

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2021
via Zoom Webinar

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Sondra Clark
Lorrie DeKay
Robin Grimwade
Tamara Kaufman
Robert Liberty
Jerry Meninick ~ 8:33 a.m.
Donna Mickley
Carina Miller ~ 8:36 a.m.
Michael Mills
Jim Morgan
Rodger Nichols
Pah-tu Pitt

COMMISSIONER MEMBERS ABSENT

Dr. Ashley Thompson

STAFF PRESENT

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

AUDIENCE PRESENT

Nathan Baker – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Mike Beck – Skamania County
Lynn Burditt – US Forest Service
Brett Carre – US Forest Service
Keith Cleveland – Hood River County
Peter Cornelison – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Sheila Dooley
Casey Gatz – US Forest Service
Laura Gephart – CRITFC
Erwin Haglund
Kelly Howsley Glover – Wasco County
Hannah Joy
Andrea Klaas
Michael Lang – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Ilene Le Vee
Terra Lingley – ODOT

Steve McCoy – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Irene Pasternack
Sue Kuehl Pederson
Alan Peters – Skamania County
B Rogers
Michael Sallis – Clark County Community Development
Tyler Stone – Wasco County
Janet Wainwright
Eric Walker – Hood River County
Amy Weissfeld

Others were present during the meeting.

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

Approval of November 9, 2021, Commission Meeting Minutes (8:33 a.m.) Commissioner Rodger Nichols moved to adopt the November 9, 2021, Minutes and Commissioner Lorrie DeKay seconded. The November 9, 2021, Minutes were approved by a majority voice vote. Robert Liberty abstained.

Land Acknowledgment (8:34 a.m.) The Land Acknowledgment was read by Chair Liberty.

Treaty Tribe Word of the Day (8:35 a.m.) Commissioner Meninick shared the Yakama Nation word of the day, which is *twít'aš*. This is how the Yakama Nation identifies the grizzly bear. Commissioner Meninick shared the legend of this animal being part of the celestial bodies and how *twít'aš* got into the stars. *Twít'aš* was the provider for tribes.

Opportunity for Treaty Tribe Nations to Address Commission (8:40 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 for Items not on the Agenda* (8:40 a.m.) No one offered public comment at this time. Erwin Haglund was expected to call into the meeting and requested time to comment earlier in the week via email. Since this agenda item was sooner than expected, the Commission agreed to allow Mr. Haglund to provide comment when he signed into the meeting closer to the scheduled public comment time of 8:55 a.m.

Tribute to Kate Mills (8:45 a.m.) Krystyna U. Wolniakowski read a written tribute by former Commissioner Bowen Blair in honor of the late Kate Mills. (Attachments A and B)

Executive Director's Report (8:47 a.m.) Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director, and staff provided updates on:

- **Counties' Land Use Ordinances**
 - Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Land Use Planner, updated the Commission on new land use ordinances being prepared by the Oregon counties within the National Scenic Area:
 - Multnomah County's Board of County Commissioners will hear the second reading of their new ordinance on December 16, 2021. It is anticipated that the new ordinance will be adopted at that meeting.

- Hood River County's Board of County Commissioners adopted their new ordinance in November and Commission staff received the updated ordinance December 13, 2021.
 - Wasco County's Board of Commissioners adopted their new ordinance on November 3, 2021. Commission staff anticipates receiving the adopted ordinance some time the week of December 14, 2021.
- Aiden Forsi, Land Use Planner, updated the Commission on new land use ordinances being prepared by Clark and Skamania:
 - Clark County's Board of Commissioners adopted their new ordinance on December 7, 2021. Commission staff anticipates receiving the adopted ordinance some time the week of December 14, 2021.
 - Skamania County's Board of Commissioners will hold its public hearing for the new ordinance adoption the evening of December 14, 2021. It is anticipated that the new ordinance will be adopted at that meeting.

Wolniakowski: The Commission will review the counties' ordinances in February and March. Once the Commission approves the ordinances, they will be transmitted to the Secretary of Agriculture for concurrence through the US Forest Service.

Mills: Requested procedural clarification regarding the comments received from Friends of the Columbia Gorge relating to the Skamania County ordinance.

Wolniakowski: A letter signed by Wolniakowski and Commissioner Donna Mickley on behalf of the US Forest Service was submitted to the Skamania County Board of Commissions explaining clarifications to the revised Management Plan. Commissioner Tamara Kaufman and Wolniakowski will personally attend the Skamania County Board of Commissioners' meeting to address questions that may come up. Planner Forsi will also be available by phone.

