

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

Spring 2003 Newsletter



comments advocating for specific ways in which the Commission could improve Gorge protection. Instead, the Commission staff has proposed weakening natural resource buffers, eliminating protection for some scenic landscapes in the Gorge, eliminating a rule that prohibits adverse cumulative effects of development, and allowing development to be located where it is more visible from important viewing areas in the Gorge.

The Commission voted to try to address some issues by the end of the fiscal year and to postpone the rest of the issues until the next biennial budget is determined. Below are highlights of the short-term and long-term lists for Plan Review.

Commission Considers Weakening Gorge Protection

Budget Cuts May Limit Plan Review

By Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

Anticipated budget cuts from both the Oregon and Washington Legislatures have the Gorge Commission gearing up to rush through the Management Plan Review, possibly completing the process at the end of its fiscal year on June 30.

Friends supports funding for Gorge programs that protect and enhance scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources. It is unfortunate that the Commission may not receive adequate

funding for the next biennium, but it may result in the agency being forced to postpone considering proposals to weaken Gorge protection and open up scenic vistas to more logging, mining and development.

So far in Plan Review, the Commission has favored allowing more development at the expense of the scenic beauty and natural heritage of the Gorge. The Commission has largely ignored hundreds of public

Scenic Protection

Scenic resource protection has been an area where the Commission staff has generally pushed to weaken the standards that protect Gorge landscapes from new development. There are a couple of exceptions to this trend, but they are disappointingly few.

Short term: Commission staff has proposed removing the requirement for new development to be sited where visibility will be minimized. Friends supports

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preserving scenic areas

View from Dalles Mountain. Friends has advocated that nearby Dalles Mountain Road be considered as a new Key Viewing Area under revisions to the Management Plan.

photo: Friends of the Columbia Gorge archives

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Executive Director's Letter

"The Columbia River Gorge is an area of worldwide importance, where scenic qualities and diverse landscapes, together with their natural and cultural components, are paramount...where the human presence is lightly demonstrated..."

— excerpts from the Columbia River Gorge Commission 1988 Vision

Fifteen years ago, with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act passed but still unimplemented, the Columbia River Gorge Commission came together to outline its Vision of the Gorge, and the role the Commission should play in protecting it.

They drafted a Vision quite remarkable for a government agency and used that Vision to set in motion the creation of a management plan that has guided Gorge development for the last 11 years. That plan has generally succeeded in holding the line against sprawling development, yet has allowed the building of more than 600 houses in the National Scenic Area. The Vision has helped preserve the landscapes that have captivated thousands of residents and millions of visitors over the past decade.

As the Gorge Commission wrestles with the mandated review of its Management Plan, the Commission's Vision is being sorely tested. The concept of the Columbia River Gorge as an area of worldwide significance has been lost, marginalized, or ignored due to local and state politics. Recommendations to weaken scenic protections continue to come forward. Considerations to actually reduce stream buffers that are already inadequate according to modern science demonstrate that our human footprint in the Gorge would be anything but light in the future.

At best, it appears the Columbia River Gorge Commission is losing direction. At worst, it is abandoning its Vision.



On April 13, 2003, Kevin Gorman hiked with Friends' members on the Lewis & Clark Landscapes Major Creek parcel. Lewis & Clark camped along Major Creek on April 14, 1806.

photo: Tiffany Kenslow

As Conservation Director Michael Lang reports in our cover story, the Commission's review of its Management Plan has a new twist this spring: likely cuts to the Commission's budget coming from Salem and Olympia. These cuts are being threatened even as the Commission works to satisfy legislators who are determined to weaken Gorge protections. It's the ultimate irony: working to appease the unappeasable, and in the process, losing sight of why you exist.

We have all heard it is darkest before the dawn. But we also know that those most likely to recognize the dawning moment are those with the best vision. Here's hoping the Gorge Commission will regain its vision of protecting the irreplaceable national legacy of the Columbia River Gorge.

