

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2021

via Zoom Webinar

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Bowen Blair
Sondra Clark ~ 8 :31 a.m.
Lorrie DeKay
Casey Gatz
Tamara Kaufman
Robert Liberty
Jerry Meninick ~ 8:31 a.m.
Carina Miller ~ 8:31 a.m.
Michael Mills
Jim Morgan
Rodger Nichols
Pah-tu Pitt ~ 8:39 a.m.
Dr. Ashley Thompson

COMMISSIONER MEMBERS ABSENT

Robin Grimwade

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, Counsel
Lisa Naas Cook, VSI Planner
Jessica Olson, Senior Natural Resources Planner
Mike Schrankel, GIS Planner
Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director

AUDIENCE PRESENT

Peter Brehm – Brehm Vineyards
Lynn Burditt – US Forest Service
Geoffrey Carr
Keith Cleveland – Hood River County
Peter Cornelison – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Kaylee Crosby – Wild Wood Tours
Sheila Dooley
Deborah Ferrer
Amber Johnson – City of The Dalles
Lisa Karell - Metanoia Inc.
KATU News
Andrea Klaas – Port of The Dalles
Michael Lang – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Ilene Le Vee

Terra Lingley – ODOT
Steve McCoy – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Keenan Ordon-Bakalian
Beatriz Parga
Tina Patterson – Pepperdine University
Alan Peters – Skamania County
Mary Repar
Ryan Rittenhouse – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
B Rogers
Anna Shank-Root – Port of The Dalles
Nate Stice – State of Oregon
Tyler Stone – Wasco County
Judy Todd
Andreas von Flotow
Janet Wainwright
David Williams
Max Yoklic
Armando Zelada

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 Minutes for March 9, 2021 (8:31 a.m.) Casey Gatz, US Forest Service, requested that he be added to the minutes as a Commissioner. Ms. Acker replied that this amendment had been made at his earlier request. Commissioner Kaufman moved to adopt the March 9, 2021 Minutes as amended. The March 9, 2021, Minutes, as amended, were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Approval of Correction to May 26, 2020 Meeting Minutes (8:32 a.m.) Commissioner DeKay moved to approve the corrected May 26, 2020 Meeting Minutes pursuant to the Staff Memo dated April 13, 2021. (Attachment A) The corrected May 26, 2020 Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote. Commissioners Mills and Kaufman abstained.

Chair Liberty noted that Oregon gubernatorial appointee Dr. Ashley Thompson was a participant in the meeting. Dr. Thompson's appointment will become effective later in April.

Treaty Tribe Word of the Day (8:34 a.m.) Commissioner Meninick shared the word of the day, Xaaslu, meaning star. He explained the meaning of the nine-pointed star: three are witness to your body, three are witness to your soul, and three are witness to your heart. The morning star was once a person that walked the Earth. Light is sacred to all living things on Earth and in the heavens. Legends confirm we are witness to the sparkle of life from the heavens when we see the stars glow in the sky.

Opportunity for Treaty Tribe Nations to Address Commission (8:38 a.m.) As part of the Government-to-Government consultation process, the Commission welcomes input from treaty tribe members on any issue on the agenda and any other matters. The Treaty Tribe Nations did not offer testimony.

Opportunity for Public Comment: (8:38 a.m.) The following provided public comment to the Commission on items not listed on the Agenda:

- **Mary Repar** – Consider establishing a community advisory team and technical advisory team to contribute to the Vital Sign Indicators project. The community advisory team could help seek grant funding for this project. Concerned about level of development occurring in the NSA. Thanked Commissioner Blair for his service on the Gorge Commission.

Executive Director’s Report: (8:40 a.m.) Krystyna U. Wolniakowski and staff provided updates on:

- **Status of the 2021-2023 Budget** – Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director, reported that the Washington Senate and House versions of the budget are close and at the Governor recommended level, including funding the Access database replacement project. The agency testified in early March before Oregon Ways and Means but Oregon has not yet had its budget work session. Oregon has recommended funding the Access database replacement project as well. Washington and Oregon budgets are close at this time.
- **Klickitat County Compliance Study** – Aiden Forsi, Land Use Planner, shared that he has done a preliminary evaluation of 43 out of the 151 tax lots selected for the study. These lots were reviewed first because they were simple to review and unlikely to be found out of compliance. Aiden found that these lots were largely undeveloped or likely had not been redeveloped since the Act was passed in 1986. Aiden plans to finish preliminary review of all 151 lots before conducting site visits, in order to focus attention on those lots where apparent compliance issues emerge. There were no follow-up questions from Commissioners.
- **Vital Sign Indicators** – Lisa Naas Cook, VSI Planner, shared this update:
 - Climate change and natural resources are the first two topics for the 2021 VSI update that builds on the 2009 effort. In late March, Commission and Forest Service staff held a VSI Climate Change and Natural Resource Indicators Work Group meeting with monitoring and natural resource specialists from various agencies and organizations in the region to discuss key management questions and indicator topics. Objectives were to gather feedback on refining these to translate into meaningful indicators and to learn how they align with existing monitoring efforts.
 - In response to Ms. Repar’s comment about a technical advisory committee, Lisa mentioned that this VSI technical work group includes U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Yakama Nation Fisheries, National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON), Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership, and others. Lisa thanked Ms. Repar for her comments, past work, and continued interest in VSI.
 - Next steps: Forest Service and Gorge Commission staff will convene a second work group meeting to identify relevant measures and available datasets for climate change and natural resources. The goal is to present a draft list of climate change and natural resource indicators to the Commission at the June Commission meeting. Forest Service and Commission staff are also conducting work planning for other VSI resource areas (scenic, recreation, cultural, and economic) with the goal of having a draft list of updated indicators by the end of the year. Staff will keep the Commission updated on suggested work session schedule for upcoming Commission meetings.
- **Climate Change Action Plan** – Jessica Olson, Senior Natural Resources Planner, shared this update:

- Jessica and Lisa attended the Northwest Climate Change Conference hosted by the University of Washington's Climate Impacts Group. Themes of the conference were youth engagement, career mentorship, tribal leadership, and environmental justice. Sessions focusing on hydrology and water resources, ecosystems in large-scale conservation planning, wildfire smoke and forests, invasive species, and economic impacts and valuations of climate change impacts, which are topics relevant to Commission work.
- Have been working on creating "vulnerability snapshots" which were presented to the Commission in February. These are distillation of information gathered from other sources about the sensitivity and adaptive capacity of resources in the NSA and protected by the Management Plan and relevant to the Commission. Met with Climate Change Action Plan Review Committee and shared draft vulnerability snapshots. Received input on initial findings and how they might inform actions to focus on in the adaptation and mitigation actions.
- Next steps: Complete vulnerability snapshots and work one-on-one with experts to fill in gaps, prepare report to present Commission for feedback. Also scheduling a series of workshops for summer and will share schedule when its available.
- Working with Lisa intersections with VSI/Climate Change indicators.
- On track for estimated workshop in June with Commission to present findings.

Morgan: Asked how involved transportation agencies are in networks and planning sessions.

Olson: Have had a great relationship with the Oregon side and hoping to extend to Washington. These meetings have been one-on-one meetings. Met and worked with Terra Lingley, ODOT's NSA representative, to discuss electrification plans, damage to roads from floods and landslides that continue to increase.

Liberty: Asked about members of the advisory committee.

Olson: Fairly diverse group. There was representation from USGS, Forest Service, CRITFC, NEON, land trusts, state agencies, and a couple of the Treaty Tribes. All four Treaty Tribes have been participating in various meetings.

Liberty: Are there participants that have technical background in understanding vulnerabilities to climate change and other people being consulted who understand the most effective actions in the realm of adaptation and mitigation?

Olson: Lot of strengths in both categories. Dave Peterson is involved who was instrumental in creating the Forest Service Vulnerability Assessment that we have looked to for this region. Yakama Nation Fisheries has also been vocal about their ideas for applying actions on the ground.

Pitt: Are we looking into qualitative research, such as interviewing people or having a listening session with focus groups? Thinking about people who have long-term relationships with the land, such as fisher people, gatherers, or farmers and orchardists. A dataset that can be drawn on over time that does some analysis of what we are hearing might be helpful.

Olson: Had a side meeting after the kickoff for traditional ecological knowledge to help learn more about how that has been directly applied. A survey is on our list of potential actions.

- **County-CRGC MOUs** – Jeff Litwak reported that staff has met with all five counties that implement land use ordinances in developing MOUs. Next step is to take feedback and develop a revised template that will be shared in the near future.

Welcome to new Washington Governor Appointed Gorge Commissioner, Pah-tu Pitt (9:05 a.m.) Chair Liberty welcomed Pah-tu Pitt to the Commission and asked her to introduce herself.