- **Access Database Replacement Project** – Mike Schrankel, Access Database Replacement Project Coordinator, reported that staff completed scoring the four proposals received and interviewed the two vendors with the highest scores. After scoring the interviews, staff determined that Sitka Technology Group LLC located in Lake Oswego, Oregon, was the apparent successful bidder (ASB). Sitka has assisted Puget Sound Partnership and Tahoe Region Planning Agency with similar projects, has worked with the Washington OCIO gated funding process, and has worked with our current OCIO project manager.

The bidders not chosen as ASB are allowed to request a debrief conference. The debrief is designed to allow bidders to receive feedback to improve their scores on future bids. After debriefing and expiration of the protest period, staff anticipates awarding the bid to Sitka and begin contract negotiations. It is anticipated that the project will begin after the first of the year.

- **FY21 Financial Statement Audit, 2021-23 Budget, and 2023-25 Budget Updates** - Connie Acker, Administrative Analyst, reported:
 - The FY21 Financial Statement Audit exit conference was held on December 8, 2021. During that conference, the Office of the Washington State Auditor reported a clean audit. Upon receipt of the audit report, it will be uploaded to the Commission website under the Commission Operations tab.

- As always staff is monitoring the 2021-23 biennial budget carefully and reported some savings in travel allotments. As mentioned previously, the FY22 budget has less funds allocated than the FY23 budget due to Washington legislative appropriations.
 - Staff has started assembling information, making projections, and compiling a list of possible budget packages for the 2023-25 biennial budget. Staff will review the agency's needs based on the priorities selected by the Commission. Oregon's Agency Request Budget is due in July 2022 and Washington's budget is due mid-September.
- **Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP)** – Jessica Olson, Senior Natural Resources Land Use Planner, reported that staff hosted two virtual “focus group” meetings for agriculture professionals in the gorge:
 - Meeting materials are posted on the website Initiatives page, including a summary of the items landowners told us they are doing on their properties to deal with climate impacts, build soils and carbon storage, and be more sustainable in their operations.
 - Outcomes in terms of concrete actions we can take: Coordination with the Conservation Districts across the river and with landowners, share incentives including technical assistance (Ecology funding not yet being taken advantage of).
 - We have identified a need to support restoration and enhancement projects as part of this CCAP effort, particularly for wetlands and water resources, and also for forest health and fuels reduction to reduce fire risk.
 - In the ag meetings we heard that conservation projects on ag lands are also hampered by permitting costs and grant-funding timelines.
 - So, this idea of reducing barriers to enhancement projects is going to be a priority in the CCAP.
 - One final note on the ag meetings - something that we knew anecdotally that came out of the data and presentations is the trend that we see in the Gorge with the fastest growing area of ag production is in vineyards in Klickitat County, whereas other crop types are relatively stable. This is an important consideration for land use planning, as these trends probably could not have been predicted when the Management Plan was first written.

The first half of the CCAP is being reviewed by the Review Committee; they will receive the second half this week. Staff is also going to be reviewing the draft. Staff expects to have a draft for the public and Commission early in the New Year.

- **Best Practices Survey** - Wolniakowski reported that the Best Practices Survey will be emailed to Commissioners in mid-January. The Best Practices Survey is important because it is linked to the agency's budget. The survey asks the Commission to evaluate itself in terms of best practices and how its roles and responsibilities were implemented for the calendar year.

Chair Liberty requested updates on the status of County MOUs and the Klickitat County Compliance Study.

- **County MOUs** – Wolniakowski reported that county MOUs are on hold until Spring of 2022 after all of the counties have received concurrence for their new National Scenic Area land use ordinances. No updates will be forthcoming for the next several months.
- **Klickitat County Compliance Study** – Aiden Forsi reported that he has requested information from the Klickitat County Building Department, which is the last set of

information he needs before he can begin data analysis. Forsi intends to present the final report at the February 8, 2022, Commission meeting.

Public Comment by Erwin Haglund (9:12 a.m.) Erwin Haglund gave comment in support of his request for a plan amendment to change the land use designation of his lots west of the City of Hood River from Large Woodland to Small Woodland to allow for more development. Commissioners discussed Mr. Haglund's request and directed staff to develop a recommendation for the Commission to vote on to allow Mr. Haglund an opportunity to address the Commission after the staff presents their report. The Commission expects to review, discuss, and vote on the staff's recommendation at the February 2022 Commission meeting.

Work Session Report* - Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) Program (9:33 a.m.) Lisa Naas Cook, VSI Planner, provided an overview of the draft indicators for natural resources and climate change for Commission discussion and deliberation. See pages 5-7 on the VSI staff report (12/14/2021) for the list of draft indicators. (Attachment C)

During the presentation, Chair Liberty offered this recommendation to staff: Using the main land cover types in National Land Cover Database, create a map comparing historic data (1986 or earliest available) and current data.

