

CATHERINE CREEK OUTBUILDING & ACCESSORY STRUCTURE REMOVAL REVISED SUPPLEMENTAL NARRATIVE & BUILDING GUIDE (2/15/24)

Applicant: Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust

Tax Parcels: 03-11-36-0-0-0001-00

Gorge Commission File No. _____

This Supplemental Narrative is intended to offer additional information that will provide context and highlight benefits of the proposed project.

Background and Current Structures

Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust (“Land Trust”) purchased this 4.2-acre property through 486 Old Highway 8, LLC adjacent to the Catherine Creek trailhead in 2020 at fair-market value from a willing seller, and remains the current landowner. The property is within a Special Management Area (SMA) of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, but, through the operation of Section 8(o) of the National Scenic Area Act, it is managed as GMA. The property is visible from at least seven Key Viewing Areas (KVAs).



FIGURE 1: CATHERINE CREEK RESIDENCE

The property includes a residence constructed in 2006, a well, and septic. In 2021, 6 outbuildings were removed after obtaining a National Scenic Area Land Use permit.

Site History Summary:

- 1935: Undeveloped natural land
- 1951 – 1977: State Department of Transportation quarry – active usage ceased between 1968 and 1977
- 1977 – 1984: Undeveloped natural land
- Mid-1980s: Developed with now removed pole buildings and mobile home for residential usage and for keeping several horses
- 2006: Existing single-family residence constructed

The residence proposed for removal was permitted and built by the Johnstons in 2006. Though the residence was permitted, the Johnstons did not follow the conditions of the permit and the residence is not consistent with either the National Scenic Area Act or current Klickitat County land use rules. Inconsistencies include an unpermitted deck that encroaches on Forest Service land to the south (see map in additional materials), unpermitted paint colors on some aspects of the house, and failure to properly screen the residence from Key Viewing Areas.

Proposed Building Removal

The Land Trust intends to deconstruct/ remove the current residence, the septic system, and a portion of the paved driveway near the residence. The underground waterline will be disconnected, but the well will not be removed at this time. The power pole will be left standing, the underground powerline will be left in its place, but the power will be disconnected and the line decommissioned. Within the property, the proposed work area encompassing the outbuildings and gabions is roughly a half-acre. The residence includes a wooden deck, full basement with a concrete slab floor, and composite roofing shingles.

Currently, Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust is cooperating with the Forest Service to develop this property into an accessible access point for the Catherine Creek Universal Access Trail system to the south and east. Removal of the residence is an essential step in restoring natural and recreation resources to the site.

Because plans for development are still in the concept stage, the project area will only be partially graded after the residence has been removed. Additional steps will be identified once the residence is removed.

A portion of the paved driveway in front of the residence (about 200ft) and the concrete parking pad to the east of the residence will be removed. The section of the driveway from the concrete parking pad to Old Hwy 8 will be left intact. No trees will be removed, and the areas of impact will be seeded and planted with native vegetation

upon completion. Disturbed areas will be seeded in the fall, benefiting from seasonal moisture and becoming fully established by the following spring.

Project Benefits

Scenic Resource Enhancement: The homesite is visible from nearby Key Viewing Areas and iconic recreation sites, including the Catherine Creek Trail System and Rowena Plateau. Removal of the noncompliant house will enhance Scenic Resources within the National Scenic Area.

Natural Resource Enhancement: Currently, the property is highly degraded and has significant impacts from past agricultural and residential uses. This is particularly true of the area around the house, which represent the principal project area.

The terrain of the property is rocky, with rock hummocks, depressions, pits, and steep slopes, which appear to have resulted from WSDOT rock quarrying activities prior to 1977. Several trees have been present at the northwestern portion of the property from at least the 1930s through the present.

More generally, the surrounding Catherine Creek recreation area has unique natural beauty and is of great botanical significance. Wildflowers are the primary draw to the Catherine Creek area. No other place in the Gorge has the diversity or duration of blossoms. The fragile ecosystem is home to wildflowers like the Northwest Balsamroot and Paintbrush- just some of the more than 90 species of wildflowers found in the area from February to July.

While the Land Trust property has been heavily impacted, it is entirely surrounded by more than 1,000 acres of basalt grasslands, oak savanna and ponderosa pine owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service which serves as habitat.

Old Highway 8 (including Rowland Lake, Catherine Creek, and the area around Balch Lake) is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) in Klickitat County. The area is also included in the Washington Audobon's "Great Birdwatching Trail".

Lewis's woodpeckers, canyon wrens, western meadowlarks, western bluebirds and Say's phoebes, western scrub and Steller's jays, Nashville warblers, red-breasted and white-breasted nuthatches, and northern flickers are all bird species that use the area.