Commissioner Pitt is from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Her family is from both sides of the Columbia River with descendants from Yakama as well. Five generations on her mother's side are from the Portland area. Her background is in environmental science. She is an artist and small business owner of Native Kut. She is teaching a college course. She frequents the Gorge and it is one of her favorite places. Her family often ventured into the mountains and Pah-tu is the formal name of Mt. Adams. There are stories about the mountains fighting with each other and those stories can be told differently. Her mother gave her the name Pah-tu.

Various Commissioners welcomed Commissioner Pitt and added that they look forward to working with her.

Work Session: Discovery Through Dialogue (9:10 a.m.) Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Land Use Planner, provided a brief history of the Commission's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work to date:

- Staff is working on creating a Land Acknowledgment as part of the recognition of indigenous people in the Gorge since time immemorial. (Attachment B) Staff has received input from Warm Springs and Yakama Commissioners. Staff has also sent the Land Acknowledgment to contacts of the Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes for review. The Land Acknowledgment will be presented to the Commission for review and approval after receipt of input from Umatilla and Nez Perce.
- The Commission adopted a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement to be included in the revised Management Plan in response to public comment received that the Commission needs to address these topics in its work and have that reflected in the Management Plan. (Attachments C and D) In September Commission staff began working with Tina Patterson, Pepperdine University extern, on developing the Commission's DEI plan. At the October 2020 Commission meeting, Ms. Patterson provided an overview of the DEI project, which included the project's two main goals. The first was to develop a DEI Policy and Procedures as required by the State of Washington for agencies. The second was to develop a draft DEI strategy and begin the workplan for the Commission. Although the Columbia River Gorge Commission is not a Washington state agency, it has chosen to follow the Washington State requirements to develop the plan as part of Washington State's DEI initiative.

Ms. Patterson with staff completed the first goal in late October and the policies related to DEI were submitted to Washington State. Ms. Patterson identified steps to achieving the second goal which included interview and work sessions with Commissioners and Commission staff. Over the past few months, Ms. Patterson had one-on-one interviews with each Commissioner and staff member to identify perspectives and interests related to DEI. Ms. Patterson drafted a report of the survey results and provided recommendations. Once the report is finalized, staff will share it with the Commission.

One theme that Ms. Patterson shared with staff that came out of the interview process was effective communication with the majority of Commissioners sharing comments about listening and hearing at Commission meetings. The majority of staff mentioned effective communication during Commission meetings as well. This prompted the first work session today.

During the second work session, Ms. Patterson will be discussing her findings and recommendations for moving forward. The second work session will include a reflection and discussion on the Meyer Memorial Trust DEI Spectrum Tool (Attachment E). This survey is a tool to assess where an organization is in its DEI journey and to identify potential areas for future work.

Joanna introduced Lisa Karell, President of Metanoia Inc., Executive Coach and Trainer, and Tina Patterson, Pepperdine University extern. Lisa Karell facilitated an interactive presentation and discussion on “It is not what you say, it is what I hear”. (Attachments F, G, H & I)

BREAK – 10:00 a.m.

Work Session*: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) (10:10 a.m.) Tina Patterson presented an overview of findings from the Commissioner and staff surveys and shared recommendations. (Attachment J) She facilitated a discussion about the Commission’s leadership role to engage with the greater Gorge community and incorporate DEI principles into the Management Plan. Ms. Patterson provided a project overview, progress update, next steps, explanation of Meyer Memorial Trust DEI Spectrum Tool, and results of Commission and staff responses for this tool.

Commission Discussion Questions on DEI Spectrum Tool:

What surprised you as you completed the Spectrum Tool?

No comments from Commissioners.

Which DEI component(s) do you see the most progress made by CRGC, if any?

Mills: Pleased to see the vision and commitment moving along in a positive direction.

DeKay: Happy what staff has accomplished and their commitment to getting the policies to the respective states.

Blair: Believe most progress has been made on inclusion where the voice of staff and board members from communities facing disparities is valued.

What did you find most insightful as you completed the Spectrum Tool?

Liberty: Discovered more opportunities to apply a diversity perspective to aspects of the Management Plan.

Which DEI component(s) do you see as opportunities for the CRGC to progress?

Liberty: Data is an area we can do more work on.

Nichols: Being an example and sharing our process and progress with others.

Mills: Opportunities to engage communities that are no longer as present in the Gorge to the extent they once were or have not been engaged historically.

Liberty: Exploring how to integrate in-person meetings and online meetings, given the benefits and challenges of each in terms of equal opportunities and access to participate.

