



ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2023 - JUNE 2024

Friends' annual reports have evolved over the years. Read our first one from 1999 and you'll find a text-heavy newsletter that's 75 percent donor recognition, 20 percent stories, and 5 percent fundraising recaps. In 2008, we moved to a more visual format with photos and short programmatic recaps. A decade later, we began writing longer feature articles. Last year, we returned to the second iteration, with staff from across the organization summarizing their work alongside beautiful photos. But this isn't just a trip down memory lane—something is missing in the way we tell these stories. Our annual reports are a great medium to celebrate organizational milestones and accomplishments, but they can feel disconnected from the heart of what makes Friends so extraordinary: our people.

Friends has only ever been as good as the folks behind it. That's why we work hard to build and nurture an organizational culture that leads with kindness, health, compassion, friendship, and teamwork. Renée Tkach embodies that ethos in every way. Her enduring devotion to Friends, her colleagues, and the Gorge has been a constant through tides of change and challenge—a thread linking the eras of her life, both personally and professionally. Her passion for this work has driven our mission forward for nearly two decades, and that impact will now accelerate as she transitions to her new role at Friends: conservation director. Her deep experience with the people, communities, and elected officials of the Gorge is exactly what we need to continue making progress on our conservation and recreation goals, and we can't wait to see how the conservation team grows with her behind the wheel. Next time you're at a Friends event, introduce yourself to Renée, but until then, continue reading to get to know more about her.

- Tim Dobyns
Communications & Engagement Director

***Note: QR codes in this annual report are clickable. They do not need to be scanned with a phone.**

FINDING PURPOSE AND HEALING IN THE GORGE

Nearly two decades ago, as a mother of two living in West Linn, I was searching for my path in life. A winter drive through the Columbia Gorge with my husband gave me the answer. Although I had visited Multnomah Falls before, I had never ventured to the Washington side of the Gorge. As we drove along Highway 14, we saw a "For Sale" sign near Cape Horn on Salmon Falls Road and immediately fell in love with the property and area.

For us, it felt like a sign—we had both been whitewater river guides on Idaho's Salmon River, where we fell in love with each other and with wild places. A month later, we moved to Skamania County to raise our children and begin a new chapter.

Shortly after, we got involved in local efforts to oppose a commercial zoning proposal threatening rural lands. That experience sparked my journey into land protection advocacy and led me to connect with Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Inspired by Friends' work, I began volunteering to engage the local community to support the

creation of the Cape Horn Trail by hosting informational gatherings and meetings. I then joined the staff in 2006, spending four years as the outdoor programs coordinator. Since 2011, I've led our Gorge Towns to Trails project, an initiative aiming to create a world-class network of trails encircling the Columbia Gorge. Now, a new challenge awaits.

Last year, I tragically lost my husband, shattering the world I knew for 25 years. Spending time in the Gorge has nurtured my healing, reinforcing my commitment to continue protecting the places I love. As I step into the role of conservation director at Friends, I am excited for a new era of building upon the relationships I've cultivated and engaging with diverse communities to grow our ability to protect and preserve this place that has given me wings to grow and heal.



Renée Tkach
Conservation Director
renee@gorgefriends.org



THE PIVOT POINT: STEERING CHANGE FOR THE FUTURE

A lot of change has occurred within our organization, the Columbia Gorge, and our world in the past seven years. From the Eagle Creek fire to a global pandemic to leadership transitions among our staff and board, the end result is that this organization has evolved considerably from 2017 to 2024.

Some people find change within the institutions they trust exciting while others find it unsettling. That's why as Friends works to build its base of support, we are always thinking about what we call "the pivot." The pivot stretches from the people who have supported our organization for years to the younger generations that we hope will support and lead our organization into the future. If we pivot too slowly, future generations with different life experiences and priorities will view Friends as outdated and irrelevant, putting our very existence in jeopardy.

However, if we change too fast, we lose support and critical institutional knowledge of our longtime members. Every nonprofit organization in the country understands that the shifting generational, cultural, and ethnic makeup of our population in the coming decades requires a change; it is the speed of change that will determine our success or failure.

