



TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director

DATE: December 11, 2018

SUBJECT: **INFORMATION ITEM:** Executive Director's Report for November-December, 2018

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**Annual Summit with Four Treaty Tribes and the Gorge Commission:**

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation co-hosted the annual meeting between the four treaty tribes and the Gorge Commission on October 31, 2018. CTUIR and Gorge Commission staff worked closely to develop the agenda. The main topic was the "Gorge 2020" Management Plan review and update process, with presentations on first foods and the impact of climate change on human health as well as land and water resources. The meeting was open to the public.

**Annual Financial Audit:**

The FY 18 audit was just completed by Washington State Auditor's office. The Gorge Commission received a clean audit with no findings or notes.

**Oregon Governor's Recommended Budget:**

Oregon Governor Kate Brown reviewed the Gorge Commission's budget and recommended three of the four Policy Option Packages proposed for the 2019-21 biennium

2019-21 Current Service Level (adjusted for inflation): **\$1,032,043** -

Three Policy Option Packages (New VSI-Compliance Planner/New Database/Computer upgrades): **\$ 334,813**-

Total 2019-21 Governor Brown's Recommended Budget: **\$ 1,366,856**

Washington Governor Jay Inslee's recommended budget is scheduled to be sent to agencies on December 20, 2018. The final budget for the Gorge Commission will be decided by June 30, 2019 after legislative review in both states.

**Staffing Update:**

**Jessica Gist Olson**, Sr. Natural Resources and Land Use Planner, will be leaving the Commission in January 2019 as full-time staff but will continue working on "Gorge 2020" part-time on contract

through June 30, 2019. We greatly appreciate Jessica's excellent work over the past 2.5 years in launching and guiding the Gorge Commission's "Gorge 2020" management plan public and agency review process, convening the Natural Resources Technical Team, and leading the effort with the inventory, assessment and text revisions. She will focus her time in the next few months on drafting revisions and presenting them for Gorge Commission review and approval in late spring/early summer 2019. The Gorge Commission is planning to recruit for a new planner in spring 2019. With Jessica's departure we will have one full time NSA land use planner, one full time planner for Klickitat County funded through a grant from Department of Commerce/Klickitat County, and a PSU Hatfield Public Service Fellow until a new full-time land use planner can be hired.

### **National Scenic Area Census:**

The recently completed and approved legal description for the exterior boundary of the National Scenic Area will be shared with the U.S. Census Bureau for incorporation into the upcoming decennial census in 2020. This will enable us to easily determine population statistics and demographics specific to the National Scenic Area.

### **Gorge 2020 Management Plan Update:**

At the December 11, 2018 Gorge Commission meeting, Gorge Commission and Forest Service staff will present a status update on the working groups, technical teams and workshops held to engage experts and the public in the Gorge 2020 process. Four "Urban Area Boundaries" public workshops have been held with presentations from state agencies, local government and the Friends of the Gorge to discuss policy options. The "Natural Resources Technical Team", with representatives from federal, state and local agencies, has met in person and on conference calls seven times since summer 2018. The Economic Vitality Work Group, with 28 representatives of Gorge businesses, ports, economic development entities and conservation groups, has met six times since April and will be presenting an update at the February 2019 Commission meeting. The Land Uses and Development Review, Recreation Resources, and Scenic Resources experts are beginning their work in December 2018 and updates will be provided on these topics in early-mid 2019.

### **Legal Issues:**

On November 13, 2018, BNSF Railway Company sued Clark County seeking a declaration from the Court that the National Scenic Area development standards do not apply to its double tracking construction project in Clark County, which it started this summer without National Scenic Area approval. Commission staff and Clark County had been meeting with BNSF to discuss BNSF submitting an application when BNSF filed suit. Using my authority in the bylaws, I authorized the Commission to intervene in the litigation, which needed to be done before I could discuss it with you at a Commission meeting. I spoke to the Chair and several commissioners and received encouragement to intervene. On my behalf, Jeff sent you copies of the litigation. If you have questions, please speak directly with Jeff.

On November 27, 2018, Friends of the Columbia Gorge sent two notices of intent to sue, which is the first step in bringing a lawsuit. Jeff sent you copies of the notices. If you have questions about them, please speak directly with Jeff.