Miller: Appreciate movement that Commission has made on DEI – different than a year ago. Want to get to the place where we are talking about white supremacy, not only policy and quantifiable concepts.

Kaufman: Are we creating barriers to people participating and how can we remove barriers?

After completing the Spectrum Tool, do you have suggestions about short term or long-term strategies for CRGC’s DEI journey:

Patterson: Commissioner Miller mentioned a larger discussion regarding white supremacy and Commissioner Kaufman commented regarding further engagement of communities that may not have been engaged historically.

Pitt: Comfort is an important consideration. This past year has been exhausting for People of Color. Unpacking equity issues is uncomfortable. Interested in qualitative approaches to climate change and monitoring work (e.g., learning about changes experienced through interviews and storytelling).

Mills: Thanked Commissioners Miller and Pitt for voicing their feelings and opinions and understand the exhaustion of last year. Please continue to voice and feel comfortable doing so. Interested in eventually reframing DEI work from “lens” to everyday operations (e.g., in business, we do not say we have a “fiscal responsibility lens,” it is simply part of operations).

Liberty: Want to think more about time of meetings (e.g., day or evening) and format (e.g., in person or online) as this relates to access. Focusing on ways to meaningfully engage the public on issues that are most of interest to them.

CRGC DEI Management Questions:

What is part of the Management Plan or Commission’s operations that you are most interested in?

Liberty: Shared that he provided written comments on this question, and Ms. Patterson mentioned that she would forward these detailed comments to staff.

Blair: Climate change action plan and monitoring and enforcement both have important DEI aspects.

Kaufman: Land use decision-making process, in particular, needs a DEI lens. Are we creating barriers for people to participate or to purchase and use the land? Are land use policies and affordability inhibiting people’s ability to live here? Are we pricing people out of the NSA?

How could a DEI lens be applied to this aspect of the Commission’s work?

Pitt: Try to practice cultural humility; sounds like there is an opportunity on the Commission to learn more.

Ms. Patterson presented Next Steps:

- Develop framework for short and long-term strategies
 - Today’s listening presentation was based on interview responses
 - Apply a DEI lens to all CRGC work and projects
 - Mission
 - Management Plan
 - Operations
 - Policies
 - Procedures
 - Public Engagement
- Public engagement
 - Community listening sessions
 - Forming partnerships and alliances with community groups

Ms. Patterson addressed the Commission: There are 13 of you as Commissioners. Not all 13 of you are going to think diversity, equity, and inclusion is a priority or that it is something that you think is necessary. If that is your position, I would ask that you not stonewall the project but support the consensus to move forward in this aspect. It is critical. I think what we saw when we looked at the Spectrum Tool is that overall, there is a belief that you have launched or are ready to start. Engaging and being part of this process does not mean that you have to love every aspect of it but certainly support the endeavors. You do not have to do that verbally by saying “I support this”, but you can support it by not obstructing the process.

Additional discussion and follow-up questions for Ms. Patterson:

Mills: Mentioned that Commissioner Pitt used the term “cultural humility”. Asked Ms. Patterson what “cultural humility” means. Ms. Patterson invited Commissioner Pitt to respond.

Pitt: Stated that this definition may be fluid to some degree: Understanding one’s own culture and where biases show up; better understanding other communities’ issues without judgment; being open to learning. Recognizing that we do not know everything.

Public Comment on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) (11:25 a.m.) The following provided public comment to the Commission on its DEI planning:

- **Mary Repar** – How do we get past the past? How do we maintain empathy for the past, while looking forward to protecting the future of the NSA? How does environmental justice fit into DEI? How do we do better together and toward each other? If our past prohibits or inhibits future actions that will impact our survival and the preservation and conservation of the NSA, how will we use DEI to get solutions that are equitable for all?
- **Michael Lang, Friends of the Columbia Gorge** – Friends appreciates that Commission is moving forward with DEI work. Friends supports applying DEI lens to climate change in the Management Plan, implementation of the Plan, and also looking at its Bylaws. It is Friends’ position that in the past, the Commission has applied the Management Plan differently based on socio-economic status. Friends encourages the Commission to support affordable housing within existing urban areas. Friends recently completed a beneficial, week-long training with Center for Diversity in the Environment.

Commission Discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Planning:

Blair: Important to really understand and be aware of the past and how it affects what we do today.

Mills: Asked Ms. Patterson to speak on the importance of acknowledgment of the past.

Liberty: The past is not a fixed set of facts; it is interpreted in the present. Understanding the past is part of understanding the present.

