

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2022

via Zoom Webinar

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Sondra Clark
Robin Grimwade
Tamara Kaufman
Robert Liberty
Donna Mickley
Carina Miller ~ 8:35 a.m.
Michael Mills
Jim Morgan
Rodger Nichols
Pah-tu Pitt ~ 9:26 a.m.
Dr. Ashley Thompson

COMMISSIONER MEMBERS ABSENT

Jerry Meninick
Amy Weissfeld

STAFF PRESENT

Connie Acker, Administrative Analyst
Aiden Forsi, Land Use Planner
Bryce Guske, Klickitat County Planner
Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Land Use Planner
Jeff Litwak, Legal Counsel
Lisa Naas Cook, VSI Planner
Jessica Olson, Senior Natural Resources Planner
Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director

AUDIENCE PRESENT

Lynn Burditt
Jason Callahan
Keith Cleveland – Hood River County
Jonathan Doherty
Sheila Dooley
Jo Ferreira
Casey Gatz – USDA Forest Service
Kevin Gorman – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Carol Johnson
Andrea Klaas – Port of The Dalles
Ilene Le Vee
Terra Lingley – ODOT
Denise Lopez – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Staci McIntire
Jennifer O'Donnell
Edward Peak

Mary Repar
B Rogers
Tyler Stone – Wasco County
Sofia Urrutia-Lopez – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Janet Wainwright
Douglas Wilson – State of Oregon

Others were present during the meeting.

Call to Order and Roll (8:30 a.m.) Chair Robin Grimwade called the meeting to order, and Connie Acker called roll.

Approval of June 14, 2022, Commission Meeting Minutes (8:31 a.m.) Commissioner Rodger Nichols moved to adopt the June 14, 2022, Minutes, and Commissioner James Morgan seconded. The June 14, 2022, Minutes were approved by a voice vote. Commissioners Sondra Clark and Pah-tu Pitt abstained as they were not in attendance at the June 14th meeting.

Land Acknowledgment (8:32 a.m.) Chair Grimwade read the Land Acknowledgment.

Treaty Tribe Word of the Day: (8:33 a.m.) Commissioner Jerry Meninick was not available to share the Yakama Nation word of the day. Although Commissioner Carina Miller was having connectivity issues, she texted two words to Connie Acker: Shatam which means summer, and Pt’aq pt’ aqni which means July.

Opportunity for Treaty Tribe Nations to Address Commission (8:34 a.m.) As part of the Government-to-Government consultation process, the Commission welcomes input from Treaty Tribe Nations on any issue on the agenda and any other matters. The Treaty Tribe Nations did not offer testimony.

Opportunity for Public Comment on items related to the National Scenic Area not on the Agenda* (8:34 a.m.)

- **Mary Repar** – Read a quote from Floyd Red Crow Westerman borrowed from All Natives United (Attachment A)

Executive Director’s Report (8:39 a.m.)

Prior to commencing with the Executive Director’s Report, Wolniakowski introduced former Columbia River Gorge Commission Executive Director Jonathan Doherty who was visiting White Salmon from the East Coast. Doherty served as the Commission’s Executive Director for seven years from 1992 to 1999.

Doherty expressed his gratitude for the work of previous and current Gorge Commission staff and Commissioners in protecting the Gorge. Doherty went on to share highlights of his tenure at the Gorge Commission during a very controversial time. Doherty stated that as time has passed, he believes more people have realized the value of protecting the Gorge and have adjusted to the dramatic change that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Litwak shared that Doherty was instrumental in the implementation of county ordinances, which was a long, hard effort.

Wolniakowski thanked Doherty for his service to the Gorge Commission.

Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director, and staff provided updates on Commission priorities:

- **Access Database Replacement Project** – Wolniakowski reported that Mike Schrankel is currently at the ESRI Conference in San Diego learning about the latest GIS opportunities. A quality assurance (QA) contractor was hired to perform quality assurance on all the deliverables from Phase 1. Allen Mills, CEO of Bluecrane, Inc., started work the last week of June and will continue through August when the QA deliverables are completed. Bluecrane has already provided staff and ESA Sitka with a draft QA assessment for review. The final QA assessment report will be uploaded to the OCIO Project Dashboard and provided to the Executive Steering Committee and Commissioners.
- **Klickitat County Compliance Study Follow-up** – After presenting the Klickitat County Compliance Study at the June 2022 Commission meeting, Chair Grimwade asked staff to develop follow-up steps to move forward. Wolniakowski stated that planners Aiden Forsi and Bryce Guske worked with her to compile a list of steps. (Attachment B)

Commissioner Comments and Questions:

Liberty: Asked whether this was the end of the pilot project or whether this was another interim report. Also requested data gathered during the development of the report. Asked if Item 7 is a way of trying to do a sample over a larger area within the Gorge outside Klickitat County.