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

Hiking Season in Full Bloom

Friends' annual Spring Hiking Program more than doubled its offerings this year. Growing from the traditional schedule of one hike each weekend plus an extravaganza in June, the schedule this spring includes two to four hikes every weekend from mid-March through June 8. The season culminates with nearly 20 outings throughout the Gorge on Gorge Hiking Weekend, June 14–15.

We've added different features in addition to our perennial wildflower favorites: hikes that feature Lewis and Clark history, wildlife and natural history information, and members-only outings. Record numbers of Gorge enthusiasts are enjoying the wonders of the Gorge this spring, yet each hike has a more congenial number of participants. The expanded program is great for hikers and hike leaders, and much kinder to the trails and lands where we hike.

Some 25 outings are scheduled between late May and June 15.

Check the complete schedule online at www.gorgefriends.org. For more details, email hikes@gorgefriends.org, or 503-241-3762 x400. ■

Native Plants at Bridal Veil

The hard work and commitment of Friends' stewardship volunteers are taking root at Bridal Veil Falls State Park. Since adopting Bridal Veil as a long-term natural restoration project last year, volunteers have shown up regularly to uproot and dig out invasive blackberry and ivy. In March and early May, the first 100 native plants in our revegetation effort—nootka roses, wild ginger, penstemon, and others—were finally put in the newly cleared ground.

Bridal Veil work parties are scheduled for Saturday, June 7, and Saturday, July 12, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at Bridal Veil State Park. See www.gorgefriends.org for more details, or call 503-241-3762 x107. ■

Spring Volunteer Gathering

More than 40 active Friends' volunteers enjoyed our annual volunteer celebration on April 22 at Lucky Labrador Brewpub. Staff presented updates on Gorge issues, outlined current challenges that call for active involve-



Hikers break for lunch amid the balsamroot and oak groves on Memaloose Hills.

photo: Diana Karabut

ment, and raffled off a Friends' shirt, a Gorge hiking CD, and a Lewis & Clark book. For more information on volunteer opportunities, contact Betsy at betsy@gorgefriends.org, or 503-241-3762 x107. ■

Stay Connected and Volunteer!

We've included our 2003 Volunteer Form in this newsletter. Be sure to fill it out and return it to us—we need your help in a variety of ways. Also, stay in touch with Friends between quarterly newsletters, through our Gorge Activities and Action Email List. Send your e-address to betsy@gorgefriends.org and ask to subscribe! ■



Volunteer Carlton Olson (l) and Friends' AmeriCorps member Cathy Robart enjoy new growth sprouting from a stump unburied from a dense blackberry thicket last fall at Bridal Veil State Park.

Photo: Diana Karabut



Conservation and Legal Program Highlights

In the Courts and in the Field...

By Nathan Baker, Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org
and Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

Friends Protects Resources Through Agreements

Friends' development review and legal programs for 2003 have resulted in impressive successes to date. We have continued to review all proposed development within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, provide detailed comments prior to a decision, and to step in with administrative appeals where the county planning directors fall short in their decisions.

In many cases, it is possible to resolve legal matters through the settlement process. This allows Friends to achieve consensus with the other parties, increase resource

protection, and bring development into compliance with the law, while avoiding the costs of continued litigation. So far this year, Friends has resolved three different administrative appeals in this "win-win" manner.

In one matter, Friends challenged a Skamania County land use decision that failed to properly evaluate the scenic impacts of 4,000 square feet of proposed residential development on a hill east of Stevenson. Shortly after filing the appeal, Friends agreed with the landowners to delay the hearing so that settlement options could be explored.

Ultimately, the parties reached a settlement that dropped one of two proposed garages, improved the landscaping map, and clarified the location of the proposed development to make it less visible from key viewing areas. The County approved these changes, and Friends withdrew the appeal.

In another Skamania County matter, Friends filed an appeal involving a land division of a 230-acre parcel along the Lower White Salmon River. Both the county's and Gorge Commission's reviews had failed to recognize that the decision created new boundary lines through the Open Space



Friends' Land Use Legal Assistant Glenn Fullilove studies a site map while reviewing a proposed building site in Skamania County.

