





Columbia Riverkeeper Senior Organizer and Comunidades Founder Ubaldo Hernández with Friends Conservation Organizer Denise López during a presentation at Latino Conservation Week in Hood River. © Paloma Ayala

CELEBRATING LATINO CONSERVATION WEEK: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES AND NATURE



Started by the Hispanic Access Foundation in 2014, the Latino Conservation Week (Semana Latina de la Conservación Ambiental in Spanish) movement strives to **promote Latino involvement in environmental advocacy** and **foster a more inclusive and more equitable conservation community**.



Text by
Denise López



Conservation Organizer



ATINO CONSERVATION WEEK (LCW) IS an annual initiative that shines a spotlight on the invaluable contributions of Latino communities to conservation efforts in the United States. More than just a celebration, LCW is about forging a deeper connection between these communities and the outdoors.

What began with just nine events has now flourished to over 250 events in recent years, uniting Latinos across the country through a blend of outdoor activities, community engagement, and education events held by community, nonprofit, faith-based, and government organizations and agencies around the country. The goals for LCW

align with those of Friends: to create a sense of belonging and stewardship for natural spaces and inspire the next generation of leaders and environmental advocates.

Comunidades, an environmental and social justice group in Hood River and a group we work with closely, asked Friends to join in on the planning for the Gorge's first Latino Conservation Week. Our vision was to bridge cultural and environmental gaps by ensuring that conservation is inclusive and representative of the diversity in the Gorge through events that emphasize the importance of diverse voices and perspectives in addressing environmental challenges. Our Gorge Latino Conservation Week ran from July 20 to July 22 and featured a Guatemalan environmental poet on Thursday, a panel of local environmental leaders discussing environmental and social justice issues on Friday, and a hike and tour of Friends' Catherine Creek property on Saturday.

Alongside members of the U.S. Forest Service, I was a part of Friday's panel where we discussed careers in conservation, how we have been able to advance in our careers to get where we are, and opportunities for Latinos in the community looking for green jobs. We had a wide variety of attendees from partner organizations, including members of the community looking to uplift Latinos, local businesses, and of course Latino families and individuals.

The energy at this event was infectious; I heard so much enthusiasm and passion in all the conversations taking place. Talking to attendees and during the panel, I shared my love for the environment and the tough journey I took to where I am today. We all had experienced life's many surprise twists and could not have predicted where we are today. It was validating to hear how everyone had strayed from the plan they set for themselves and inspirational to be able to pass on lessons I hadn't realized I had been carrying with me.

Friends welcomed the Latino community to our Catherine Creek Preserve for lessons on local wildlife and ecology (top and middle photos show Friends' volunteer stewardship coordinator Sarah Skelly leading learning sessions), and to admire the beautiful summer view of the Columbia River and Mt. Hood. © Paloma Ayala





Walking at Catherine Creek during Gorge Latino Conservation Week. © Paloma Ayala

Feeling a mixture of exhaustion and fulfillment, I finished my preparations for the hike Friends was leading the next day and woke up bright and early for the drive to Catherine Creek. Every successful Latino event has a mixture of the following three things: tasty food, fun activities, and people who know how to have a good time. To make sure I met these expectations, I enlisted the help of Friends' Stewardship Volunteer Coordinator Sarah Skelly, Forest Service Ranger Lily, and my family.

We had an exciting day, with a full house and our first cat companion on the hike! Throughout the hike, Sarah taught the group about the climate resilience of oak woodlands, local bird populations, and the interesting plants in the area. Our walk and nature lesson was a fitting follow-up after the panel, and it was special to create the opportunity to bring the community outdoors and see the smiles on their faces as they learned formal names for plants and birds that they already recognized as a part of their community.

As a Latina, the opportunity to celebrate the joy and resilience of my community is incredibly impactful and important to me. While we face many challenges, climate change being one of the most difficult, a sense of togetherness and determination is what helps keep us going. For many in my community, our culture and history have resulted in a strong relationship with the land and a deep respect for la Madre Tierra (Mother Earth).

The more we can highlight the interconnectedness between people and the natural world by sharing our traditional practices and teachings, the more people will feel energized to continue protecting and preserving. Unlike many in the Latino community, I've had the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors with my family, which led me to become an advocate for our natural spaces. I hope that future Latino Conservation Week events can continue to provide the same opportunities that I have experienced, so that we will all be able to find joy, curiosity, and passion for the outdoors. ■

by Sarah Skelly, Stewardship Volunteer Coordinator

If you volunteer at a Friends stewardship event, on a land steward team, or spend a lot of time exploring Gorge trails, you will likely meet Jackie Grubelnik along the way, filling bags with invasive weeds, planting native shrubs, or perhaps donned in her green Trailkeepers of Oregon helmet, reworking trail tread. She might even show up with brownies to share, ready to pitch in and get work done. Jackie began volunteering with Friends in 2019 and continues to be a force in our stewardship volunteer program today as part of the Eastern Gorge Land Steward Team, alongside six other stellar stewards who keep momentum on projects at Mosier Plateau, Mt. Ulka, and Lyle Cherry Orchard.

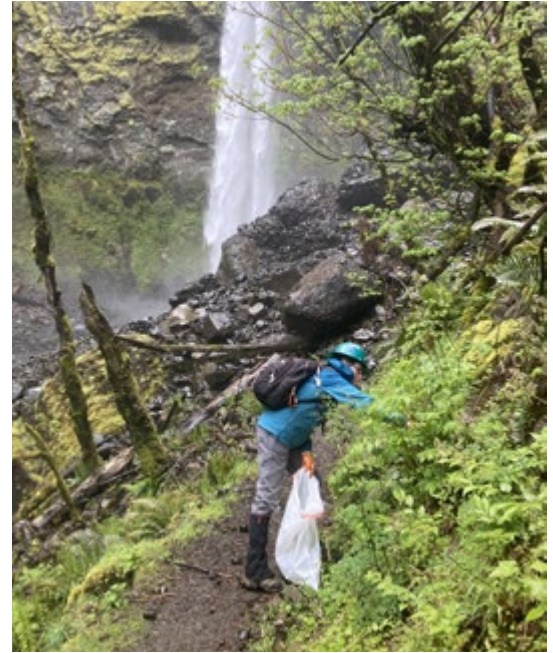
Stewarding in the outdoors is not new to Jackie. “I’ve always been an outdoor-oriented person interested in preserving the natural world—as a kid I was always playing in the woods.” Her first trail work was in Southern California on the southern portion of the Pacific Crest Trail where it crosses through the desert. Upon retiring from 40 years in the medical field, Jackie relocated to the Gorge in 2018 to be closer to family. Her passion for trails and nature preservation led her to quickly connect with Gorge conservation and trail organizations.