Wolniakowski: Raw data collected by Forsi will be shared with those Commissioners requesting the data. Commissioners Liberty and Nichols requested the data.

Liberty: Curious to get staff recommendations for the application of this pilot project to the other five counties.

Wolniakowski: As directed in Step 3, the report will be shared with the other county planning directors.

Liberty: The counties are administering the Plan. The counties will either say they are doing a great job, or they don't have the ability to enforce, which is what they have said in the past. There needs to be an approach to use the pilot project to evaluate compliance more generally in the Gorge.

Wolniakowski: After sharing the report with the other counties during the Planning Directors meeting, staff will provide the Commission with recommendations on how to move forward.

Liberty: Asked if Item 7 was applicable to the other five counties.

Wolniakowski: The list was specifically for Klickitat County which the Commission has control over.

Liberty: Expects a report on moving forward with the other counties after the Planning Directors meeting.

Nichols: Also expressed that Item 7 was not clear whether it was specific to Klickitat County. As a fairness issue, other counties should be sampled as well. Perhaps just a couple of random samples from each county.

USDA Forest Service NSA Manager's Report (9:05 a.m.) USDA Forest Service National Scenic Area Manager Donna Mickley and Casey Gatz provided updates on Forest Service activities in the National Scenic Area:

Commissioner Mickley:

- Fire season has officially arrived in the Gorge. The Forest Service responded to three fires on July 11, 2022. All were contained at 1½ acres or less. The wet spring somewhat delayed the

fire season, but the wet weather also increased the fuels, and those fuels will be drying out and will accelerate the risk of fire danger.

Casey Gatz:

- **Accelerated Fuel Reduction** – The partnerships with Oregon and Washington continue on fuel reduction.
- **Landscape Settings Mapping** – Finalizing scenic integrity mapping. This effort was started prior to Covid and Covid delayed the project. The effort looked at all of the landscape settings and used the newly revised landscape setting descriptions in the revised Management Plan. The project assessed a value of very high, high, moderate, or low on a parcel-by-parcel basis. That mapping effort will be shared with the Commission in the future. Twenty-two percent of the scenic area is within urban areas or other non-regulated lands. The remaining lands are either at a very high or high assessment, which means that the land is unaltered or appears unaltered. This tells us that in many places, we are doing a good job of meeting the landscape settings through development reviews and conditions applied. Six percent is moderate and 5% is low.

Commissioner Comments and Questions:

Nichols: Have you found that the new definitions caused movement from one landscape setting to another?

Gatz: The revised Management Plan provided clear direction on what was meeting a landscape setting and what was not.

Nichols: Asked for the location of current fuel reduction work.

Gatz: The primary focus is on national forest system lands, but we have started looking at a county-by-county approach to prioritize engagement. The current priority is in Klickitat County. After that eastern Hood River County and Wasco County, and then moving on to Skamania County.

Clark: Asked about the causes of the recent fires in the Gorge.

Mickley: The first two were on the Coyote Wall area and are under investigation. The third fire was a fully engulfed semi-trailer on Interstate 84 which then spread to fire along the highway.

Liberty: Asked again about red flag closures within the National Scenic Area.

Mickley: This is not a process that the Forest Service is considering pursuing. Any closure would require a large commitment and coordination with state parks, landowners, counties, cities, etc. Closures are not meaningful unless you can enforce them.

Liberty: Believe that this would be a worthwhile effort. Dread what will happen if there is another incident during a red flag day that the public regard as preventable because governmental stakeholders could not agree on a protocol.

Grimwade: Recommended that Commissioner Mickley, Wolniakowski, and he schedule a meeting in the next couple of weeks to try to better understand the issue and strategize what is possible.

Information Item*: Draft Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP): (9:25 a.m.) Jessica Olson, Sr. Natural Resources Planner, and Lisa Naas Cook, VSI Planner, presented an overview of the Draft Climate Change Action Plan, followed by an opportunity for public comment during the session. The deadline for public comment on the Draft Action Plan has been extended through August 9, 2022. Written comments may be submitted to ClimateAction@gorgecommission.org. (Attachment C)

Commissioner Questions:

Liberty: Asked for clarification on the description of the action plan as voluntary steps. Are we identifying steps the Commission will take, either through Management Plan amendment or during the next Management Plan update?

Olson: Yes, the action plan lays the groundwork for policy and directs staff to perform the research to be able to come to the Commission with recommendations.

Thompson: Asked whether staff feels that they have received good comments from diverse stakeholders in the community. Are we reaching out to the greatest number of people we can or are we getting comments from the usual suspects?

