



MEMORANDUM

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission
FROM: Aiden Forsi, Land Use Planner and Risk Officer
DATE: September 13, 2022
RE: **Discussion Item:** 2022 Updates to Agency Risk Register

Background

The Gorge Commission is required to submit a risk register annually as part of our state audits in Oregon and Washington. The risk register identifies and describes the risks inherent the Commission's work, how the Commission has addressed those risks, what gaps remain, and how the Commission intends to further reduce the likelihood or impact of those risks in the future. By conducting this risk assessment, the Commission works towards increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the agency. The Commission adopted the first risk register at its December 12, 2019 meeting. Updates have been made annually as existing risks are addressed, and as new risks are identified. The latest risk register, submitted on September 1, 2022, is attached to this staff report.

Updates to Existing Risks in 2022 Risk Register

Generally, staff either retained the existing risk score for identified risks, or increased the likelihood or potential impact of the risk by .01. Risks retained their existing scores when staff controls have continually managed the likelihood or impact of that risk. For example, all of our data is backed up regularly, so the "Backup Data" risk saw no change in score. A .01 increase to a score means that the risk is in the process of being addressed, or has not yet been addressed but is not actively more risky. For example, the highest scored risk is "Database Tracking," despite the considerable amount of work done in the last year to identify solutions that address that risk, because the existing database is still in use.

Many of the unaddressed risks that saw .01 increases to their scores are related to staffing and workflow, and addressing who is doing what work and what happens when they are not able to do that work. (These include "Contingency Planning," "Staff Turnover," and "Office Out of Order" to name a few.) Some risks in this category saw larger increases to their scores, and are discussed in the next paragraph. Overall, this category of risks rose as a priority to be addressed in the immediate future, and is discussed further in "Next Steps."

The risks that saw substantial increased to their scores are listed below. Broadly, these risks are related to the Commission's increased legal load, and to diminished staff capacity at our partner

agencies, namely intermittent promotional details taken by Forest Service staff, who the Commission and the counties rely on for information on protected resources.

- Single Points of Failure
- Partner Delays
- Engaging Four Treaty Tribes
- Work Flow Rate
- Public Records
- Following NSA Act and GC Rules
- Court Decisions

The risks that saw decreases to their scores are listed below. This reflected work conducted in the last year to address those risks, including the establishment of a communications committee, evidence of staff effectiveness throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and progress towards implementation of the VSI program and the DEI Framework.

- Matching Funding in Two Legislatures
- Public Understanding
- DEI (Internal)
- Work From Home
- Site Visits
- Public Communication and Outreach
- Demonstrating Resource Protections
- Contracts for Services

New Risks in 2022 Risk Register

There are several new risks identified in this year's Risk Register. Three newly identified risks scored high, meaning they are more likely to occur and to be more impactful – they are “Increasing Number of Lawsuits,” “Information Accessibility,” and “Timely Updates to Management Plan.” The other identified risks were generally controlled by staff actions, and scored low. Some of the new risks consider the creation and implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan, which the Commission will consider for adoption later this year.

- Increasing Number of Lawsuits
- Information Accessibility
- Timely Updates to Management Plan
- Funding for CCAP
- Staff Capacity to Support CCAP
- CCAP Alignment with Other Agency Policies
- Divergent Implementation of CCAP
- CCAP Implementation Insufficient
- Delays in Implementing CCAP
- CCAP Overly Ambitious
- Effect of Climate Change on Development Patterns
- Project Mismanagement
- GIS Data Management
- Different Sets of Data
- Unresolved Compliance Issues
- Responding to Complaints
- Tracking Legislation and Agency Rulemaking

Next Steps

Many of the existing risks are currently being managed or addressed through our approved work plan. Our administrative, legal, and programmatic capacity is focused on achieving the two purposes of the NSA Act, implementing the Management Plan, and addressing Commission initiatives. Replacing our database, finalizing the Climate Change Action Plan, implementing the VSI Program and the DEI Framework, and ensuring compliance throughout the NSA will further reduce the likelihood and impact of several risks identified in the risk register.

Staff have identified three longstanding risks that it intends to specifically address this year, which are “Contingency Planning,” “Single Points of Failure,” and “Partner Delays.” These risks are central to the “staffing and workflow” category of risks identified above. Contingency Planning is about agency operations in case of extended office closures or critical equipment failures. Single Points of Failure is about identifying work that currently can only be done by one person in our office. Partner Delays is about identifying what work is done outside our office that we rely on to do our work. For each risk, staff intends to list specific risk factors, the potential consequences of not addressing each risk factor, a short-term solution, and a long-term solution.

Developing controls for some of these risks may not require Commission input (for example, identifying staff who can be cross-trained to do other tasks), but others such as budget requests or work plan recommendations will be brought to the Commission at the appropriate times.