Public Comment on the Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) Program (10:04 a.m.) The following provided public comment:

- Michael Lang, Friends of the Columbia Gorge – Commented that an inventory of dwellings in forest land is another metric that is useful to assess wildfire risk.
- Ilene LeVee – Expressed support for staff's work on VSI.

Commission Discussion on Draft Natural Resource and Climate Change Indicators (10:08 a.m.)

Kaufman: Important to keep in mind the policy context of the coniferous forests indicators, extent and land cover change. Forest practices are allowed in the National Scenic Area, and these indicators will show changes in extent corresponding with allowed logging activities.

Morgan: Expressed support for the draft natural resource indicators and offered points to consider on several topics.

- Grasslands: Functionality is dependent on quality. Support starting with extent and hope to be able to use remote sensing for a quality indicator in the future.
- Wetlands: Floodplain connectivity is important.
- Talus: Like the emphasis on temperature and moss cover as indicators of habitat and changes in climate.
- Air Quality: Lichen distribution is a good indicator.
- Wildfire: Acres of fuels reduction on NFS lands indicator helps tell the story of work to reduce wildfire risk and enhance carbon storage.
- Carbon Storage: Difficult to pursue at this time, given different methods for measuring carbon storage and complexity of the topic.

Pitt: Offered several comments on the draft indicators:

- Transportation: Suggested partnering with state parks or DOTs to explore fish-friendly EV infrastructure. Important to consider that much of the energy for EV comes from dams. Mentioned idea of connecting EV charging stations with solar power generated on site.
- Wildfire: Commented that burn severity, recovery, and response are additional factors that could be considered.

- Soil moisture: Mentioned that this data can be helpful to understand how water moves through a system.

Commission Vote on Draft Natural Resource Indicator Recommendations

Staff recommendation: *Move forward with draft natural resource indicators on pages 5-7 in the staff report.* An informal vote resulted in 9 thumbs up.

Commission Discussion on Climate Change Indicator Topic Recommendations

Commission Vote on Wildfire

Staff recommendation: *Move forward with wildfire extent/distribution and acres of fuels reduction on NFS lands indicators. Continue working with partners on an all-lands fuels reduction indicator.*

An informal vote resulted in 8 thumbs up and 1 thumb sideways.

Pitt: The rationale for the sideways thumb was timing and resources.

Commission Vote on Carbon Storage

Staff recommendation: *Complete detailed land cover data layer necessary for natural resource indicators. When that product is complete, the Commission can reassess capacity and need for additional carbon storage assessment work.* An informal vote resulted in 7 thumbs up and 2 thumbs sideways (Morgan and Nichols).

Morgan: Does not feel this is a priority at this time, given complexity of data required.

Nichols: Not a priority at this time.

Commissioner Comments on Transportation

Liberty: Offered an alternative to the staff recommendation on transportation: Gather information on metrics with available data including average commute length, trip volume data (from DOTs, could include bridge crossings), state park visitation, and transit trips.

Naas Cook: Asked whether Chair Liberty was interested in a one-time assessment with this information or wanted these to be incorporated as long-term indicators.

Liberty: Replied that this data could be used in the interim and fit the indicators to the authority of Commission. Not comfortable tabling this entire indicator.

Kaufman: Asked for staff clarification on tabling transportation indicator for this biennium.

Wolniakowski: Biennium ends June 30, 2023.

Pitt: Hope to gather interim data on this indicator.

Nichols: Respect staff work and recommendations.

Mickley: Makes sense to table this indicator. It is a priority but coordination of this large, complex issue needs time.

Commission Vote on Transportation

Staff recommendation: *The current staff recommendation is to table a transportation-related indicator for this biennium given the amount of work that would be needed without additional resources.* An informal vote resulted in 6 thumbs up, 2 thumbs sideways (Pitt and Miller), and 1 thumb down (Liberty).

BREAK – 11:10 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.

Action Item - Adoption of Commission Ordinance* (11:20 a.m.) Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Planner, and Jeff Litwak, Legal Counsel, presented the final draft Land Use Ordinance for Klickitat County. (Attachment D)

Public Comment on Land Use Ordinance

- Michael Lang, Friends of the Columbia Gorge – Reiterated Friends’ written public comment dated December 13, 2021. (Attachment E)

Commission Vote to Approve Land Use Ordinance

After Commission discussion regarding short-term rental language and language concerning expiration of director decisions, Commissioner Nichols moved to approve the land use ordinance and Commissioner Kaufman seconded.

	Yes	No	Abstain
Clark	×		
DeKay	×		
Grimwade*	×		
Kaufman	×		
Meninick	×		
Miller	×		
Mills	×		
Morgan	×		
Nichols	×		
Pitt	×		
Thompson			
Liberty		×	
Total	10	1	0

*Commissioner Grimwade emailed Connie Acker later in the meeting indicated that his vote was Yes.