Olson: Staff has received comments from both – the usual commenters and new stakeholders. The longer comment period has allowed staff to build an outreach strategy that will continue throughout the life of the action plan.

Naas Cook: Staff views this as an ongoing process and not limited at all to the confines of the 90-day comment period. The conversations will continue, especially as staff works with others to start implementing the plan.

Thompson: Are there demographics or folks you think you are missing? Has there been outreach to young people in the community who are invested in climate change and climate change research? Has staff reached out to older folks or other groups that have been missing in the past?

Naas Cook: There is always more that can be done. Staff has had conversations with the Columbia Gorge Action Network and a request by a student in The Dalles who is writing a paper. Staff has included exploring what a forum would look like in the action plan which would provide ongoing feedback and implementation of the plan.

Grimwade: During various discussions with agencies, what percentage of those have given a clear indication that they have developed and implemented a plan or have yet to start?

Olson: Everyone is on a bit of a different path. Each is considering developing and implementing plans in terms of their own missions and agency efforts.

Grimwade: From the agencies that are involved in natural and cultural resource protection along the Columbia, are there any fundamental differences in their proposed actions or strategies that give rise to traditional risks and subsequently diminish the ability of other agencies to address climate change from an adaptation, mitigation perspective?

Naas Cook: This is foundational to our approach. We are looking at what is out there and considering plans that have been in existence for a while and those that are emerging.

Opportunity for Public Comment on the Draft Climate Change Action Plan:

- **Janet Wainwright**

- Suggested that staff review article focused on First Foods in Seattle Times. Staff provided this article link later in the meeting: <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/first-foods-how-native-people-are-preserving-the-natural-nourishment-of-the-pacific-northwest/?amp=1>
- Current language for policy to protect high-quality oak habitat is passive; suggested changing language from “Consider policies” to “Propose policies.”

- **Mary Repar**

- Consider a list of species and conditions that trigger Commission action.
- Gorge Commission must work with regional partners; climate change is a global issue.
- Population and development are dangerous drivers of climate change; not a large discussion of these in the CCAP.
- Need to discuss how the Gorge Commission will regulate the policy options that are generated through the CCAP.
- Work with counties to focus on carbon sequestration on county forests.
- Do not want fire risk to be a driver for more timber harvest.
- Believe that the Goldendale Energy Project is a threat to the Columbia River. Urged the Commission to look at this project and how it impacts the National Scenic Area.

- **Sheila Dooley**
 - Support action in Draft CCAP regarding oak habitat.
 - Support goals and strategies to reduce fire risk, including restrictions on new development in certain areas.
 - Concerned with fuels reduction work performed improperly.
 - Increased stream buffers are needed to ensure salmon and orca whale survival.
 - Wetlands actions in the Draft CCAP are much needed, and wetland buffers need to be protected to protect species such as Western Pond Turtles.

- **Ilene Le Vee**

Klickitat County has always been a natural resource-based economy. Mentioned support for Mary Repar’s comments today. Need to be able to plan and mitigate for changing conditions.

Commission Discussion

Nichols: Expressed appreciation for Mary Repar’s commitment and responded to her comment.

Olson: Staff has heard feedback that the draft CCAP should better connect the influence that increasing population and increasing visitation can have on resources in the NSA. In revising the draft, staff is reviewing how we characterize increased visitation as a non-climate stressor that exacerbates climate change effects. There we may add actions in the revised Action Plan that recognize this trend and specify how we will ensure resources are protected.

Liberty: Mentioned that ODOT is contributing to emissions in some of their work. Suggested that staff look at California Air Resources Board as a leadership example.

BREAK - (10:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.)

Work Session:* Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Draft Framework: (10:30 a.m.) Joanna Kaiserman, Sr. Land Use Planner, provided an overview of the Gorge Commission’s work on DEI and the development of a plan for internal operations and external outreach opportunities to diverse communities in the NSA. (Attachments D and E)

Commissioner Comments and Questions:

Nichols: Appreciate the work but it is sad that we must go through this process when in a very civilized civilization it would be automatic – we would be doing this without even thinking about it.

Mills: Commended staff for the volume of work addressing this critical issue. One of the most important things we need to do before we can proceed which is outlined on the final two pages of the report – is building trust and relationships. Commissioner Mills shared excerpts from the Call to Action from EcoTrust.

Thompson: Grateful that racial equity issues are being highlighted. All of this is intersectional. As we are thinking about DEI, we need to think about socio-economic equity, disability equity, and LGBTQ+ equity as we explore how the Commission can become a more equitable institution within the Gorge. Socio-economic inequity in the Gorge comes to my attention every day.

