

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

Summer 2002 Newsletter



Scenic Area in Danger *Gorge Commission prepares to weaken rules*

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

In 1986, Congress sought to protect scenic vistas in the Columbia Gorge by requiring that new development occur without adversely affecting the Gorge's outstanding scenic beauty.

Sixteen years later, more than 600 new houses and many more buildings have been constructed on scenic landscapes. Under the current rules, hundreds more can be built within the National Scenic Area, without any limit

on the number or size of new buildings. As a result, this national scenic treasure is rapidly becoming one of America's most endangered landscapes.

Now the Gorge Commission is preparing to further weaken rules protecting scenic landscapes from the worst effects of urban sprawl and inappropriate development, without first evaluating the impacts of current and future development on the

These new houses, approved in 1994, are highly visible from the Columbia River, a key viewing area. Both houses are in violation of the National Scenic Area Act. photo: Michael Lang

scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources of the Gorge.

The Commission and Forest Service staffs have already recommended the following measures to weaken existing protections:

- Remove the requirement that new buildings and roads be sited on portions of a property where visibility will be minimized. (This contradicts the Commission's own Nov. 2000 Scenic Resources Report, which found that "siting new structures to minimize visibility is an important way to ensure new structures are visually subordinate." The report recommended "as a first step to applying the guidelines, require agencies to site structures on portions of the properties to minimize visibility from key viewing areas.")

- Allow new development near key viewing areas to be more visible than currently allowed.

- Reduce the number of key viewing areas. (A recent Commission staff memo recommended removal of Tom McCall Point and the Wyeth Bench Road from the list of key viewing areas.)

Missing the forest for the trees

The Gorge Commission too rarely asks the question, "What is
(continued on page 7)

preserving scenic areas

INSIDE
Late Season
Hike Schedule

Executive Director's Letter

In high school and college, I was a cross-country runner. I was drawn to long-distance running because success came not through brute speed, but through a combination of brains, stamina, teamwork, and the ability to look beyond—but not ignore—short-term obstacles.

Protecting the Columbia River Gorge is not a job for sprinters. Gorge protection efforts began more than 80 years ago. Our organization was founded in 1980, and it was another six years before passage of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act. Sixteen years later, the race to protect landscapes including federal, state, county, private, and tribal lands continues.

Over the past year, numerous obstacles have been placed in front of us. As Michael Lang reports in our cover story, the Gorge Commission has so far ignored thousands of citizen comments that urge the Commission to strengthen protections in the Management Plan during plan review. The disregarded comments included calls for tougher open-pit mining regulations.

Coinciding with the Commission's unwillingness to look beyond local special interests, an Oregon legislative subcommittee is holding public hearings to pummel the Commission and remind them that the state legislatures hold the purse strings to the Commission's future. Over half the people who signed up to testify at the first hearing were Gorge protection advocates. Unfortunately, most of those supporters did not get to speak: the subcommittee chair, Senator Ted Ferrioli, shuffled the sign-up list allowing many of the Act's opponents to speak first, and time ran out before many protection advocates could speak.

These are very unsettling developments, but we have come a long way in the work to preserve the Gorge as a national treasure, and we are not about to give up now. A vast majority of Pacific Northwesterners, including many Gorge residents, support the National Scenic Area Act. But protection opponents are making a lot more noise than supporters right now, and calls for the common good are being drowned out by a chorus singing the praises of personal gain.

As a member of Friends of the Columbia Gorge, we hope you consider yourself part of the relay team in this long-range protection marathon. We encourage you to attend meetings. Write letters. Speak out. Our work is far from complete. In fact, to borrow an old slogan from that Beaverton-based shoe company that sold me my first running shoes 25 years ago, "there is no finish line." We're in it for the long run.

