RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE COMMISSION SEEKING TO PROTECT THE OUTSTANDING SCENIC, NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND RECREATION RESOURCES OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA, AND SEEKING TO PROTECT THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND ECONOMY OF GORGE RESIDENTS, VISITORS, AND COMMUNITIES FROM THE IMPACTS OF INCREASING RAIL TRANSPORT, INCLUDING THE TRANSPORT OF COAL AND OIL THROUGH THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE.

WHEREAS, the Columbia River Gorge is a national treasure that contains world-class scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources and draws visitors from around the world; and

WHEREAS, sacred cultural resources along the Columbia River Gorge have been kept and protected since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is a uniquely vulnerable landscape due to its steep topography, varied landscapes, unique concentration of scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources, and increasingly evident impacts of climate change, invasive species and intense wildfires; and

WHEREAS, Oregon and Washington, and the United States Congress committed to protect, enhance and support the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area with a unique framework of local, state, and federal laws; and

WHEREAS, the continued protection of the Columbia River Gorge cannot effectively be accomplished by a single state or community acting alone; and

WHEREAS, the Columbia River Gorge Commission is committed to protect the most sensitive portions of the National Scenic Area from the cumulative effects of human use and development; and

WHEREAS, the Columbia River Gorge contains two major railways and the only sea-level rail route through the Cascade Mountains; and

WHEREAS, communities across the United States and Canada have recently experienced devastating tragedies resulting from train derailments, oil spills, explosive fires, and other tragic incidents involving the shipment of crude oil; and

WHEREAS, Gorge communities are individually and collectively unprepared to respond to a train derailment, or a spill of coal, oil or other hazardous materials in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area; and

WHEREAS, a coal or oil spill or a tank car explosion would impact both sides of the Columbia River, Gorge communities are willing to work together to protect their regional community; and

WHEREAS, Gorge industries have expressed specific concerns about the threat of a derailment or fire to human lives, private property and economic assets on both sides of the Columbia River; and

WHEREAS, the introduction of fugitive hazardous materials into the National Scenic Area by any means or from any source is a threat to the world-class resources, quality of life, public health and safety, and the economic stability of the Gorge community; and

WHEREAS, Washington and Oregon agencies are currently reviewing multiple proposals to site large-scale coal and oil transportation facilities in the Northwest that would significantly increase the volume of rail traffic in the National Scenic Area; and

WHEREAS, the proposed developments could increase the volume of oil transported through the Gorge to hundreds of thousands of barrels of crude oil daily, thereby significantly raising the risk of one or more catastrophic incidents; and

WHEREAS, the Columbia River Gorge Commission, acting in its capacity as a bi-state policy-making body for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, is authorized to develop, adopt and implement standards for protecting the resources and assets of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area; and

WHEREAS, the Columbia River Gorge Commission has unanimously agreed that coal and oil transport through the Columbia River Gorge present unacceptable risks to Gorge resources and threaten the health, safety and economy of Gorge communities;

NOW THEREFORE THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE COMMISSION, AN INTERSTATE COMPACT AGENCY WITH UNIQUE AUTHORITIES IN THE STATES OF OREGON AND WASHINGTON, HEREBY RESOLVES:

1. The Gorge Commission resolves to fully uphold its responsibility to ensure the consistent protection and enhancement of Gorge resources, and resolves to support and protect the economy of the Gorge from potentially devastating impacts from the transport of coal and oil.

2. The Gorge Commission strongly urges both Governors to use the powers of each state and the authorities in the National Scenic Area Act to impose a moratorium on all new fossil fuel transport through the Gorge until both states, the Commission, and all Gorge communities have jointly completed a comprehensive risk assessment and implemented a regional plan to avoid, minimize, and mitigate risks from fossil fuel transport through the Gorge.

3. The Gorge Commission strongly urges both Governors and all state agencies of Oregon and Washington, to carry out their respective functions and responsibilities in accordance with the Gorge Compact (ORS 196.150 and RCW 43.97.015), including the specific responsibilities under ORS 196.155, RCW 43.97.025, and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act.

4. The Gorge Commission strongly urges the United States Department of Transportation to significantly raise the safety and operational standards for rail cars and other commercial transport vessels to avoid and minimize the risks of hazardous materials transported through the Gorge and across the continent.

5. The Gorge Commission strongly urges Oregon and Washington to work with the Commission to explore and fully implement the authorities under the Gorge Compact and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act.

6. The Gorge Commission strongly urges Oregon and Washington to use mandatory protection standards in the National Scenic Area Act, the Gorge Compact and the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, as those standards are applied by the Gorge Commission and the United States Forest Service, to evaluate the effects of any new development or transportation proposal on or in the National Scenic Area.

7. The Gorge Commission is committed to fully implement the purposes of the National Scenic Area Act, including developing planning, policy and management tools to ensure that our communities, resources and environment are healthy, safe and protected now and for future generations.

8. To ensure the full and timely implementation of this Resolution, the Gorge Commission respectfully requests that the offices of the Governors of Oregon and Washington, and appropriate state agencies, meet with the Commission and its staff not later than September 30, 2014, to discuss and determine appropriate State and Commission actions.

9. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon passage by a vote of the Commission and upon signature of this document by the Chair or his appointed designee.

Dated and signed this 17TH day of JULY, 2014.

Jim Middaugh, Commission Chair – Multnomah County

Lynn Burditt, USDA – US Forest Service

Janet Wainwright, Vice Chair, Washington

Gorham Blaine, Hood River County

Damon Webster, Clark County

Rodger Nichols, Wasco County

Keith Chamberlain, Skamania County

Antone Minthorn, Oregon

Carl McNew, Klickitat County

Bowen Blair, Jr., Oregon

Hon. Don Bonker, Washington

Dan Ericksen, Oregon

Lorrie DeKay, Washington