“Being a Land Steward is invigorating! I have time, I enjoy physical labor, and I love learning about all the plants, birds, and most recently the bees, thanks to [Friends Preserves Manager] Frances Fischer!” she adds. “And it’s important to help preserve these areas for future generations.”

Her first Gorge work party was with Friends partner Washington Trails Association on a rainy day at Lyle Cherry Orchard in 2019 where she happened to meet Friends Stewardship Manager Sara Woods—and the rest is history!

Jackie is part of a growing cohort of Land Stewards that began in 2020 and has grown from 10 to 30 stewards throughout the Gorge. Land Stewards commit to stewarding a site throughout the year and the impact has been incredible and certainly visible! Reflecting on changes at Mosier Plateau, she comments, “The [invasive] teasel used to be solid and everywhere, but the team is diligent. It’s important to move these projects forward and it’s a long-term commitment, but the commitment really pays off. You see the progress over time which is gratifying and it’s also about the people and connections with other stewards. You really get to know your site, notice the little changes, and also get a better sense of what needs to get done.”

A sincere thank you to Jackie and her fellow Land Stewards for the incredible contributions that make Gorge stewardship successful!



Jackie Grubelnik pulling invasive herb-Robert geranium along the 400 trail by Elowah Falls. © Sarah Skelly



Jackie is a part of our Eastern Gorge Land Steward Team that helps steward Friends properties at Mosier Plateau (left), Mt. Ulka, and Lyle Cherry Orchard (right). © Cate Hotchkiss



FRIENDS 2024 PHOTO CONTEST: In January 2024, Friends of the Columbia Gorge will be launching our 9th annual photo contest! If you'd like to be notified when the contest opens for entries, please subscribe to our eNewsletter by visiting gorgefriends.org/subscribe or by scanning the QR code on the right side of this page. In this Scenic Eastern Gorge category-winning photo from 2020, photographer Laura Payne captured a scene of beautiful winter serenity at Rock Creek in Mosier, Oregon.

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Art in the Park

Text by
Melissa Gonzalez

Outdoor Programs Manager

On a chilly October day,

a special art event unfolded at Benson State Recreation Area, bringing an afternoon of creativity and connection with nature. The fall foliage surrounding Benson Lake had begun to emerge, with trees adorned in vibrant yellow and orange hues. Participants, many arriving with family and friends, trickled in on this cloudy afternoon. Greeted with hot beverages and tasty snacks, attendees, bundled up against the cool air, gathered for a unique experience of sketching and painting outdoors. Guided by Portland-based landscape painter Elo Wobig, this gathering became a celebration of art, nature, and the charming beauty of a gloomy autumn day.

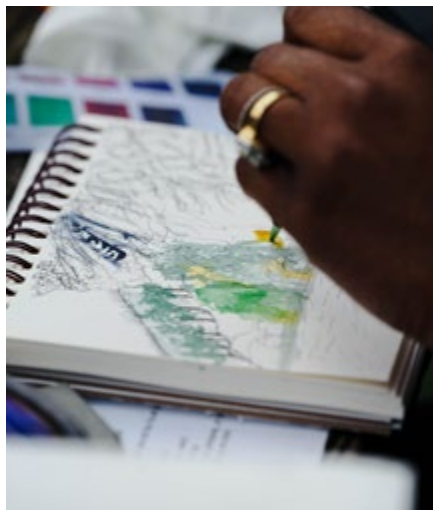
As folks warmed up with a drink, the air buzzed with



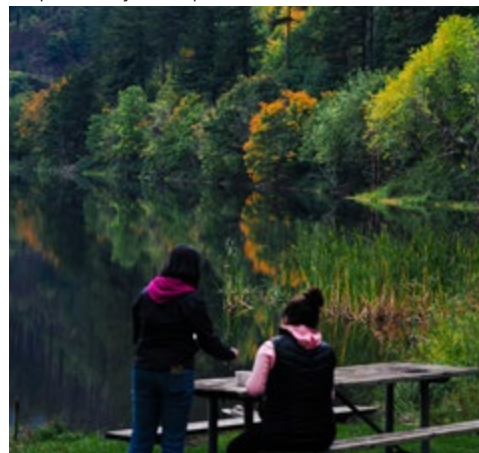
conversations as people forged new connections and rekindled old ones. Elo then gathered everyone to kick off the afternoon urban sketching session. Equipped with a sketchbook, pencil, and watercolor set, participants seated at picnic tables or nestled in camping chairs listened as Elo provided valuable tips on sketching and watercolor mastery. She skillfully guided the group in blending colors to mirror the hues of the Gorge's mountains and the vibrant fall foliage, eliciting oohs and aahs at her flawless watercolor technique.

After Elo's presentation, participants were set free to find their spot for sketching and creating their art. Some stayed in groups, while others sought solitude along

Elo Wobig



All photos by Monique Trevett, Friends of the Columbia Gorge



the lake's edges. For many, this event was a completely new adventure in connecting with nature, and for some, their first time in the Columbia Gorge. Elo walked around the park, offering guidance and encouragement, helping everyone appreciate the beauty of the landscape. Attendees, bundled up in scarves and jackets, found a unique kind of inspiration in the quiet of the afternoon. The cold day seemed to heighten the warmth of the shared creativity.