We just wrapped up our 2024-2027 strategic plan and feel good about where we are in the pivot. We will continue to hold firm to our long-standing work of being conservation watchdogs, legal advocates, and acquirers of critical lands. But we are also expanding our work around recreation accessibility, outreach with communities of color, and tribal issues. As Friends continues to navigate and adapt to the changing landscapes around us, we're so grateful to have dedicated members like you with us every step of the way.

Kevin Gorman
Executive Director

Pleschette Fontenet
Board Chair

FRIENDS LAUNCHES \$6.6M SHARE THE WONDER CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT, RESTORE, AND CONNECT THE GORGE

In April, Friends introduced Share the Wonder, a bold capital campaign to preserve and protect key landscapes in the Columbia Gorge through strategic land acquisition, habitat restoration, and new trail connections.

By October, over \$5.5M had already been generously invested by our communities of supporters, an inspiring show of support pushing us well ahead of our initial projections. This tremendous momentum speaks to the shared vision and dedication that defines the Friends community. While we're closer than ever to reaching our \$6.6M goal, the path ahead still calls for the collective effort of all who treasure the Gorge.

The campaign is already delivering results. Share the Wonder has allowed us to purchase both Heartleaf Bluffs and a new vital property near Turtle Haven Preserve (see pages 5-6 for more details on these two sites). Habitat restoration has begun at Cape Horn and Catherine Creek, and significant strides are being made in designing the Mosier-to-The Dalles trail in Oregon.

As we look toward the final phase of Share the Wonder, we invite you to visit sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org or scan the QR code to learn more about these efforts and consider adding your special campaign gift. Together we're shaping the future of the Gorge!



Sunrise from the Portland Women's Forum Scenic Viewpoint. Photo by Chris Elkinton.



SHARE THE WONDER: ONE YEAR OF REMARKABLE PROGRESS

Preserving Land for Future Generations

Generous gifts and pledges to Share the Wonder have enabled the acquisition of two Gorge gems:

- Heartleaf Bluffs, a stunning 105-acre Eastern Gorge property near the Klickitat River. Acquisition saved the property from becoming two multi-million-dollar mansions. Learn more on page 5.
- A 120-acre forested wetland property below Dog Mountain. Acquisition saved the site from clearcutting and gravel mining. Learn more on page 6.

Restoring Habitat for Native Wildlife and Plants

Your support is transforming land trust sites at Cape Horn and Catherine Creek and creating new standards for conservation-minded recreation:

- Forest restoration and tree thinning ongoing at Cape Horn;
- Native shrub plantings underway at Catherine Creek;
- House removals at both sites set for this fall; and
- Partnering with Ash Creek Forestry to install occultation* patches at Cape Horn Preserve for future oak grove plantings.

*Occultation is a strategy to control weeds without the use of herbicides. By covering a weedy area with black plastic for an extended period of time, weed seeds will wither so that when we plant natives, they will be more competitive with the weeds.

Expanding the Network of Trails Across the Gorge

Through Share the Wonder, our Gorge Towns to Trails vision for a 200-mile connected trail around the Gorge is taking a huge leap:

- Launching a public process with the U.S. Forest Service to create a conceptual design for a Mosier-to-The Dalles trail;
- Partnering with a Gorge-based Latino focus group to ensure trail design is inclusive and reflects the needs and interests of all community members;
- The proposed trail will provide a scenic and accessible route for both locals and visitors; and
- We expect to move from conceptual designs to implementation in 2025.

HEARTLEAF BLUFFS: A MONUMENTAL LAND ACQUISITION IN KLIKITAT COUNTY

In July 2023, Friends acquired the second-largest and, at \$2.5 million, the most expensive property in the history of our organization. Heartleaf Bluffs is one of our most breathtaking preserves, spanning 105 acres in the Eastern Gorge. Located just above the Balfour-Klickitat Day Use Area and across the river from the Tom McCall Preserve, this property features expansive oak woodlands, vernal ponds, vibrant wildflowers, and sweeping views of the Columbia Gorge—making it a true jewel of the region.

As a newly acquired property, Friends is still conducting thorough habitat assessments. However, initial observations have revealed extensive oak woodlands, springtime vernal ponds that burst with life, and meadows filled with wildflowers. The preserve is named after heartleaf buckwheat, a plant that flourishes throughout the property. While a full wildlife survey is pending, staff have already noted the presence of fairy shrimp in the vernal ponds, along with black-tailed deer, coyotes, ground squirrels, and rattlesnakes.