Removal of the residence will allow for expanded and improved habitat, particularly in the corridor between the upper and lower Catherine Creek trail systems.

Recreation Enhancement: One of the premier areas for early spring wildflower viewing in the eastern Columbia River Gorge, Catherine Creek Recreation Area is popular each spring before it dries up by mid-summer. The trailhead and parking north of Old Highway 8 are the access point to a network of multi-use biker/hiker/equestrian trails.

The residence proposed to be removed is highly visible from this trail system, and detracts from the visitor experience by obstructing or marring the otherwise sweeping views of the Columbia Gorge.

Removal of the residence would restore scenic views and enhance the visitor experience.

Additionally, the Land Trust is working with USFS to transfer the property into public ownership within the next few years. Together, the two organizations are in the process of developing a design for modest recreation enhancements that will improve accessibility and safety for users of the Catherine Creek Universal Access Trail. The development plan is in its early stages.

Wildfire Risk and Firefighter Safety: Finally, implementing this project will eliminate a potential concern for wildfire and firefighter safety. In the event of a wildfire, potential protection of the residence by wildland firefighters could present challenges. The removal of the residence from this location will lower wildfire hazard and potential risks to both firefighters and neighboring public lands.

Rare Plant Species

In 2021-22, the Land Trust conducted a botanical survey of the parcel in preparation for the planned development projects. In the survey, *Lomatium klickitatense*, a plant identified as a Washington state listed rare species in 2021, was identified in the southwest corner of the property. Since the listing of the species, Walter Fertig from the WA Natural Heritage Program has stated, “additional sites [where *L. klickitatense* has been identified] have been documented in 2022, suggesting strongly that the species is more abundant than we suspected...in light of these new discoveries we will be revisiting the status of *L. klickitatense*.” The staff from the WA National Heritage Program informed Friends that they will be updating the current WA State Sensitive Plant listings in early 2024 and *L. klickitatense* will be reevaluated.

The removal of the residence and other activities covered in this application will not disturb the area where *L. klickitatense* has been identified. However, the project is within the required 200ft buffer from the identified plant. Again, the plant will not be

disturbed during deconstruction. The area surrounding the plants will be blocked off to ensure workers don't disturb the existing population.

Grading Plan

This property has a slope less than 10% (actual slope of 5.4%) and this proposed project does not entail moving any material on or off site. The information in this section is intended to ensure clarity in the proposed actions- particularly in the context of the rare plant identified on the parcel.

This project is intended to de-construct and remove the residence, septic system, and a portion of the paved driveway. All building materials will be removed and hauled off-site for reuse, recycling or disposal. The eastern portion of the paved driveway and well house will remain. The power pole and underground powerline will be left in place, but the power will be decommissioned at the pole.

The house has a full concrete basement and foundation. The concrete wall is 7ft 10in from the foundation to the top of the slope. Before the house was built, the area of the basement was a small quarry. In light of the anticipated future recreational development of the site (including future permit applications), Bryce Guske (Gorge Commission) advised the Land Trust on the following grading plan for the current basement. This would be an "interim" approach until more tangible plans for development of the site are complete.

After the residence is removed, the concrete block foundation and concrete basement walls will be pushed into the basement area. The concrete will be broken up, and left in this old quarry to mimic the natural slope (to the extent possible) using the materials on hand. The concrete parking pad to the east of the residence will be broken up. The broken up materials from the concrete pad will be pushed into the basement area. As material is added, the fill will be compacted every 12" using heavy equipment.

The approximate 200 feet of asphalt paved driveway (from the concrete parking pad to just west of the residence) will be broken up and removed. The asphalt will be hauled off-site for disposal or recycling.

In the event that a dramatic difference in grade remains the concrete are added and compacted , the Land Trust will take appropriate safety measures to warn and/or exclude people from the area (if necessary). The area will be properly graded during the future development of the site.

During this removal project, though there will be minimal excavation, there is the potential for light disturbance by removal of manmade material. No natural material will be moved on site.

Estimated duration for all of the work is between 2-3 weeks, with a desire to complete the project during the summer dry season. While not expected, the land trust would take routine measures to minimize erosion and runoff as necessary.

No fill will be brought on-site. No trees will be removed, and the project area (noted in yellow in the site plan) will be re-vegetated with native plants upon completion. The native seed mix will include blue wildrye, Idaho fescue, California brome, prairie junegrass, broadleaf lupine, and western yarrow. The area will be seeded in the fall, benefitting from seasonal moisture and becoming fully established by the following spring. The site will be monitored consistently to ensure seed success and will be re-seeded and planted as necessary.