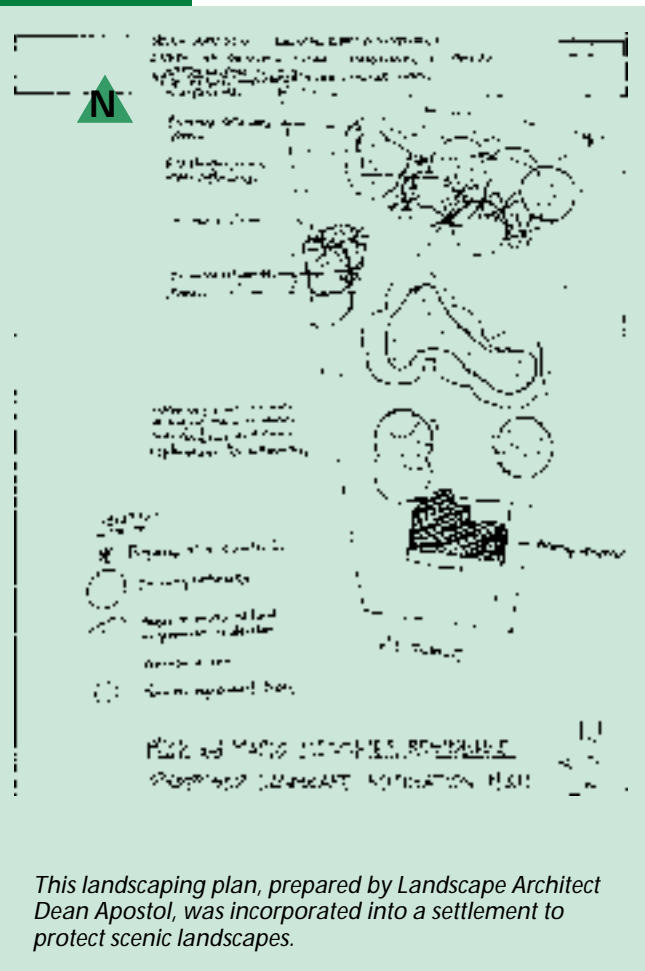
photo: Nathan Baker

zone, which is prohibited. Open Space is the most protective land use designation and prohibits land divisions and most new development.

In response to our appeal, the landowners agreed to redraw the boundary lines to avoid affecting the land zoned as Open Space. In response to a joint request from Friends and the landowners, the Skamania County Board of Adjustment approved the redrawn boundary lines.

Finally, Friends settled a longstanding dispute in Multnomah County involving a proposed house along the Columbia River in the Warrendale area. In prior litigation involving the proposal, Friends had prevailed before the Multnomah County Hearings Officer on issues involving the legality of the parcel and the scenic impacts of the proposed dwelling. Following that ruling, the applicants submitted addi-

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This landscaping plan, prepared by Landscape Architect Dean Apostol, was incorporated into a settlement to protect scenic landscapes.

Land Acquisition Funding Slashed in Final Days

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

It was there one moment— then half of it was gone. A few months ago, all signs indicated that the U.S. Forest Service would be receiving a \$10 million congressional appropriation for its Gorge Land Acquisition Program in 2003. The \$10 million was in the President's original budget and passed through both the House and Senate, but it was cut in half to \$5 million by a Senate conference report in a last-minute effort to decrease federal spending.

This cut comes at a critical time for Gorge land acquisition. In 2000, an amendment to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act resulted in a flood of offers from Gorge landowners to the U.S. Forest Service to sell their land—187 offers totaling more than 6,700 acres. The amendment stipulated that the Forest Service must make purchase offers within three years or the lands offered will convert to less restrictive zoning and allow more development and increased logging and mining.

In 2002, the Forest service purchased 21 properties totaling more than 1,000 acres.

Now, because of the funding cut, public protection of many critical

lands is in jeopardy. The Forest Service has indicated that less than one-third of the 37 offers it was processing for 2003 will remain active. A few will be moved to 2004, and 18 will be delayed indefinitely.