We are now in the process of developing a comprehensive management plan for the property, with plans to create volunteer opportunities for individuals to help restore and protect this remarkable landscape.



Heartleaf Bluffs. Photo by Paloma Ayala.



A NEW PRESERVE TO SAVE THE NORTHWESTERN POND TURTLE

Our latest acquisition, purchased in late spring 2024, is a 120-acre parcel adjacent to our Turtle Haven Preserve. This new property is a mishmash of wetlands, ponds, forests, and boulders sitting below the western slopes of the iconic Dog Mountain. Here, more water can mean only one thing: turtles, or more importantly, Washington state-endangered northwestern pond turtles. Northwestern pond turtles are hanging on by a thread in the Pacific Northwest and this landscape, with its abundant ponds, is one of the best places to focus on saving the turtle.

Before our acquisition, this forested property was marketed to be clearcut, which might have been allowed under Gorge rules, and the owners wanted to keep mineral rights to the land so they could mine the gravel after logging. The property would have been scorched earth and as it sits directly above our Turtle Haven Preserve at slightly higher elevation, winter rains would have carried logging and mining debris through the forests and ponds that Friends and the U.S. Forest Service have restored and protected for years.

But that didn't come to pass. Rather, for the first time, wildlife biologists are walking the lands and kayaking the ponds to gain insights into what the future holds for this beautiful pocket of the Gorge.

We'll be releasing more information on this new preserve in the coming months, including in our winter 2024 Passages magazine.

LEGAL VICTORIES IN CLARK AND SKAMANIA COUNTIES

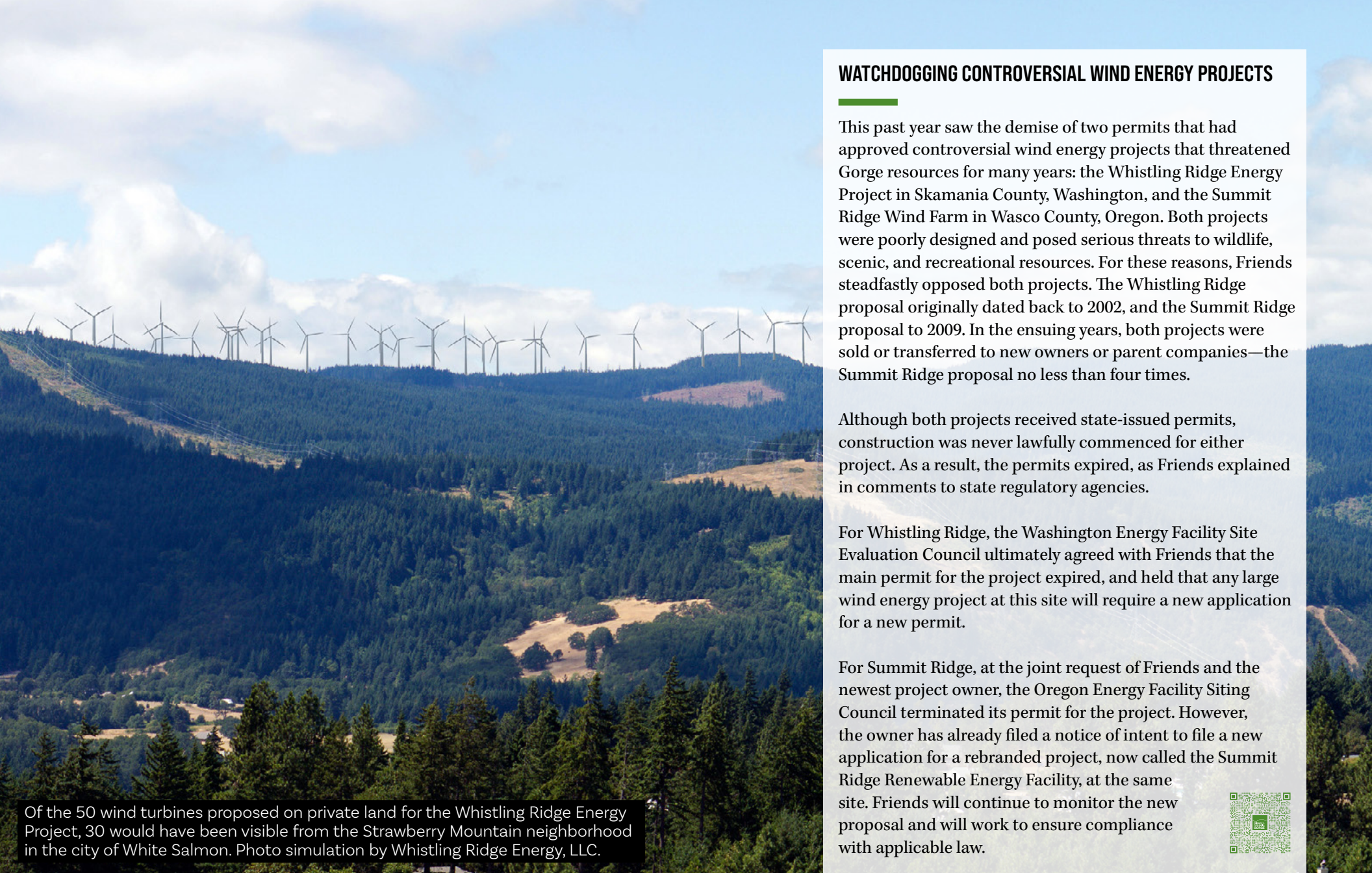
Friends has recently enjoyed a number of legal victories involving land use projects in Clark and Skamania Counties. In 2023, Friends prevailed in 12 out of 12 court cases, appeals, and contested motions in litigation against the illegal Zimmerly mine in Clark County. And so far in 2024, Friends has had three out of three legal victories against Zimmerly. The latest victories included a decision by the Clark County Council unanimously rejecting a request to convert the privately owned SE 356th Avenue into a county-owned mining haul road. A new land use application for mining on the Zimmerly property has been filed, so the legal battles are far from over.