Sincerely,



Kevin Gorman
Executive Director



Kevin Gorman addresses guests at Friends' annual picnic, held this year in Mosier.
photo: Ken Denis

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

Bridal Veil Stewardship

Friends' July 13 stewardship project at Bridal Veil State Park was a partnership activity with Oregon Park and Recreation Dept. and volunteers from REI. Twenty-five determined invasive-plant eradicators cleared six truckloads of Himalayan blackberry and English ivy, ending the day proud of their achievement.

Friends has adopted Bridal Veil State Park with a long-term commitment to invasive plant removal. Check out our website at www.gorgefriends.org for the stewardship schedule. ■

AmeriCorps Change

July was the end of Amy Brown's AmeriCorps term with us. We will miss Amy's ready laugh and her enthusiasm for our hikes and stewardship efforts. Amy has helped clarify Friends' stewardship objectives, and assisted with expansion of our hiking program.

Even as we say goodbye to Amy, we look forward to meeting the new AmeriCorps member who will join us in September for the coming year. ■



Friends' volunteers at Bridal Veil in July loaded six dump trucks with invasive blackberry vines. photo: Betsy Toll

Late Season Hiking Series

Cooler weather and fall colors combine to create a wonderful autumn experience in the Columbia Gorge. For further hike details, including second meeting places, check our website at www.gorgefriends.org, or call 503-241-3762 x107 to request a flyer.



photo: Matt Courtney

SEPTEMBER 14 - COYOTE WALL, Washington Hike with Bev Linde along the spectacular basalt Coyote Wall east of Bingen. Hike 6.5 miles w/1800-ft gain. 1st meeting place: 7:45 AM at Gateway.

SEPTEMBER 20 - MOONLIGHT WALK TO ANGELS REST, Oregon Join Bergefreunde Ski Club leader Captain Bob Lubach on a full moon journey past waterfalls to Angels Rest. Bring a flashlight. Hike 7 miles w/1650-ft gain. **ONLY meeting place:** 6:00 PM under the Travel America sign at I-84 Troutdale Exit 17.

SEPTEMBER 2 - WYGANT MEADOWS, Oregon Climb Chetwoot Trail with Trails Club hiker Heather Rosenwinkel to gorgeous views from Wygant Meadows. Hike 6 miles w/1800-ft gain. 1st meeting place: 8:00 AM at Gateway.

SEPTEMBER 28 - TRIPLE FALLS-ONEONTA LOOP, Oregon Enjoy a classic Gorge waterfall hike with Friends' Board member Ken Denis. Hike 4.5 miles w/550-ft gain. Possibly extend to Elowah Falls, 3 miles, 600-ft gain. 1st meeting place: 8:00 AM at Gateway.

OCTOBER 5 - MOSIER CREEK TO TWIN TUNNELS, Oregon Check out the Mosier Creek Waterfall at Pocket Park and the new trail to the Historic Highway with hike leader Gay Jervey. Hike 6 miles w/1000-ft gain. **ONLY meeting place:** 10:00 AM at Fairy Dell Store in Mosier. Park in gravel lot across from the store (I-84 East Exit 69, curve left into Mosier, passing the school. Fairy Dell Store is on the right).

OCTOBER 12 - INDIAN HEAD AND LITTLE BEACON ROCK VIEWPOINTS, Washington Join Mazamas hike leader Roy Stout on an adventure to two fantastic viewpoints. Ascend Indian Head in High Valley, then drive to Little Beacon Rock trailhead to hike to another sensational view. Indian Head, hike 2 miles w/1200-ft gain. Little Beacon Rock, hike 3 miles w/500-ft gain. **ONLY meeting place:** 9:00 AM at Gateway.

OCTOBER 19 - DALLES MOUNTAIN RANCH, Washington Hike with Gorge enthusiast Ken Bailey through oak and pine groves high in the eastern end of the Gorge. Hike 6 miles w/1500-ft gain. 1st meeting place: 8:00 AM at Gateway.



Conservation and Legal Program Highlights

In the Courts and in the Field...