What made the day truly special was the sense of togetherness in nature. Laughter echoed through the rustling of the trees as people shared stories and admired each other's creations. Participants added

finishing touches to their art and gathered for a group photo, proudly displaying their beautiful Gorge art. As daylight waned and rain began to trickle, attendees packed up and left the event. The relaxed vibe made it a day of happiness, where everyone felt part of a creative community. They didn't just take home drawings and paintings; they took home memories of a day spent in the Gorge, creating art in community. This event is just the beginning of the diverse outdoor experiences Friends aims to offer, showcasing alternative ways to connect with nature beyond traditional hikes. This art event was an example of how blending art and nature can be a joyful experience, bringing people together in the outdoors.



**Text by
Olivia Wang**



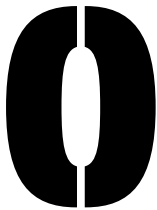
Public Engagement Intern

Tunnel Five Fire © Christian Roberts-Olsen

STRONG INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION HELPS MITIGATE DAMAGE FROM RAILROAD-CAUSED TUNNEL FIVE FIRE

***UPDATE:** After this article was written, Washington DNR Investigator Bruce Long’s preliminary wildland fire report on the cause of the Tunnel Five Fire was certified and made available via a public records request. The investigation revealed that debris from brakes and carbon emission particles from the engine of BNSF train 2322 ignited the blaze. The report also states that BNSF track maintenance activities had ignited two small fires in the same vicinity five and eight days before the large wildfire. These two track maintenance fires occurred during hours of darkness when temperatures would have been cooler and humidity higher. These incidents should have alerted BNSF to a localized fire danger along the tracks in this area. Additionally, two witnesses reported that the engine appeared to be of the “non-turbocharged” variety, indicating it was more than 40 years old. Non-turbocharged engines have a higher likelihood of emitting diesel carbon emissions from the exhaust which could start a fire, and thus are not generally used in the Columbia Gorge during summer months due to their propensity to start fires. Scan the QR code to view the full investigation report.

CLICK/TAP HERE
TO READ THE
FULL REPORT



ON JULY 2, 2023, AROUND 11:19 AM, A WILDLAND FIRE WAS SPARKED NEAR THE TOWN OF UNDERWOOD IN Skamania County, Washington. The blaze, which came to be known as the Tunnel Five Fire, spread rapidly due to the hot, dry, and windy weather. Within a few hours, large portions of Skamania County were put under a level 3 evacuation notice, the highest possible classification which advises residents and business owners to leave immediately without gathering belongings or attempting to protect their property due to extreme danger. The fire burned 529 acres and destroyed at least 10 structures, including homes and other properties. Fortunately, first responders like Northwest Incident Management Team 12 were able to collaborate with Skamania County’s Fire District, the Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Forest Service to provide fire personnel. They were able to act quickly; without such a rapid response, the fire could have accelerated and caused even more damage to wildlife, plants, and human communities in the Gorge. By July 5, zones near the eastern and western perimeters of the fire had been reduced from level 3 to 2—evacuation level 2 advises residents and business owners to pack all their belongings and be ready to evacuate at any time. On July 7, the weather started to cool down and Skamania County’s evacuation level was reduced to level 2. As the temperature continued to drop and humidity levels increased, containment rapidly accelerated as well. On July 10, the fire reached 80% containment. The fire was fully contained nearly two weeks since it first ignited.

Photographer Richard Hallman peered out the window from his Hood River living room on the first day of the fire and noticed ominous plumes of slate-gray smoke rising up from across the Columbia. “I could look out right across [the river] and see the smoke coming up. So, I knew something was up,” said Hallman. He decided to try to get a closer look from the Washington side, but with SR-14 closed from mileposts 56-65, he wasn’t able to venture further west after crossing the Hood River Bridge. Hallman then retreated to Oregon, where he stationed his camera on the Hood River Waterfront Trail and started snapping photos and videos that he would later post to Instagram (@richardhallman_photo) to help inform community members what was happening.

Air assets were able to arrive quickly at the scene. Looking north across the river, Hallman was astonished by the number of helicopters and air tankers dropping water and fire retardant on the burn. “I don’t know how many different kinds of planes there were,” Hallman recounted. “I stood there for almost an hour in the daylight and I didn’t even take pictures of all the passes



Although we did lose structures, and there are people that are still without their homes, the fire personnel were incredible in their response and we were very blessed to have that.”

- SKAMANIA COUNTY SHERIFF SUMMER SCHEYER



because they were just coming through and hammering it so hard.” Skamania County Sheriff Summer Scheyer was also pleased with their quick response. “The Department of Natural Resources has done an incredible job in mobilizing air assets locally. So we had multiple air assets on scene within an hour of the fire.”

With dry grasses and vegetation along with high temperatures and wind nourishing the fire, the burn intensified and expanded on the eastern and western perimeters through the Fourth of July. Air assets continued to drop water on the fire and different areas that had a high chance to ignite, called fire hotspots. On July 3, fire crews ran hoses around buildings and structures that were at high risk from the fire, removed flammable excessive terrain, and put in dozer lines. These procedures continued throughout the first days of the fire, and by July 5, containment levels began to decrease. That day, the fire—which at that time was much more active in the interior than at the perimeter—reached 5% containment.

The containment of the fire increased more quickly beginning on July 7 thanks to cooler temperatures and higher humidity levels. The fire was only 20% contained on July 7 but became 80% contained on July 10. The fire was fully contained a few days later.

Throughout the week of the fire, there was an average of 347 personnel involved each day, including pilots, ground firefighting crews, fire engine and dozer operators, and operational and logistics managers. Scheyer mentions the different resources that came to help fight the fire. “Not only our local resources

by District 3 were responding but Klickitat County responded with their fire personnel, and then U.S. Forest Service and Department of Natural Resources.”