Project and Landowner Contacts

Dan Bell

Director, Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust

(971) 634-2037

dan@gorgefriends.org

Frances Fischer

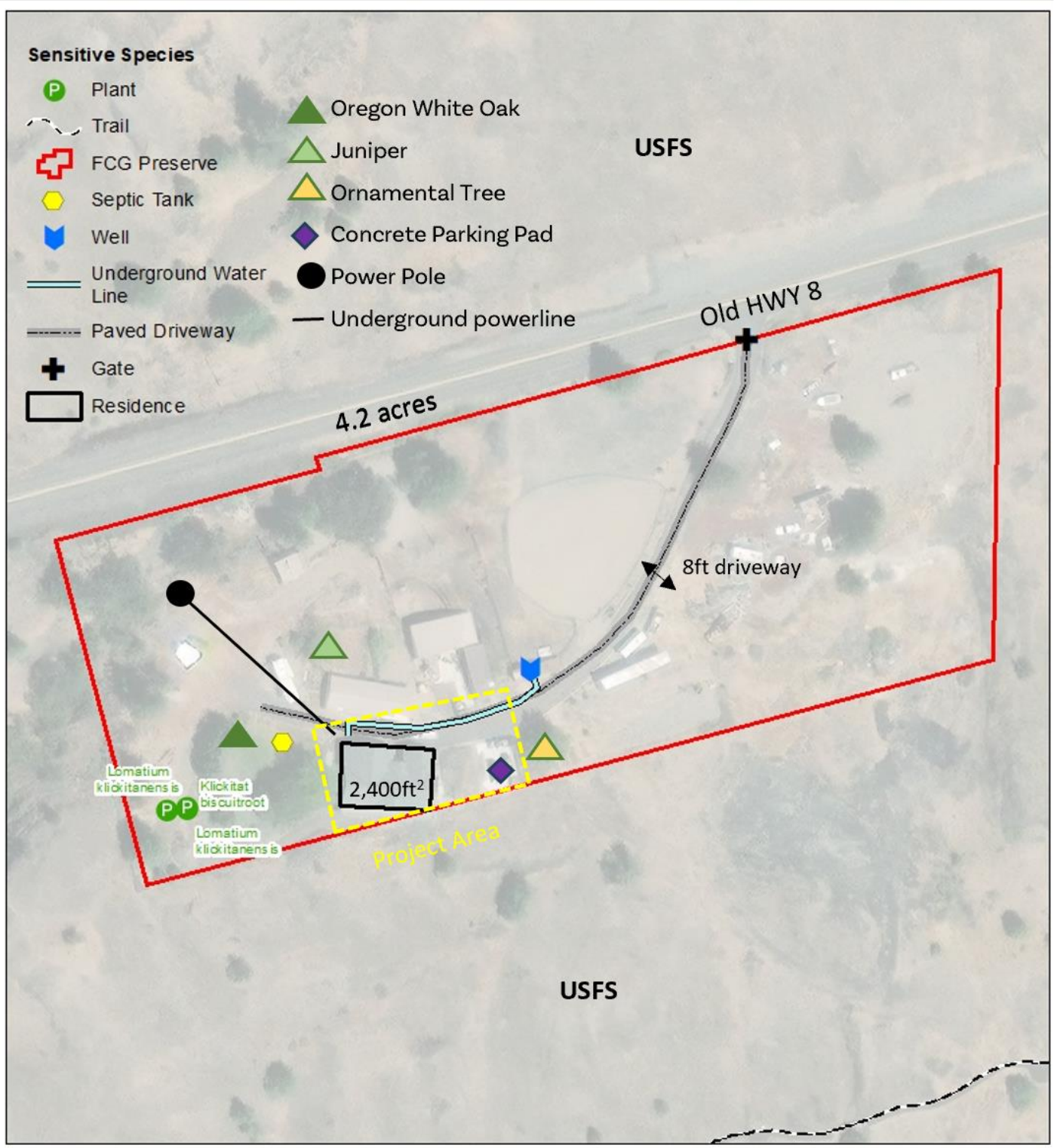
Land Trust Coordinator, Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust

(971) 634-0593

frances@friends.org

Sensitive Species

- P Plant
- Trail
- FCG Preserve
- Septic Tank
- Well
- Underground Water Line
- Paved Driveway
- Gate
- Residence
- Oregon White Oak
- Juniper
- Ornamental Tree
- Concrete Parking Pad
- Power Pole
- Underground powerline



Catherine Creek House Removal
Friends of the Columbia Gorge

0 0.015 0.03 Miles

0 100 200 Feet



*Black dot indicates enlarged area above



Service Layer Credits: Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Export Date: 11/6/2023

ATTACHMENT A: Photos of Project Area