By Nathan Baker, Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org

FERC Staff Endorses Removal of Condit Dam

On June 28, the staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued its final environmental impact statement regarding Pacificorp's proposal to remove Condit Dam from the Lower White Salmon River. The FERC staff unequivocally endorsed dam removal because it "would provide numerous fishery, wildlife, recreational, and aesthetic benefits expedi-

proposal, Condit will be the largest dam removed in U.S. history. If FERC forces Pacificorp to keep the dam in place and install required fish ladders, the cost of operating the dam would be at least two times the value of the power produced. ■

Friends Succeeds in Cluster Development Cases

Two of Friends' legal cases involving cluster developments have recently been resolved in Friends' favor. Friends settled one case with the landowners in a "win-win" resolution that will protect forest resources. In the other case, Friends prevailed in a hearing before the Columbia River Gorge Commission and the cluster development was denied.

Cluster developments are groups of dwellings clustered together on a small portion of a tract of land, leaving the remainder of the tract protected from development. If it is

developers to regard clusters as a tool to maximize development potential at the expense of Gorge resources. This trend has been most evident in Skamania County, where planners have routinely approved unlawful developments.

In the first cluster case, Skamania County approved a cluster development despite the applicants' failure to offer special benefits to the parcel's forestland not attainable through conventional development. Friends appealed to the Columbia River Gorge Commission.

While the matter was pending before the Gorge Commission, the landowners agreed to attach restrictions to their deeds to protect forest resources on their undeveloped land. The restrictions substantially limit the size of future clearcuts, preserve trees for wildlife, and protect against soil disturbance. In exchange for these protections, Friends withdrew the appeal on January 15.

The second case involved a proposed "cluster" that scattered one existing house, one proposed house, and one proposed bonus house into distant corners of a parcel. The bonus house was more than a quarter-mile away from the others. Skamania County approved the unlawful development and even allowed the developer to write his own "staff report" and conditions of approval for the land use decision.

Friends joined several neighboring property owners in appealing the county's decision to the Gorge Commission. At the hearing, the Gorge Commission held in Friends' favor and reversed the decision.

(continued on page 5)



Removal of Condit Dam will allow salmon and steelhead to access 18 miles of river habitat that has been blocked for 90 years.

photo: Michael Lang

tiously and in a cost-effective manner."

Pacificorp's dam-removal proposal stems from a 1999 settlement agreement with Friends and 20 other environmental groups, Indian tribes, and government agencies. If the FERC commissioners approve the

clearly demonstrated that the proposed cluster will offer clear advantages—such as added scenic or natural resource protection—over conventional development, the developer is awarded "bonus houses" and small lots.

Unfortunately, the lure of bonus houses sometimes causes

THE LEWIS & CLARK LANDSCAPES PROJECT

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

Gorge Land Acquisition Successes and Setbacks

The Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project has experienced great successes and some setbacks in recent months. The Forest Service has made great strides in purchasing sensitive land throughout the Gorge, acquiring more than 1,000 acres since October 2000 (including Chenoweth Table, pictured below).

In addition, the \$10 million request for Gorge land acquisition for the coming year remains intact following the Senate and House Appropriation committee meetings. Senator Patty Murray (WA) was key in moving the request through the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Unfortunately, the Forest Service has pulled all current, unobligated land-acquisition dollars around the country into a funding pool for fire-

fighting cost overruns. Funds removed from the National Scenic Area's land acquisition program total just over \$3 million. These dollars are expected to be returned if unused or replenished in the next fiscal year, but this will undoubtedly slow the momentum of land-acquisition activities in the Gorge.

What You Can Do:

Contact your elected officials and ask them to support the \$10 million funding for Gorge land acquisition program. Sample letters, contact information, maps and photos of the Lewis & Clark Landscapes are available at www.lewisandclarklandscapes.org

For more information, contact Tiffany Kenslow at 541-386-5268 or tiffany@gorgefriends.org. ■



A full-color Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project booklet, with photographs of key landscapes, a map and legend, and information about the program, is available on request. To receive a copy of this 16-page booklet, contact Tiffany Newton at 541-386-5268, or e-mail tiffany@gorgefriends.org.