Miller: Appreciate the questions shared and acknowledged that she is also still learning. Sometimes there is a sense of urgency to quickly wrap up issues and get on with the work. The narrative needs changing and the way history is understood because it is impactful still today. Miller shared that her father’s community had a boarding school. This is not just the past, this is today. Hopeful that the Commission someday unanimously, naturally chooses to make DEI a priority.

Pitt: History informs where we are today (e.g., exclusionary laws). It takes time to address 100-year-old legacy/policies. Takes commitment and time to address these issues.

Clark: One thing the Commission needs to remember about the past is that the area it is dealing with was not a National Scenic Area in the past. The Commission’s mission is to protect the NSA. Many people lost a lot of their rights as citizens to do with their property as they want. Need to keep in mind that we are focusing on the National Scenic Area with different rules that cannot be ignored that the rest of society does not have to follow.

Ms. Patterson responded to Ms. Repar’s questions: Need to acknowledge the past for healing and dismantling racism. Environmental justice is part of DEI work. Acknowledgment is the first step. South Africa can be looked at as an example (e.g., Truth and Reconciliation Commission) and Germany (e.g., choose to acknowledge the victims and decided to move forward and not repeat the past). Objective of this conversation is not to assign guilt; it is to look at who is not at the table and needs to be.

Ms. Patterson concluded with her reflections and observations:

- Reflections
 - Collegial to cordial to cautious – often experience a range of reactions in her facilitation work. This range was reflected in 22 interviews of Commissioners and staff.
 - Kinship and loss – Realized through this work that she does not know her history beyond 1800s. Do not have the connection with land and people.
 - Food connects us.
- Observations/Suggestions
 - Consensus: a general agreement (while you do not have to agree with everything, avoid obstructing)
 - Collaborate: seek out, pursue opportunities to partner
 - Commitment: stay focused (abundant information and resources out there; focus on what is most important to the Commission)

After Ms. Patterson completed her presentation, various Commissioners and staff thanked her for her work and contribution to Commission efforts and congratulated her on her upcoming graduation. Commissioner Nichols suggested that a letter of commendation be signed and provided to Ms. Patterson. All Commissioners agreed.

U.S. Forest Service NSA Manager’s Report: (11:35 a.m.) Casey Gatz, US Forest Service, provided an update on Forest Service activities in the National Scenic Area including:

- Planting with Friends at Sams Walker site.
- Experiencing high visitation numbers at recreation sites.
- Dog Mountain permit system is active for the season.
- USFS is invested in DEI work nationally. One of five priorities is advancing racial equality. Another is improving workforce and work environment. Working on “This is who we are” initiative.
- Appreciate ongoing partnership with USFS and CRGC staff on VSI, climate change action planning, DEI, and other work.

Executive Committee Membership (12:10 p.m.) Chair Liberty moved to appoint Casey Gatz, US Forest Service, to the Executive Committee as a voting member pending the appointment of the new Area Manager. The temporary appointment was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Other Business (12:11 p.m.) There was no other business brought before the Commission.

Thank You to Commissioner Bowen Blair (12:15 p.m.) Commissioner Nichols and Chair Liberty led a Thank You salute to Commissioner Bowen Blair. Various Commissioners, staff, public partners, and members of the public thanked Commissioner Blair for his many years of service to the Gorge Commission and National Scenic Area. The Executive Director presented a plaque from the Commission to Commissioner Blair in recognition of his commitment and invaluable contribution to the NSA. (Attachment K)

Executive Session (12:45 p.m.) Executive Session pursuant to Commission Rule 350-11-006(1)(g) to consult with counsel concerning the Commission’s legal rights and duties with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

Adjourn – (1:15 p.m.)

Meeting Attachments:

- Attachment A – Staff Report to Correct 5/26/2020 Meeting Minutes
- Attachment B – Draft Land Acknowledgment
- Attachment C – Staff Report – DEI Work Plan Summary 2020
- Attachment D – Gorge2020 Management Plan DEI Statement
- Attachment E – Meyer Memorial Trust DEI Spectrum Tool Survey
- Attachment F – Listening Story presented by Lisa Karell
- Attachment G – Listening Story Questionnaire
- Attachment H – Listening Story Answers
- Attachment I – Wait & Think
- Attachment J – DEI Presentation by Tina Patterson
- Attachment K – Bowen Blair Tribute
- Attachment L – Public Commission Meeting Protocol

Approved – May 11, 2021