Kaufman: Appreciate staff’s work. Want to echo what Commissioner Thompson said in that the socio-economic factor, the human factor, of what is happening in the Gorge is very important. This intersects with the National Scenic Area Act and the purposes of the Act and the grand experiment

that is the National Scenic Area. We need to make sure we are taking care of our resources and also caring for the people who live in the Gorge.

Pitt: Echo what others have said including the intersectional piece. When talking about educational opportunities, no-cost training is an issue. Is that putting a burden on the communities we are working with?

Liberty:

- Observation: High amenity areas attract high-income visitors and residents. There will be more and more pressure from people with wealth and resources to live in the Gorge and make use of the Gorge. This is a challenge shared with many other areas. Urge staff to see what other areas have done to address this concern.
- If we want to engage people, we need to provide them with an opportunity to understand the work that is done by the Commission. This will increase the value of the contribution they make.
- Other high amenity areas have developed a more varied economy. Is there anything we can do to leverage the amenity attraction with the kinds of jobs that build sustainability and equity at the same time? This brings the first and second purposes of the Act together.

Morgan: The third category of the framework mentions the integration of the Management Plan review with DEI and the Climate Change Action Plan. Is this something that is an overriding framework for both plans? Can we make it clear to everyone that this is an ongoing process and that stakeholders will have input along the way?

Kaiserman: We want to make it clear to everyone that we are seeking public comment and input on any proposed policies that might be added to or that will modify existing policies in the Management Plan relating to DEI and the Climate Change Action Plan.

Opportunity for Public Comment on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Draft Framework:

- **Mary Repar** – Would like to see female equity issues addressed more in-depth.
- **Ilene Le Vee** – Cautioned the Commission against conducting DEI work beyond what is prescribed by state agencies.

Commissioner Comments

Nichols: Thanked Mary Repar for mentioning female equity issues. Although the Commission does not control how banks lend, there are two places where we can make a difference and those are the Oregon and Washington Investment Boards. We need to do some outreach to make sure that everyone in the Gorge knows that these funds are available.

Morgan: Appreciate Commissioner Pitt's comment that we must do the work rather than asking others to do the work. Urged Commissioners to take the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) mentioned in the DEI report. It is important that we do a bit of work and exam ourselves and our own inherent ideas. You may be surprised when you examine how you are a product of a lifetime accumulation of prejudices and conceptions.

Wolniakowski: Appreciate all of the Commissioners' comments. Staff has had a lot of discussions about how to move forward with DEI and we are always reflecting on our roles and responsibilities, not only here at the agency, but as individuals living and working in the Gorge. We are doing everything we can to include those elements in the DEI plan. When we talk about no-cost workshops, right now we do not have funding to pay for any translations or convening of workgroups, however, as a bi-state agency, we are submitting policy option packages to Oregon and decision packages to Washington requesting additional resources in the next biennium to implement the DEI action plan. We will do everything we can when the plan is approved to start the work that fits into our resources.

Grimwade: Suggested that the Commission consider making this a three-year rolling action plan. May be prudent to cherry-pick the best of what Washington and Oregon have to offer and roll that into a single governance structure. DEI is going to be one of the top three critical issues for public, private, and non-profit organizations to deal with in the future. I suggest that DEI warrants elevating the status as an advisory committee to the Commission.

Other Business (11:15 a.m.)

Commissioner Kaufman announced that a family situation has taken her husband to the east coast. Commissioner Kaufman will be joining him in August. The family home will be retained, and residency will be retained in Washington. The Skamania County Commission is looking into whether, given virtual communication, the role as a Skamania County appointee to the Commission is possible. She will keep the Commission informed.

Grimwade: There was a request to consider in-person meetings.

Wolniakowski: We are required to provide hybrid meeting opportunities to provide accessibility to Commission meetings. We have contacted an audio-visual contractor who has agreed to assist us at a possible in-person meeting in September.

Acker: The AV contractor is available on September 13th, but a venue has not yet been secured for the meeting. Inquiries have been made and we are waiting for confirmation from facilities. We will keep the Commission updated.

Executive Session: (11:27 a.m.) Executive Session pursuant to Commission Rule 350-11-006(1)(g) to consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of the Commission regarding current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

Return to Open Session (12:00 p.m.) The Commission returned to open session, and Chair Grimwade announced that no decisions were made during executive session.

Adjourn – (12:01 p.m.)

Meeting Attachments:

- Attachment A – Public Comment – Mary Repar - Quote from Floyd Red Crow Westerman borrowed from All Natives United
- Attachment B – Staff Follow-up Steps for Klickitat County Compliance Report
- Attachment C – Staff Presentation – Climate Change Action Plan Public Overview
- Attachment D – Staff Report – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Draft Framework
- Attachment E – Staff Presentation – DEI Work Session

Approved – 9/13/2022