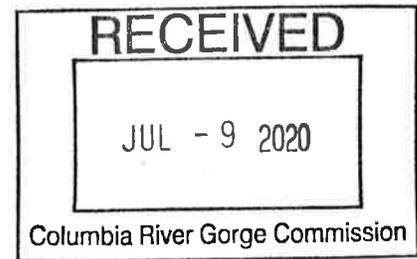


Columbia River Gorge Commission
PO Box 730
White Salmon, WA 98672



To the Commissioners:

I am writing this letter as a concerned citizen of Oregon. I moved here 35 years ago from Chicago and have always enjoyed Oregon's interest in preserving the environment. The Gorge has always been a special place for me and I would like it to continue to be so.

I attach many of the points raised by the Friends of the Gorge, where I am a member. The mining operations that continue are really concerning to me. It does not seem logical, considering the governance model for the Commissioners.

Many of the issues raised by the public during the last review of the plan have not been addressed, yet development on sensitive lands within the National Scenic Area continues to march forward under guidelines developed more than 25 years ago. In 2004, some regulations were weakened to allow more logging on sensitive lands in the Gorge, even on National Forest lands in Special Management Areas. New mining operations are still allowed in the Scenic Area. The Gorge's outstanding geologic features receive no special protection and are exposed to open pit mining. Native plant communities, including Native American first foods, receive no protection despite tribal treaty rights. Land divisions take place without analysis of cumulative effects to scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources.

Friends of the Gorge offers many great recommendations that I urge you to consider and enact.

1. Climate Change Threatens the Gorge: Climate change due to human-caused global warming is like to impact just about everything in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Longer dry spells which could cause more frequent and severe fires, impacts to sensitive species, wildlife habitat, native plants, growing conditions, watershed impacts, recreation, salmon runs, and community development are just a few of the main areas of risk due to future climate change. The Gorge Commission and the Forest Service are the main governing bodies in the scenic area, and their priority is to protect the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the gorge. However, there is currently no mention of climate change and global warming anywhere in the management plan. With your help we would like to change that, and ensure that the Gorge Commission and Forest Service are adequately preparing to confront the many challenges and impacts we can expect from global warming in the decades to come. A good first step would be to improve natural and scenic resource protection standards to address impacts from climate change.

2. Eagle Creek Fire: Ensure the natural recovery of forests impacted by the Eagle Creek fire and prohibit post-fire logging. Ensure the recovery of native plant communities by adopting a comprehensive program to combat the spread of invasive species. Ensure the agencies are following the law on all emergency responses, post-fire actions and mitigation measures for resource damage resulting from fire response activities. Consider requiring temporary closure of trails when the fire danger is extreme, as it was when the Eagle Creek fire ignited.

3. Base plan review on the best available science and sound resource protection policies. Updating the resource inventories, completing a simulated "build-out" of development allowed within the scenic area and reliance on the "Vital Signs Indicators" program will help ensure that plan review is data driven.

4. Amend the definition of "cumulative effect" to require analysis of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions.

5. Adopt guidelines addressing fossil fuel transport through the National Scenic Area, including oil and coal trains. For example, require analysis of worst-case oil spills from oil train derailments and prohibit coal pollution from open-topped coal cars.

6. Improve regulations on rail expansion to better ensure protection of communities and scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources.

7. Prohibit new mining, including new open pit quarries within the scenic area.

8. Prohibit commercial logging on all National Forest lands in the scenic area.

9. Scenic resources: Limit "trophy homes" on scenic landscapes. Determine whether scenic landscapes are approaching the tipping point for overdevelopment and, if so, require additional scenic resource protection measures.

10. Natural resources: Expand protective buffers for fish, wildlife and rare plants to better reflect the best available science and to adapt to climate change. Require protection for native plant communities. Adopt standards to protect outstanding geologic features, such as the Bonneville Slide area that created the "Bridge of the Gods." Assess the impacts of climate change on protected species and habitat.

11. Protect cultural resources: Until a thorough survey of cultural resources is completed in the Gorge, require cultural resource reconnaissance surveys prior to any approval of land divisions, significant ground-disturbing activities, and new development.

12. Support sustainable recreation: Support policies for trail systems linking recreation sites, viewpoints and Gorge communities. Promote more dispersed recreation by supporting new recreation sites and discouraging overuse of existing sites. Support sustainable recreation through alternative transportation options. Improve river access but avoid adverse impacts to sensitive resources and treaty rights.

13. Expand open space designations to protect sensitive areas and newly acquired public lands.

14. Protect high value farm land. For example, update standards for agricultural dwellings to better protect farm land from residential sprawl. Make the standards for new farm dwellings at least as strong as Oregon's standards outside the National Scenic Area, which require proof of at least \$80,000 in gross annual farm income.

15. Prevent urban sprawl by strengthening protections that control expansion of urban area boundaries into the management areas of the National Scenic Area. The second purpose of the Scenic Area Act is to promote economic development that is consistent with protection of the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the gorge. This is best accomplished by increasing urban density rather than urban sprawl.



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