The Forest Service indicates they will need \$15 million in 2004 for the Gorge Land Acquisition Program. Through our Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project, Friends continues to work with our congressional delegation to secure necessary funds, but we face an uphill struggle. We're encouraged that the entire Oregon House delegation and two members of the Washington House delegation wrote a letter to the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee



Several parcels surrounding St. Peter's Dome and Rock of Ages (shown here) may face increased development due to cuts in Gorge Land Acquisition Program funding. photo: Deirdre Murray

on Interior and Related Agencies supporting the full \$15 million request. ■

Conservation and Legal Program Highlights Friends Protects Resources...

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tional information regarding the legality of the parcel, and agreed to work with Friends to mitigate scenic impacts.

The resulting settlement agreement limits the dwelling to a modest 1,800 square feet and screens the dwelling as viewed from the Columbia River and Beacon Rock. The screening requirements are based on

a landscaping plan prepared by Friends' landscape architect Dean Apostol.

As long as new development is allowed in the Gorge, Friends will continue to monitor development proposals and work with developers and reviewing agencies to ensure compliance with Gorge protection laws. ■

THE LEWIS & CLARK LANDSCAPES PROJECT

What you can do:

Contact your elected officials and ask them to support \$15 million for the Gorge land acquisition program.

Sample letters, contact information and more information about the Lewis & Clark Landscapes project are available at www.gorgefriends.org.

Or contact Tiffany Kenslow at tiffany@gorgefriends.org or (541) 386-5268. ■



Funding Gorge Protection

Development Director's Report

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

Membership Meeting Draws Record Numbers

More than 180 Friends members came to Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington for our Annual Meeting in April. A beautiful luncheon was followed by a presentation from author and Emmy-winning cinematographer Rex Ziak.

Standing in front of a beautiful map of the lower Columbia River, Rex read from the Lewis & Clark journals, recounting the Corps of Discovery's progress through the Gorge nearly 200 years ago. He also discussed his new book, *In Full View*, which explores in detail the rugged final 20 miles of Lewis & Clark's voyage to the Pacific. ■

Sternwheeler Event Reprised

Friends' Sternwheeler Lewis & Clark Landscapes Tour of the Gorge was such a success last year, we're taking the trip again. Join us on Saturday, June 14 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM as author Rex Ziak shares stories of Lewis and Clark's journeys through the Gorge. Friends founder Nancy Russell will describe historically significant Gorge landscapes that Friends is working to preserve, and lunch and live music are included in this perfect day on the river. Cost is \$55. For reservations and details, call our office at 503-241-3762. ■

Summer Picnic

Planning for Friends' Annual Picnic is underway. Details about this year's picnic location—a beautiful riverfront home in Vancouver—will be mailed in



Author Rex Ziak enthalls members with accounts from the Lewis & Clark journals.

photo: Ken Denis

early summer, but mark July 20 on your calendar right away. ■

Where There's a Will There's a Way

Estate Planning is an excellent way to leave a lasting legacy to the Gorge. Many Friends members have made arrangements in their wills for a gift to Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Gifts can be undesignated, to be used where needed, or can be directed to the Endowment Fund to remain in perpetuity, providing yearly income to our operating budget for protection of the Columbia Gorge.

Call Jane Haley-Harris at 503-241-3762 x102 for more

information about our Planned Giving Program. ■

Exploring Alaska's Coastal Wilderness

Space is still available on Lindblad Cruise Line's Seabird ship voyaging from Juneau to Sitka June 22-29. This exceptional company offers the trip of a lifetime, and a percentage of the proceeds from this cruise comes to Friends. The trip offers a stunning, up-close look at Alaska's frozen wilderness for adventurous nature lovers and sightseers. Call Friends' office at 503-241-3762 x102 for details. ■

Check out Electronic Renewal Options

Friends members can renew quickly and efficiently on-line. Log on to www.gorgefriends.org and click the Join/Renew link on our Membership Page. If you have sent us your e-mail address, we will send you an automatic e-mail renewal reminder, too. Be sure to check out our **electronic funds transfer** program, as well. A monthly or quarterly gift made through this option saves us all precious resources as well as saving time. Log on and check it out! ■

Commission Considers Weakening...