On July 6, the railroad was at the epicenter of the Tunnel Five Fire. During this time, firefighters worked hard to protect the tracks. Even though the cause of the fire is still under investigation (*see update at beginning of article), it is possible it was caused by the railroad. Sixteen years ago, a fire started at the same location as the Tunnel Five Fire, called the Broughton Fire. The 2007 Broughton Fire was caused by rail grinding, a process of repairing tracks that may have malformations due to the constant use of heavy trains and railroad cars. Rail grinding can create sparks that may start wildfires, particularly in regions like the Gorge with steep topography; uphill slopes are known to intensify wildfires because as the hot air from the fire rises, it heats up grasses higher up the slope, making them more flammable once the fire reaches them.

If it weren’t for all the first responders, the fire personnel, and everyone who helped and supported the community during the fire, it could’ve spread even faster and done much more damage. Scheyer believes that although there was damage and tragedy that happened, the outcome could have been much worse. “I think overall it was successful. From my perspective, although we did lose structures, and there are people that are still without their homes, I think that the fire personnel were incredible in their response, and we were very blessed to have that.”

Thankfully, the emergency crews were able to extinguish the Tunnel Five Fire before it became even worse, the future of wildland fire in the Gorge will likely bring much of the same. Friends Conservation Organizer Sofia Urrutia-Lopez explains that her stressful experience from the Eagle Creek Fire prepared her for the Tunnel Five Fire. “[The Tunnel Five Fire] didn’t make me feel anxious just because the Eagle Creek fire was so unpredictable.” Wildfires are not something you can prevent, and they are essential for sustaining healthy, balanced, and biodiverse ecosystems in the Gorge. Each year when wildfire season comes, it will only get hotter and drier due to climate change. As of now, to protect the Gorge communities, there is no simple solution—we cannot just move a highway, railroads, or homes. But, there are solutions to lower the risks of wildfires and staying safe when they occur near communities.

For homeowners who live in areas that have high wildfire risks, it is essential to practice how to live “firewise.” Firewise is a program created by the National Fire Protection Association that helps those who live in

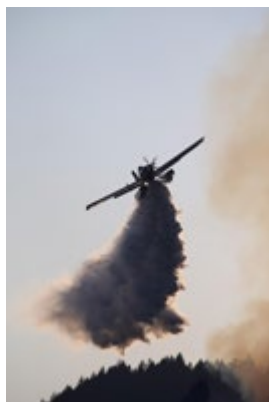
environments that experience frequent wildfires. Living “firewise” involves taking measures to prevent wildfires from harming homes such as removing shrubs and trees that are within 30 feet of your home; keeping your gutters free of any debris, dead leaves, and pine needles that could be flammable; and replacing or repairing any missing or damaged roof tiles, shingles, and window screens to prevent embers from creating a fire. These are all different practices that homeowners should do to prepare for wildfire season. To live in an environment where wildland

fires happen often, you must take on the responsibility of staying safe to protect yourself and your community. “It’s really cool to see the community coming together even though it was pretty tragic. I felt like the area was just really strong with support during the whole time,” said Urrutia-Lopez. Scheyer mentions it is natural for a wildfire to happen because of these windy and dry conditions we live in—just another challenge we have to face. “The area that we live with the high winds, the dry area, difficult terrain, we’re going to have these fires.” ■



FIREWISE: Read “Fighting Fire with Firewise,” a post-Tunnel Five Fire piece from The Columbian’s Lauren Ellenbecker, by visiting gorgefriends.org/firewisetunnel5 or scanning the QR code below.

