

NEWS RELEASE

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Columbia River Gorge Commission Selects New Executive Director

Darren Nichols has been selected to serve as the Columbia River Gorge Commission's Executive Director. Nichols comes to the Commission from Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development with a solid background in planning, management and state legislative experience.

Gorge Commission Chair Joyce Reinig said, "The competition for the position was particularly strong with over 70 applicants but we believe Darren brings the right balance of personality, experience and qualifications to the Commission."

Nichols brings energetic leadership and a wide range of land use and development experience to his new role. He has worked on urban growth management, community development, national wildlife policy and renewable energy issues. Nichols recently worked with the President's Council on Environmental Quality in Washington D.C. and he is completing a law degree at Lewis & Clark Law School. He also holds a Master's degree in planning and has 10 years of experience as a construction contractor.

Nichols described the Columbia Gorge as "one of America's greatest treasures." He has a deep respect for the Commission and its staff and is thrilled to work with them on short and long-term opportunities. "We are in the midst of some fiscal challenges but this is the Columbia River Gorge *National Scenic Area*," he emphasized. "Working with our partners, we can protect this national asset *and* help our communities invest in a vibrant future."

The Commission has been working to fill the position since Jill Arens announced her resignation in October. Arens will continue to serve as Director through the end of January 2012.

Gorge Commission Chair Joyce Reinig praised Arens performance "as a highly effective and collaborative leader who managed the agency through very challenging policy issues and fiscal situations. Her calm demeanor and balanced approach to complex problems has been indispensable to the Commission and she will be greatly missed."

Thirteen members comprise the Columbia River Gorge Commission. The six Gorge counties each appoint one member, the governors of Oregon and Washington each appoint three members. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture appoints one non-voting member. More information on the Gorge Commission is available on the web at www.GorgeCommission.org.

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