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keeping this standard, and in fact, adopting a stronger standard for endangered landscapes in the Gorge. The Commission will also consider whether to require corridor planning along highways in the Gorge. Friends supports corridor planning as a way to ensure comprehensive scenic resource protection over time.

Long term: Commission staff recommended eliminating the current language in the Management Plan intended to prevent cumulative impacts. In its place, the staff recommends vague wording that describes adoption of a cumulative effects standard at some future time, after Plan Review. Friends supports the current standards that protect Gorge landscapes from the cumulative effects of development, identifying landscapes facing development pressure, and adopting stronger protection standards for these landscapes.

Commission staff supports allowing new development within 300 feet of key viewing areas to be more visible than currently allowed. Friends supports the current standard requiring new development to blend into surrounding landscape.

Commercial and Industrial Uses

The Commission is considering increased commercial uses, such as more bed and breakfast inns, commercial events, catering facilities and wineries in rural residential zones, and new industrial uses such as fish processing plants. Friends is generally opposed to increased commercial uses in the National Scenic Area. The National Scenic Act prohibits industrial uses and development except within urban areas in the Gorge.

The Commission staff has also proposed the following changes to the management plan:

- ✓ Allowing ODOT to stockpile highway spoils in the Scenic Area;
- ✓ Streamlining environmental review for uses that will have “minor effects”;
- ✓ Expand the list of uses and development that are allowed without any review;
- ✓ Recognizing some outdated subdivision lots and requiring the aggregation of others.

Commission Postpones Many Controversial Topics

Everything else is being put on hold until the budget situation is resolved. The proposals include: rezoning land currently zoned as Open Space to Forest, which would allow large-scale logging and even mining; rezoning agricultural lands to allow more land divisions and development; revising cluster development standards; revising standards that restrict conversion of farm land to residential development; and consideration of allowing new schools and churches in the NSA. Every one of these topics have the potential to allow more development at the expense of the natural beauty of the Gorge. ■

How You Can Help

- ✓ Contact the Columbia River Gorge Commissioners directly to let them know how you feel. Check www.gorgefriends.org for contact information.
 - ✓ Sign on to our email list as an Email Activist; encourage others to sign on as well. Email betsy@gorgefriends.org to sign on.
 - ✓ Attend Plan Review and Gorge Commission meetings and hearings.
- For more information on Friends of the Columbia Gorge's efforts on Management Plan Review, contact Michael Lang, michael@gorgefriends.org ■

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

www.gorgefriends.org

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Hikers at Stacker Butte amid balsamroot in full bloom.
photo: Cathy Robart

Know Your Gorge Spring Hiking News

With spring hiking season in full bloom, the Columbia Gorge offers some of the best hikes, vistas, and wildflower shows anywhere. Here are some tips:

- Friends' Dog Mountain Hike on May 31 presents one of the Gorge's most brilliant displays of balsamroot, lupine, and red paintbrush. It's a challenging uphill hike, with a 2900-ft. elevation gain, but Dog Mountain's flowers and vistas make every step on the trail worth the effort.
- Our Hamilton Mountain Hike (also May 31) is almost as rigorous as Dog Mountain, and offers wonderful wildflower displays and waterfalls as well. Abundant patches of the "inside-out flower," white serviceberry, juneberry, and Saskatoon berry greet hikers on their way up the 2,100-ft. elevation gain on this trail.
- Other great spots in Friends' May and June hiking program also include less strenuous hikes. Wahkeena Falls, Cape Horn, Eagle Creek, and Indian Head are just a few of the moderate hikes planned, while Table Mountain, Ruckel Ridge and Wind Mountain, along with Dog and Hamilton (above), are great for experienced hikers.

Check our website at www.gorgefriends.org for details on hikes through Gorge Hiking Weekend, June 14-15. Contact hikes@gorgefriends.org, or call 503-241-3762 x107 for more information. ■