CLICK/TAP HERE TO READ THE ARTICLE

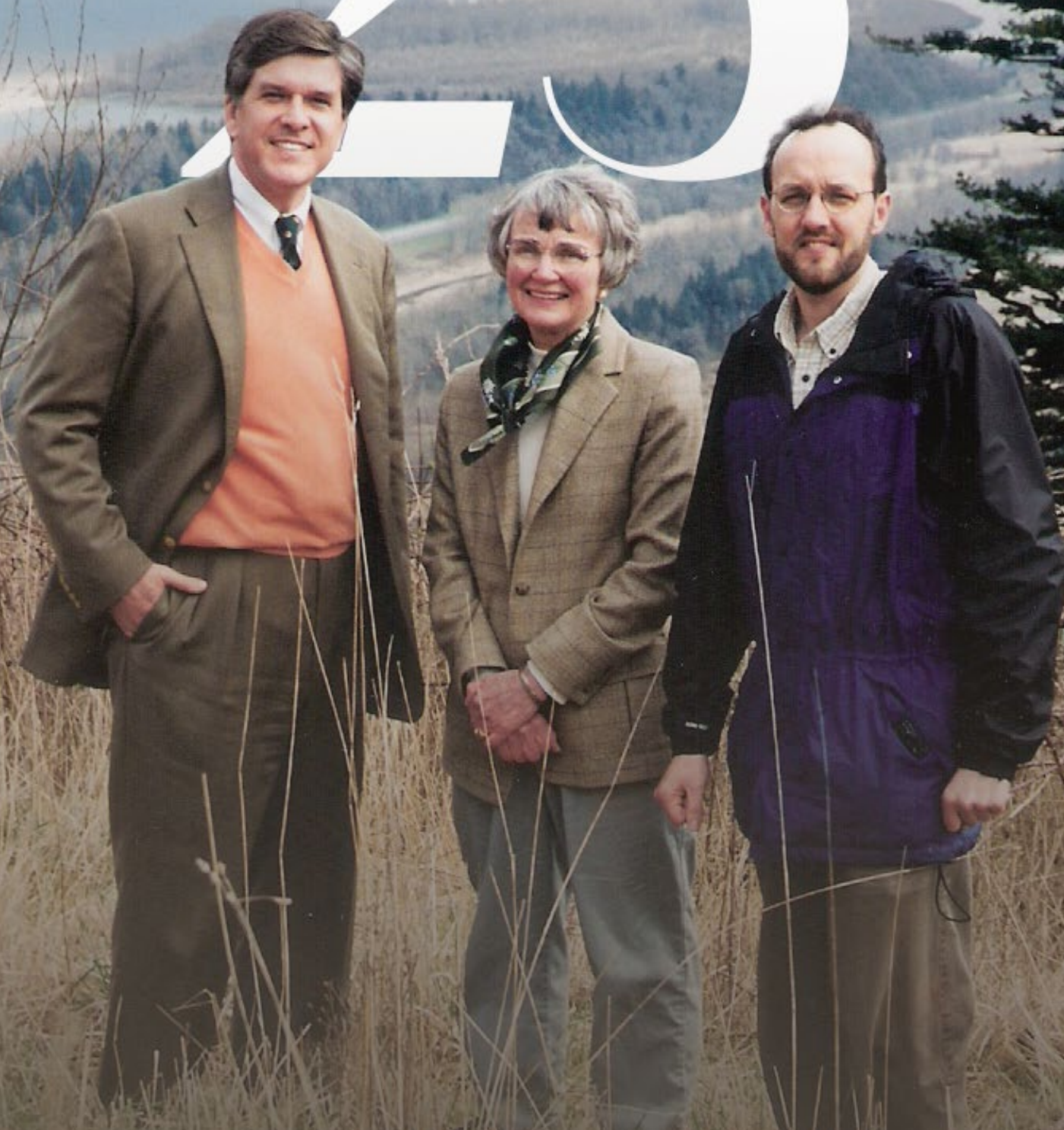


WATER COLLECTION: Visit gorgefriends.org/airtanker or scan the QR code to watch a video of an airtanker collecting water from the Columbia River to fight the Tunnel Five Fire.

CLICK/TAP HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO

Top left: An airtanker drops fire retardant Phos-Chek in front of the spreading fire to create a chemical barrier (photo by Richard Hallman); Top right: Hot spots are visible from across the Columbia River in Oregon (Jarrod Lyman); Middle left and middle: Firefighters from NW Incident Management Team 12 carried heavy gear down rail tracks and roads in their efforts to stop the blaze (J. Michael Johnson); Middle right: Fire personnel gather shortly after sunrise for morning briefing on July 7, 2023 (National Wildfire Coordinating Group); Bottom row: Aerial firefighting mainstays like airtankers and helicopters were used to douse the fire with water (Petar Marshall).

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FRIENDS' EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KEVIN GORMAN REFLECTS ON A QUARTER CENTURY WITH FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE



n 1986, I was fresh out of college working as an advertising copywriter with no thoughts whatsoever of working in conservation or leading a nonprofit organization. That June, I was watching a friend graduate from Columbia Bible College in Columbia, South Carolina, when the Southern Baptist Black preacher giving the

commencement leaned forward on the podium and bellowed, “Your life is but a moment between two vast infinities. *What are you doing with your moment?*”

I was taken with his words, but they really didn’t sink in until a few years later as I was still working at that same ad agency in Michigan but had risen from copywriter to creative director. I was with our agency’s leaders driving back from an advertising pitch that our agency president had blown and wouldn’t admit. When asked how many minority staff the agency employed, our president hemmed and hawed and finally lied. By a lot. The car ride back to the office was quiet until the president asked who might know Black people who would be willing to sit in empty offices and pretend to work there when the potential client took a tour of our office. The preacher’s words from years before came roaring back to me: what are you doing with your moment?

Within months, I left advertising for the nonprofit world and it wasn’t too long after that that I found myself on my first day as interim director of Friends of the Columbia Gorge. I never would have imagined such a long-term relationship as I had never worked at a job for more than four years. I had also never run an organization and while I liked the Gorge, I didn’t love it (that would come later). But I was enamored with the origin story of Friends. I was fascinated by Friends’ founder Nancy Russell, a woman equally comfortable rubbing elbows with Portland’s wealthiest citizens as she was plotting litigation strategies with young environmental warriors. The organization was small but mighty—it had already achieved its greatest legacy in ushering through the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

But the staffing side of Friends needed some TLC. I inherited six staff and only one had been there longer than one year. Salaries were low and benefits were almost nonexistent. I spent the next several years trying to both “get the right people on the bus” and making Friends a place people wanted to stay. With good people who cared about the Gorge on board, we began taking on higher-profile issues and winning, from stopping casinos and destinations resorts to removing dams and coal-fired power plants. The public’s attachment to the



Kevin Gorman hiking with daughter Meghan at Wahclella Falls, 2001.

Gorge grew and many Gorge residents who once saw the Gorge legislation as a stick to be used against them now saw it as shield, protecting them from sprawling development from the west.

With a growing organization and growing support, we started to take on projects that would have been unthinkable when I started, such as launching Gorge Towns to Trails and our land trust. The result has been that Friends has now become a backstop for Gorge protection, preservation, and stewardship. We are sometimes advocates, sometimes litigators, sometimes land buyers, and sometimes partners and allies. We continue to change, adapt, and grow but never lose sight of our North Star.

We’ve also navigated some of the most challenging years I’ve ever experienced recently with the pandemic and George Floyd murder and their collective aftermaths. Many of our staff and board now look and think very differently than staff and board from decades ago. I couldn’t be more heartened by that. For Friends to thrive and prosper 50 and 100 years from now, it must reflect our ever-diverse world. It’s imperative.

I feel very blessed to have 25 years under my belt with Friends. And I know now that if that same preacher asked me today, what are you doing with your moment, I could look him in the eye and say “exactly what I’m supposed to be doing.” ■



Creation of the Klickitat Rail Trail and formation of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy (2001 - 2004)

Friends played a support role as a group of citizens came together to bring a 31-mile rail trail online that Washington State Parks was ready to get rid of. Friends helped the volunteers create the Klickitat Trail Conservancy, write incorporation documents and fundraising letters, organize a board, and connect with other trail groups. Friends' donors also purchased a few properties along the trail to support the efforts.



Creation of the Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust (2005)

Our board's decision to add a land trust component to our work fundamentally changed our impact over a larger landscape. Today, we own properties totaling nearly 1,200 acres on both sides of the Gorge, including Lyle Cherry Orchard, pictured at left.



