

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Lisa Naas Cook, Vital Sign Indicators Planner, Columbia River Gorge Commission
Casey Gatz, Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor, USDA Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

DATE: October 10, 2023

RE: **Information Item*:** Vital Sign Indicators Program and Climate Change Action Program Quarterly Progress Reports – October 2023

Purpose

This memo provides an overview of progress on Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) monitoring program development and Climate Change Action Plan implementation using a standardized reporting template approved by the Commission at its June 13th meeting.

The purpose of the two quarterly reports that follow is to share progress on the key work items included in the 2023 Work Plans for VSI and Climate Change Action programs, presented to the Commission in February 2023. The attached VSI and Climate Change Action reports include accompanying 2023 Work Plan Timelines for each program as a reference.

Staff welcomes questions on these quarterly progress summaries at the October 10th Commission meeting. Staff will also provide a brief overview of funding opportunities for regional partners that could help support several Climate Change Action Plan priorities.

For more information on Vital Sign Indicators and the Climate Change Action Plan, see the Gorge Commission website:

- Vital Sign Indicators: <https://www.gorgecommission.org/initiatives/vital-sign-indicators>
- Climate Change Action Plan: <https://www.gorgecommission.org/initiatives/climate-change>

2023 Vital Sign Indicators Work Plan Timeline

Draft Natural Resource, Climate Change, Scenic Resource, Recreation, and Economic Vitality Indicators presented by 12/13/2022)

2023



	Vital Sign	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023	November 2023	December 2023	2024	2025	
Staff Work	Cultural Resources		Commission review draft quarterly update template	Quarterly Update			Quarterly Update			Quarterly Update		 Comprehensive List of Indicators	VSI Annual Report (Date TBD)		
	Wetlands, Grasslands, Oak Woodlands, Coniferous Forest, Talus, Agriculture	Data acquisition and analysis		 Draft Land Cover & Land Use Map complete	Convene meetings with staff from Columbia River Treaty Tribes to explore role of VSI monitoring to support policy approaches for First Foods protection and access (overlaps with Climate Change Action work)								 VSI update in Report on First Foods Policy Approaches		
	Streams & Riparian Areas: Cold Water Refuge Habitat		Initial CWR monitoring partner meeting	Develop CWR temperature monitoring framework with key partners						 CWR Monitoring Progress Update					
Commission Action Update															

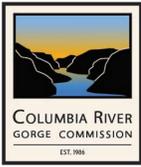
Key:



Interim VSI Outcome



Completed VSI Outcome



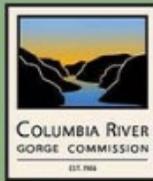
Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) Program: October 2023 Quarterly Progress Report



Program Purpose: To evaluate the long-term health of scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources, and local economies, of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA).

VSI Program Goals	Status	
2023 Goal: To finalize Vital Sign Indicators and begin implementation in 2024.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">  On Track  At Risk  Off Track  On Hold  Complete

Actions and Accomplishments	Deliverable	Target	Completed
Cultural Resources: VSI work overlaps with Tribal Treaty Rights priority for Climate Change Action Plan. See Climate Change Action Program progress report slide for details.	VSI Update in Report on First Foods Policy Approaches	12/2023	
Cold Water Refuge Streams: Invited to participate in Columbia River Federal Caucus Cold Water Refuges Work Group meetings as a regional partner. Coordinating an update from the Federal Caucus on cold water refuge monitoring priorities at upcoming Commission meeting. Plan to assess staff capacity to resume coordination role after Commission staff hiring is complete.	Cold Water Refuge Monitoring Progress Report Update from Columbia River Federal Caucus	Changed from 10/2023 to 11/2023	
Full List of Indicators: Continued coordination with partners to finalize indicators for presentation to Commission in December.	Full List of Vital Sign Indicators	Changed from 10/2023 to 12/2023	
Risks & Issues	Next Steps		
Staff reduction in summer and lack of dedicated funding for Climate Change Program Manager position reduced capacity to work on VSI this quarter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue coordination with Treaty Tribe staff to discuss cultural resource monitoring interests. • Coordinate with Federal Caucus on cold water refuge monitoring update at November Commission meeting. • Confirm data availability and methodologies in preparation for VSI list presentation to Commission at December meeting. 		
Planned Action			
Scheduled presentation of full indicator list for December 2023 to allow for additional staff time to finalize indicators with assistance of Natural Resources Planner on board in September. Reaching out to Federal Caucus to coordinate an update on cold water refuge monitoring.			



Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

Climate Change Action Plan Priorities
2023-2030

OVERALL PRIORITIES



Inclusive Climate Action

Engaging with diverse communities and partners across the Gorge



High Climate Resilience Areas

Identifying and conserving areas expected to support species in a changing climate

ADAPTATION



Cold Water Refuge Streams

Protecting water temperature and flow for fish



Wetlands

Improving wetland habitat for associated plants and wildlife



Tribal Treaty Rights

Supporting Tribes to ensure ecosystems and land use promote accessible, thriving First Foods



Oak Woodlands

Improving oak woodland habitat and corridors

MITIGATION



Regional Transportation

Reducing single-passenger vehicle travel and promoting regional transit



Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

Increasing charging stations and collaborative electrification planning



Carbon Sequestration

Enhancing land-based carbon sequestration



Fire Risk

Supporting resilient forests and fire-adapted communities



www.gorgecommission.org/initatives/climate-change

2023 Climate Change Action Timeline

Climate Change Action Plan
Adopted (12/13/2022)

2023

	CCAP Priority	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023	November 2023	December 2023	2024	2025
Commission Action Update	(Note: Monthly updates to be included with Executive Director's Report starting in May 2023.)		Commission review draft quarterly report template	Quarterly Update			Quarterly Update			Quarterly Update			Climate Action Annual Report (Tentative Feb. 2024)	
Staff Work	Tribal Treaty Rights: First Foods Policy Approaches			 <i>Treaty Tribe Outreach and Meeting Schedule Identified</i>	Convene meetings with staff from Columbia River Treaty Tribes to discuss and develop policy approaches for First Foods protection and access							 <i>Report on Goals, Strategies, and Policy Approaches for First Foods Protection and Access</i>		
	Inclusive Climate Action				 <i>Gorge Climate Change Symposium: Panelist for Adaptation & Action Session</i>				 <i>Gorge Climate Stewards Pilot Program Launch</i>		 <i>Gorge Climate Stewards Pilot Completed</i>	 <i>Strategies and Actions for 3 Key Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Goals Completed by Pro-Equity Anti-Racism Team</i>		

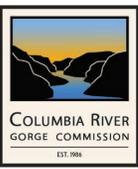
Key:



Interim Outcome toward Climate Action Goal



Completed Outcome toward Climate Action Goal



Climate Change Action Program: October 2023 Quarterly Progress Report

Note: The two Climate Action goals below are the focus for 2023. A progress summary for all 10 priority goals in the Climate Change Action Plan will be provided in the annual climate action report available in early 2024.

Climate Action Goals	Status	
<p>By 2023, the Commission has identified specific goals, strategies, and policy approaches for First Foods protection and access, created with the Columbia River Treaty Tribes.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">  On Track  At Risk  Off Track  On Hold  Complete
<p>By 2025, the Commission has completed a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan with specific, measurable, and timebound goals to advance climate equity.</p>		

Actions and Accomplishments	Deliverable	Target	Completed
<p>Tribal Treaty Rights: Coordinating with staff from Columbia River Treaty Tribes to discuss and develop approaches for First Foods protection and access. Key outreach conducted this summer: Adrienne Grimm, Yakama Nation Climate Action Project Lead, presented an overview of Yakama Nation’s Climate Action Plan and 2023 priorities to Commission in July; coordinated with Bill Sharp, Research Scientist with Yakama Nation Fisheries, and Elaine Harvey, Watershed Manager with Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, to host Climate Stewards Cold Water Refuges field trip in September; and presenting at climate resilience listening sessions hosted by Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and OR Department of Environmental Quality in early October.</p>	<p>Report on Goals, Strategies, and Policy Approaches for First Foods Protection and Access</p>	<p>12/2023</p>	
<p>Inclusive Climate Action: Presented on fire risk and climate change action planning to WA Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network in June. Participated in first Gorge Latino Conservation Week focused on reducing barriers for Latino communities to access the outdoors and inspiring next generation of environmental stewards. Co-presented on high climate resilient areas and community outreach with Friends of the Gorge at Land Trust Alliance conference in September. With partners Oregon State University Extension Service and Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, launched Columbia Gorge Climate Stewards community training pilot in September.</p>	<p>Climate Stewards pilot completed</p>	<p>12/2023</p>	
	<p>Strategies and actions for 3 key DEI goals completed by Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team</p>	<p>12/2023</p>	
Risks & Issues	Next Steps		
<p>Staff reduction in summer delayed meetings with Tribes and PEAR Team. No Oregon funding received for Climate Change Program Manager position.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue coordination with Treaty Tribe staff to discuss First Foods protection and access. • Complete remaining field trips and classes for Climate Stewards community training pilot. • Plan next PEAR meeting. 		
Planned Action			
<p>Resume work on DEI goals when DEI staff lead returns from parental leave in November. Continue coordination with Treaty Tribe staff on climate change priorities (e.g., invite Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Nez Perce staff to present to Commission). Pursue climate change funding during the OR short legislative session in early 2024.</p>			