Action Item - Establish 2022 Commission Priorities* (11:51 a.m.) Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director, presented the draft 2022 Commission Priorities Staff Report for discussion. (Attachment F)

Public Comment on 2022 Commission Priorities

- Amy Weissfeld – Collection of Dog Mountain shuttle information.
- Michael Lang, Friends of the Columbia Gorge – Recommend against pursuing land amendment for large woodland.

Commissioner Suggestions to 2022 Commission Priorities

Kaufman: Offered her priorities in order but urged the Commission to be flexible:

- Gorge 2020 Management Plan implementation.
- Access database replacement.
- Administration and communication strategies.
- VSI, climate change and other items Commission has been working on.
- Rolling Management Plan review process should also be added to the list of priorities.

Mills: Commented that he believes that Commission staff and Hood River County Commissioners have not ignored the Haglund issue. The special review before the new ordinance is implemented or a land trade are options for the Haglunds. Compact review is a risk.

Pitt: Staff recommendations are realistic. Finding resources is important to implement priorities.

Nichols: Offered that Management Plan implementation should be at the top of the list.

Meninick: Shared his experience with management planning and what he has learned throughout the years.

Liberty: Asked for a restatement from staff of what the Commission normally does to be delivered to the Haglunds, giving them an opportunity if they wish to challenge the Commission’s decision.

Clark: Asked Wolniakowski if Liberty’s request regarding the Haglunds was appropriate.

Wolniakowski: Responded that staff will provide a recommendation to the Commission in February 2022.

Kaufman: Asked for a specific motion to outline the 2022 Commission priorities.

Commission Vote to Establish 2022 Commission Priorities

Chair Liberty moved to adopt 2022 Commission Priorities as follows: 1) *Gorge Management Plan implementation*, 2) *Communications and outreach and all items listed as 2021 priorities*, 3) *new priorities as time allows*. Commissioner Pitt seconded the motion.

	Yes	No	Abstain
Clark	×		
DeKay	×		
Grimwade			
Kaufman	×		
Meninick	×		
Miller	×		
Mills	×		
Morgan	×		
Nichols	×		
Pitt	×		
Thompson			
Liberty	×		
Total	10	0	0

U.S. Forest Service NSA Manager’s Report (1:00 p.m.) Donna Mickley provided an update on Forest Service activities in the National Scenic Area:

- Focused on funding from Infrastructure bill which will allow pace and scale of fuels treatment projects.
- Making progress with Great American Outdoors funding.

BREAK – 1:03 p.m. – 1:17 p.m.

Bylaws Discussion: (1:17 p.m.) At the November Commission meeting, a suggestion was made to automatically include the immediate past-Chair as a member of the Executive Committee. The Commission discussed this suggestion and decided to change the bylaws accordingly. (Attachment G)

Commission Vote to Amend Bylaws:

Commissioner Kaufman moved to: *Amend the Bylaws per the December 14, 2021, staff report*. Commissioner Mills seconded the motion.

	Yes	No	Abstain
Clark	×		
DeKay	×		
Grimwade			
Kaufman	×		
Meninick	×		
Miller			
Mills	×		
Morgan	×		
Nichols	×		
Pitt	×		
Thompson			

Liberty	×		
Total	9	0	0

Action Item – 2022 Executive Committee Membership: (1:23 p.m.) The Commission chose to move this topic to the January 11, 2022, agenda in light of the technical difficulties incoming Chair Grimwade was having during the meeting. Wolniakowski reminded the Commission that the last Executive Committee meeting of the year was scheduled for Tuesday, December 21, 2021, at 9:00 am due to the holidays.

Thank You to Commissioner Lorrie DeKay* (1:26 p.m.) Commissioner Lorrie DeKay served for 8.5 years as a Washington Governor’s Appointee. Commissioners, staff, and members of the public thanked Commissioner DeKay for her many years of service to the Gorge Commission and National Scenic Area. The Executive Director will personally present a plaque from the Commission to Commissioner DeKay later in the month in recognition of her commitment and invaluable contribution to the NSA.

Other Business (1:45 p.m.) – No other business was offered.

Executive Session: (1:45 p.m.) Executive Session pursuant to Commission Rule 350-11-006(1)(h) to discuss the Executive Director’s 2021 Performance Review.

Adjourn – 2:10 p.m.

Meeting Attachments:

- Attachment A – Tribute to Kate Mills
- Attachment B – Photos of Kate Mills
- Attachment C – Staff Report - VSI Progress
- Attachment D – Staff Report – Adopt New Gorge Commission Land Use Ordinance
- Attachment E – Public Comment – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Attachment F – Staff Report – 2022 Commission Priorities
- Attachment G – Staff Report – Draft Revisions to Bylaws

Approved – 1/11/2022