Acquisition of four Cape Horn properties, creation of the Cape Horn Trail, and the formation of the Cape Horn Conservancy (2006 - 2023)

Similar to the Klickitat Trail work, Friends played a critical but larger support role in bringing the Cape Horn Trail online. Friends supported locals to start the Cape Horn Conservancy, purchased key properties, and encouraged others to conserve lands. These steps convinced the U.S. Forest Service to jump on board and bring the trail to life. Friends even paid for the construction of the Nancy Russell Overlook.



Limiting a Destination Resort at Broughton Landing (2008-2009)

Not a complete victory as the Gorge Commission approved a project subject to future scrutiny, the proposal for a 245-unit gated community next to a world-class windsurfing site drew tremendous controversy, and eventually the developer lost interest. Without Friends and citizen opposition, this resort would most certainly be built today.



Stopping a Gorge Casino (1999 - 2012)

The Gorge casino proposal would have allowed Oregon's first off-reservation casino and encompassed the equivalent of 65 Portland city blocks within the small community of Cascade Locks. The victory was bittersweet as Friends had worked cooperatively for years with the Warm Springs Tribes and originally sought a smaller-footprint compromise but was rejected by attorneys for the Tribes.



Stopping more than a dozen proposed coal and oil terminals in the Pacific Northwest (2012 - 2016)

Over 100 tribes, nonprofits, and communities banded together to keep the Gorge from becoming a fossil fuel transportation byway. This stunning outcome certainly limited the efforts to ramp up coal mining in the Powder River Basin and drilling in the Bakken oil fields for eventual Chinese export.



Removal of the Condit Dam (2012)

A decades-long legal battle working with a broad coalition to remove a 100-year-old, 100-foot-tall dam. Removal allowed salmon to access an additional 17 miles up the White Salmon River.



Acquisition of Steigerwald Shores and subsequent salmon restoration work at Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge (2017 - 2022)

Its rare that one acquisition can literally transform a National Wildlife Refuge, but this did. The 180-acre Steigerwald Shores acquisition allowed U.S. Fish & Wildlife to breach the Steigerwald dike trail in three places, allowing nearly a thousand acres of farmlands to be reclaimed as wetlands and provide rare resting habitat in the lower Columbia for young salmon heading to the ocean.



Acquisition of Catherine Creek inholding (2020)

For over 20 years, a private residence filled with junk cars, tractor-trailers, and unpermitted buildings sat amidst thousands of acres making up the Catherine Creek Natural Area. Friends filed lawsuits and complaints to clean up the property but to no avail. In 2020, the property went on the market and Friends worked to buy the property anonymously. Since then, Friends has cleaned up the property and hopes to see the land eventually support the Catherine Creek area.



Closure of the Boardman coal-fired power plant (2020)

Friends and others were in a decades-long litigious battle with Portland General Electric to close Oregon's largest emitter of sulfur oxide and nitrous oxide, which caused significant pollution in the Eastern Gorge. Oregon's only coal-fired power plant finally closed in 2020.



Improved Gorge Management Plan & creation of Climate Change Action Plan (2022)

It is rare that conservation rules become stronger as they are typically watered down by developers over the years, but cooperative work with Friends and Gorge Commission staff led to substantial improvements, including protecting wetlands and limiting development in fire-prone areas.



Organizational Growth (1998 - Present)

In 1998, Friends of the Columbia Gorge had seven employees, an annual budget of \$450,000, and a net worth of \$750,000. Today, Friends has 24 staff members, a \$3.5M annual budget, and an organizational net worth of \$21.5M.

2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

by Steve McCoy, Staff Attorney,
and Rudy Salakory, Conservation Director

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area was birthed from activism, advocacy, and lobbying by Friends of the Columbia Gorge and others. These activities still have a crucial role in Friends' ongoing work to maintain this wondrous place where people live, work, and play. Bills still come before the legislatures of Oregon and Washington, as well as at the federal level, that would have intentional or unintentional adverse effects on the Gorge and the rules that protect it. In addition, Friends always envisions ways that current laws can be improved.

Each legislative session, thousands of bills are considered and many people are needed to track them. We get a lot of help from coalition partners. Friends is part of a coalition called Stand Up to Factory Farms (SUFF). SUFF is made up of groups who are interested in positive outcomes for human health, farmworker safety, mid- to small-scale family-owned farms, water and air resources, and animal welfare. We are also a part of the Oregon Conservation Network (OCN), the Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT), and the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT). Currently, Friends' Land Trust Director Dan Bell is the President of the Board of COLT. Working with partners and coalitions amplifies our voice, and thus your voice.

Friends staff spent time writing letters and providing written and public testimony on a number of bills. In Oregon, we supported measures that would have provided state funding for upgrades to the Bridge of the Gods and the proposed Hood River-White Salmon Bridge replacement, while we opposed bills that would have allowed unilateral changes to urban growth boundaries anywhere in the state. In addition to these bills, there were dozens of bills that needed continuous monitoring. Bills can change radically from one committee meeting to the next. It's extremely difficult to know the fate of every bill. Again, this is where coalitions and partners can help us.

Senate Bill 85 and Gorge Air Quality

The 2023 legislative season in Oregon was unusual. Oregon had a new governor, new leadership in the

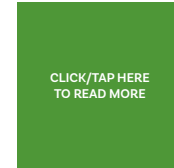


Senate and House, and nearly a third of the total lawmakers were new to the legislature. Add to that a still largely partisan split on a panoply of issues and the result was awkward and difficult negotiations on bills and a walk-out by some state senators. An example of the compromises made is Senate Bill 85 (SB-85) which was originally developed as a temporary moratorium on new or expanded extremely large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (Mega-CAFOs) in Oregon so that the adverse effects these operations bring could be prevented, but ended up not containing the provisions that Friends sought.