Additional Supporters of the Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project. For a complete list check www.lewisandclarklandscapes.org.

- Columbia Riverkeeper
- Endless River Productions
- Friends of Forest Park
- Friends of the White Salmon River
- Gorge Trust
- Native Plant Society of the Mid Columbia
- Native Plant Society of Oregon
- Summit Projects
- Vancouver Audubon Society
- Wasco County Historical Society

Conservation and Legal Program Highlights Friends Succeeds in Cluster...

(continued from page 4)

In its May 8 written order, the Gorge Commission held that the proposal “runs counter to the very idea of a cluster development” and that by allowing the developer to write his own land use decision, Skamania County had “abdicated its responsibility to independently examine” whether the development was lawful.

Friends’ successful appeals in these and other cluster development cases have helped raise awareness about how cluster developments that are not thoughtfully planned by developers and carefully reviewed by the counties will harm sensitive resources such as wildlife habitat, scenic views, native plants, and cultural resource sites. ■



Aerial view and conceptual trail design for Chenoweth Table, recently purchased by the Forest Service. To the right is the city of The Dalles.

photo courtesy of Wasco County Planning Department



Funding Gorge Protection

Development Director's Report

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

Legacy Gift

Longtime Friends member Michael Dale spent a great deal of time hiking throughout the Gorge until he passed away last autumn. To honor his life, his estate has made a \$75,000 gift to Friends in his memory.

Michael's sister and brother-in-law, Priscilla and Tom Turner, made the decision to arrange this contribution because of Michael's abiding love of the Gorge. The Turners arranged for half of the gift from Michael's estate to be directed to Friends' Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project, with the balance to be designated to Friends' endowment fund.

We extend our sincere condolences to the Turner family for the loss of their brother and friend. Their generous gift will create a lasting tribute to Michael Dale, who lived his life simply and with a great love for the Columbia River Gorge. ■



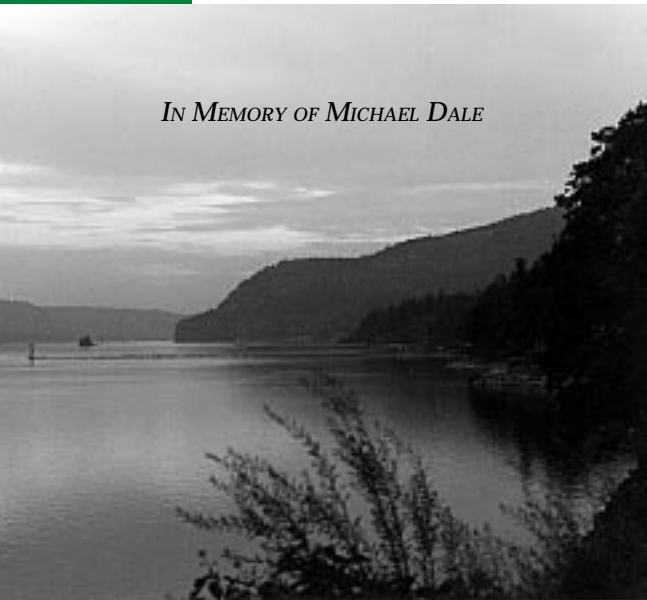
Live music, shady trees and breezes combined to delight guests at Friends' annual picnic, held this year in Mosier.
photo: Ken Denis

21st Annual Summer Picnic Hits the Spot

Friends' summer picnic keeps getting better every year. On July 21, more than 100 adults and kids gathered at the Mosier home of David and LaVonne Povey for a leisurely summer afternoon. Long-time members and new friends of Friends brought wonderful potluck dishes and summer enthusiasm to share.