Friends' support of early versions of the bill was centered on mitigating adverse effects to Gorge air quality. Mega-CAFOs produce high levels of nitrogen oxides, ammonia, and particulate matter which are all shown to have serious health impacts to residents of the Gorge and throughout the state. Mega-CAFOs often have enormous manure lagoons (see photo above) where the waste anaerobically rots and pollutants are released into the air. Manure management is the fastest-growing source of methane emissions in the United States because Mega-CAFOs with their massive polluting manure lagoons are rapidly replacing family farms that don't have manure lagoons. Since thresholds for significant adverse effects on human health and the environment have already been exceeded in the



Manure lagoons produce four gases—hydrogen sulfide, methane, ammonia, and carbon dioxide—that can harm human health and the environment. The larger picture on the left shows a 20-acre manure lagoon in Boardman, Oregon (photo by Friends of Family Farmers). The smaller picture shows a worker at the now-shuttered Lost Valley Farms observing overflowing manure lagoons. In light of the passage of SB 85, serial water quality violator Easterday Dairy has given up its attempts to reopen the site with more than 30,000 cows. Visit gorgefriends.org/megadairy or scan the QR code to read more from the Center for Food Safety. (Photo by Oregon Department of Agriculture)



Gorge for particulate matter and nitrogen deposition, any significant source of pollutants will likely contribute to cumulative significant adverse impacts to Gorge residents and resources. Still, the Mega-CAFO industry continues to propose new projects that will adversely affect Gorge air quality with no permitting done to control its negative effects.

time this year trying to get Oregon to pass the Columbia River Gorge Commission's full budget request for the next biennium. Per the Columbia River Gorge Compact, the Gorge Commission's budget is split equally between Oregon and Washington with the lesser amount approved being allocated by both states. Washington committed to fully funding the Gorge Commission's budget request, while Oregon chose to remove packages that would have funded a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program; a Climate Change adaptation and mitigation program; and a much-needed second Gorge Commission attorney. Thus, these critical packages will not be funded at all.

Friends has been working hard to ensure that adequate permitting is done to protect air quality in the Gorge and beyond. SUFF championed SB-85 this past session. SB-85 eventually went through 11 amendments and the session included a moment when lawmakers considered dropping the bill altogether. In the final version, all effective air quality language was stripped from the bill along with the moratorium on new and expanded Mega-CAFOs. Friends believes air quality is a critical issue and will continue to advocate for permitting requirements for operations that have the potential to harm human health and the environment.

Future Work

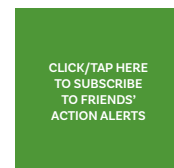
For the 2023 session, we did not have the resources, coalitions, and partnerships (outside of WALT) to track legislation in Washington State as we did in Oregon. In future years, we intend to increase our participation in Washington's lawmaking.

The final result of all of the testimonies, debates, and advocacy was a weakened SB-85 that addressed a loophole in the amount of water that a Mega-CAFO could draw without a water permit. Before SB-85, these operations could withdraw, for stockwatering purposes, as much groundwater as was available in the aquifer with no oversight or restriction. Closing the stockwatering exemption loophole for Mega-CAFOs is a welcome outcome, but only part of what Friends had hoped for. We have more work to do.

There is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes with laws that can have a tremendous impact on the Columbia River Gorge and the National Scenic Area Act that protects it. It takes more than just our involvement. You can participate in this process too. Occasionally we send out Action Alerts (see button below) to our members and friends on critical issues that require attention immediately. Sometimes we will highlight issues that we are tracking in our newsletters, social media pages, or in this magazine. We encourage you to participate when and where you can. Together, we can amplify each other's voices and keep the Gorge a place of wonder and a place for everyone. ■

Funding the Gorge Commission

In addition to Friends' work on SB-85, Friends staff spent



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: JUDY HENDERSON

If you want to meet a person who moved to the Gorge from a place about as different as it comes, then you need to meet Judy Henderson. Judy came to the Gorge in 1976 from Brooklyn, New York, and found it stunning: “I was amazed at the variety of terrain from the green Douglas fir forests as it changed to the brown high plateaus in the east. I got this feeling that it was a prehistoric place when driving on the Scenic Highway. It was so lush and green.”

When Judy moved to Portland, she lived near Tryon Creek and became an active volunteer at Friends of Tryon Creek. There she learned all about the forest and what was special about Pacific Northwest ecosystems. As she began to learn about other environmental and conservation groups, Judy became overwhelmed by the number that was out there and felt she needed some criteria to determine which to support.

She looked for a group that protected a beautiful natural resource nearby and was very effective in carrying out its mission. Because she was a hiker, she spent a lot of time experiencing the Gorge on foot and learned about Friends. When she became involved with Friends in the early '90s, she felt Friends checked all the boxes and has since remained an active member.

Judy is still a hiker who enjoys the Gorge with Friends and her daughters but also feels the need to protect the Gorge from overuse and climate change. “We are starting



From left to right: Heather Henderson, Judy Henderson, and Gina Henderson

to see climate refugees and as more people come to the area, we have to be ready for them because climate change is here. I really feel that Gorge Towns to Trails is special because it is beneficial to the communities that it connects and it protects sensitive places.”

She went on to say, “My hope for the future is that we will be successful teaching kids about the outdoors and climate change so they will want to protect it for generations to come.”

As Judy thought about the future, she decided she needed to have a legacy plan. Once she started her planning, it made sense to put her priorities of protecting the Gorge now into that plan for the future.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

May 16, 2023 - November 30, 2023

In honor of J. Abele
Keegan Vance

In honor of Ben Kinder and Julie Aguiar
Tupper Kinder

In honor of Debbie Asakawa
Carl Asakawa; Kate Swabey

In honor of Nathan Baker
Rita Heinz; Eric Lichtenthaler and Dixie Stevens

In honor of Richard Benner
Donald Clark

In honor of Pam Davee
David J. Pollock

In honor of Will Dixon
Penny Dixon

In honor of Judy Fisher
Antoinette Arenz

In honor of Kathryn Foster
Gordon and Devra Foster

In honor of Elsa Gauler
Diane Hohl and Dr. Richard Hohl

In honor of Kevin Gorman
Joe and Pat Campbell

In honor of Fernanda Gwinner
Jeanie Nguyen

In honor of Yagmur Hanim
Niyazi Candan

In honor of Nicole Hart
Sue Evans

In honor of Helen Robinson
Kathleen Tack

In honor of Tracy and Peter Hyland
Courtney and Harry Brod

In honor of J. Isaac
Lauren Isaac

In honor of Ellis Kamenko
Devon Roxbury

In honor of Jane Keating
Karen Keating

In honor of Ellen Leslie
Timothy Leslie

In honor of Christopher Masciocchi
Tina Schafer

In honor of S. McCoy
Sue Evans

In honor of Anthony Midson
Margaret Herrington

In honor of Barbara and Morris Miller
Margaret Rogers

In honor of Buck Parker
Meredith Herr

In honor of Maren Reed
Carol Reed

In honor of Jane Corboy and John Rogers
Annabelle Corboy

In honor of Fred Rothchild
George Cummings

In honor of Captain Dale B. Russell
Nicole Aue

In honor of Eugenia Szontagh
Laura Krioukov

In honor of Robert Tiedeman
Louis and Sheryl Weisberg

In honor of Jozsef Urmos
Becky and Bruce Copeland

In honor of Mike and Debbie Youmans
Scott DeVenney

In memory of M. Mehdi Akhavein
Roudi Akhavein

In memory of Jeremy Bechtel
Patrizia Caposio-Nelson and Jay Nelson

In memory of Allen and Helen Bellinger
Laura Kellenbarger

In honor of Mona Janey Brett
William Williams

In memory of Alison Brown
Michael and Catherine Barrett

In memory of Dorothy Bahret
Diane Hohl and Dr. Richard Hohl



WILDLIFE OF THE GORGE

by Kenzie Hammond,
Youth & Community
Education Specialist

Cougars or mountain lions (*Puma concolor*) can be found all over North and South America and are the widest-ranged cat species on the planet. These large cats call the Gorge home, thriving in its dense forests, rocky slopes, and arid landscapes. They are considered one of the most ecologically important species in the area; at least 39 species of birds and mammals depend on their leftover kills. Cougars are obligate carnivores, meaning their diet consists of only meat, with deer as their primary diet in the Gorge. They are solitary cats with male territories being, on average, around 50-150 square miles. They're also crepuscular, so they are most active during dusk and dawn. The biggest threats to cougars today include deforestation, poaching, vehicle strikes, and depredation permits.

This August, the Mountain Lion Foundation hosted the conference “Coexistence in Practice – Klickitat County” for residents of the region to gather and learn about coexisting with cougars. Executive Director R. Brent Lyles spoke to the community about conservation efforts in Washington State, and the organization also led a workshop on making barns carnivore-safe to prevent predation of livestock and a session on tracking and identifying cougar tracks. For more information on cougars in the Gorge and beyond, check out their website at mountainlion.org.

May 16, 2023 - November 30, 2023

TRIBUTE GIFTS

In memory of Carolyn Denomme Burstein
Richard and Betty Halley; Tim Hohl

In memory of Franklin Coale
Ann Steiner

In memory of Arnald Cogan
Donald Clark

In memory of Elizabeth Deering
Rosemary and Dick Law

In memory of Frederick Albert Faulkner
Michael Sampson

In memory of Vivi Fillback
Will Peterson and Mark Pyrch

In memory of John Christian Edwardsen
Jane W. Hubbard; Kyna Rubin; Diane Solomon;
John Herc

In memory of Heidi Ellett
Clark County Newcombers Club, Desert
Sleuths, Donna Maple

In memory of Zoe Coughlin-Glaser
Karl Skedsvold and Bob Workmeister

In memory of Julia Ferreira
Felice and Ken Denis

In memory of Donald Gonthier
Donna Weare

In memory of Kent Goodyear
William Scott; Carla Fenning;
Cary Morris; Jeanne Oliver

In memory of Darryl Hoyt
Susan Gabay

In memory of Adam Joy
Masako Bridges, Thuja Jameson, Sarah
Hwang, Joshua Hetrick & Sarah Lombardi

In memory of John Lovell
David and Jude Russell

In memory of Jill Wilson's beloved dog, Maddie
Gaye Richardson

In memory of Charlie McCarthy
Maryann Roulier

In memory of David McClure
Elaine Ostrander

In memory of Eugene McLemore
Barbara & Karl Wetzel, Neil Malling, Kregg &
Andrea Hanson, Rosemary & Dick Law, David
Shaw, Kenneth Shipley, Timothy Sellers, Bruce
Townsend, Melvin Hinto, Anonymous Donors

In memory of Robert Allen Mickibben
Annette Talbott

In memory of Barbara and Gordon Miller
Dawn Daniels and Mark Miller

In memory of Mary Narey
Sharon Wright

In memory of David L. Neitling
Glenda Tedrow

In memory of Douglas Andrew Nolan
Margaret and Thomas Nolan

In memory of LaDelle Elaine Nosen
Diane Hohl and Dr. Richard Hohl

In memory of Kathleen Parry
John Parry

In memory of Ann Radakovitch
Donald Clark

In memory of Hollis C. Ransom, Jr.
Susan Mates, Douglas Schoen

In memory of Oliver Dalton & Nancy Russell
Sandi and Thomas Rousseau

In memory of Dick Springer
John VanLandingham, Nancy Heim, Jan
Coulton, Larry Bennet and Jane Bennett

In memory of Shelly Spielman
Edward and Laurie Simmons

In memory of Mason Van Buren
Brent and Stephanie Berge, Elizabeth Newcomb
Janis Carpenter, Gary Kahn, Stephanie McBride;
Evans Van Buren and Marsha Warner

In memory of Arcia Wilson
Fernanda and Brandon Gwinner

In memory of Matthew Winthrop
Joan Ercolini; Tom Nelson and Peggie Schwarz

In memory of Ray Witter
Bunny Witter

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View from Crown Point in autumn © Bob Pool



Passages is a quarterly publication produced for members and supporters of Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

Founded in 1980, Friends of the Columbia Gorge is the only conservation organization entirely dedicated to protecting, preserving, and stewarding the Columbia Gorge for future generations. Friends has offices in Portland and Hood River, Oregon, and Washougal, Washington. Visit gorgefriends.org to learn more. Send inquiries to info@gorgefriends.org or call 503.241.3762.

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