Set in the middle of a producing cherry orchard, the Poveys' grounds were the perfect spot for swimming and tossing horseshoes. We all shared a great lunch and enjoyed live bluegrass music. A hike with Friends Founder Nancy Russell to the newly dedicated Mosier Pocket Park capped the afternoon. ■

IN MEMORY OF MICHAEL DALE



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! ■

Scenic Area at Risk...

(continued from page 1)

the risk to the landscape as a whole?" Implementation of the Management Plan for the Gorge is mostly done on a piecemeal basis, one development at a time.

For example, when new development is approved in the Scenic Area, conditions are applied to ensure that it does not noticeably contrast with the surrounding landscape. This standard is called "visual subordination." But what happens when 10, 20, or 100 new buildings are constructed in a landscape? Even with perfect compliance, at some point the natural features of the landscape give way and the cumulative effects of development become the dominant feature. This situation is already occurring with several Gorge landscapes.

Cumulative effects ignored

The National Scenic Area requires protection of scenic landscapes from cumulative adverse effects, yet the Gorge Commission has failed to monitor the cumulative effect of development to determine whether the current rules are fulfilling the purposes of the National Scenic Area Act.

Now the Commission is preparing to weaken the Management Plan before analyzing the cumulative impacts of development, logging, and mining on the Columbia Gorge.

Because of this reckless path, Friends of the Columbia Gorge has requested the involvement of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), long-time supporters of Gorge protection. The Oregon Chapter of ASLA has formed a committee to evaluate the impacts of development on scenic landscapes in the Gorge and make recommendations to the Gorge Commission.

Experts find that Gorge landscapes are endangered

This July, the ASLA committee conducted visits to six key viewing areas in the Gorge to assess effects of development. The committee found that several public viewing areas are already at or exceeding the point where human development is the dominant feature. The committee reached the following consensus:

- Certain scenic landscapes in the Gorge are already at risk.
- Under the current rules, scenic resources in the Gorge will be adversely affected.
- The Commission's proposed Management Plan revisions will increase the risk to scenic landscapes.

The ASLA committee is recommending more protective measures, including the removal of a loophole that allows development to degrade the scenic beauty of the Gorge, stricter standards for endangered landscapes, monitoring of cumulative impacts of development, and the addition of several new key viewing areas.

Write to the Gorge Commission today!

Send a personalized letter addressing these points:

- Strengthen scenic protections in the Management Plan.
- Remove the policy that allows approval of new development even when it mars scenic beauty.
- Increase the number of key viewing areas.
- Require screening of new development so that it is not visually evident.

Address letters to:
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E-mail: crgc@gorgenet.com

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* Gorge residents

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Know Your Gorge Autumn Harvests in the Gorge

The Columbia River Gorge has been home to small farms and productive orchards for more than 150 years. Side roads winding up from both sides of the river are dotted with countless family farms and “u-pick” orchards producing abundant fruits and vegetables.

Plump cherries ripen in late June, while mid-summer offers apricots, berries, nectarines and peaches. Autumn brings wonderful apple and pear-picking opportunities, along with a cornucopia of vegetable harvests. Vineyards in the Columbia Gorge are home to numerous small fine wineries.

The global economy challenges local growers to compete with produce shipped to the United States from vast factory farms thousands of miles away. Increasing numbers of local farmers and orchardists are meeting that challenge by selling their fresh produce and farm products directly to visitors, neighbors, and friends. Many growers and family farms in the Gorge are proud to employ organic and sustainable agricultural practices.

An autumn drive through the Gorge offers a chance to purchase farm-fresh produce, fruits, jams, ciders, pies, and other delights directly from the farmers and lands that produce them. And weekly farmer’s markets in Hood River on Saturdays and White Salmon on Sundays give visitors the opportunity to shop from a variety of growers in a relaxed, congenial atmosphere.

Further information on some of the Hood River Valley growers can be found at www.hoodriverfruitloop.com. ■