Friends also had other victories not involving mining. In May 2024, the Clark County Superior Court upheld earlier decisions by the Clark County Land Use Hearing Examiner and Columbia River Gorge Commission denying an application for a “non-farm dwelling” on prime farmland in southeast Clark County. Friends’ legal victories against that project will serve as useful precedent for protecting farmland in Clark County and beyond.

In June 2024, Friends won an important procedural victory involving a cell tower project in Skamania County. The Skamania County Hearing Examiner agreed with Friends and neighboring landowners that the project was not exempted from National Scenic Area land use review by federal telecommunications law, and that the project requires full review rather than “expedited” review. The applicants have appealed to the Gorge Commission, where the litigation remains pending.



The Zimmerly property, with its unpermitted gravel mine, is just steps away from Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Brady Holden.



Of the 50 wind turbines proposed on private land for the Whistling Ridge Energy Project, 30 would have been visible from the Strawberry Mountain neighborhood in the city of White Salmon. Photo simulation by Whistling Ridge Energy, LLC.

WATCHDOGGING CONTROVERSIAL WIND ENERGY PROJECTS

This past year saw the demise of two permits that had approved controversial wind energy projects that threatened Gorge resources for many years: the Whistling Ridge Energy Project in Skamania County, Washington, and the Summit Ridge Wind Farm in Wasco County, Oregon. Both projects were poorly designed and posed serious threats to wildlife, scenic, and recreational resources. For these reasons, Friends steadfastly opposed both projects. The Whistling Ridge proposal originally dated back to 2002, and the Summit Ridge proposal to 2009. In the ensuing years, both projects were sold or transferred to new owners or parent companies—the Summit Ridge proposal no less than four times.

Although both projects received state-issued permits, construction was never lawfully commenced for either project. As a result, the permits expired, as Friends explained in comments to state regulatory agencies.

For Whistling Ridge, the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council ultimately agreed with Friends that the main permit for the project expired, and held that any large wind energy project at this site will require a new application for a new permit.

For Summit Ridge, at the joint request of Friends and the newest project owner, the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council terminated its permit for the project. However, the owner has already filed a notice of intent to file a new application for a rebranded project, now called the Summit Ridge Renewable Energy Facility, at the same site. Friends will continue to monitor the new proposal and will work to ensure compliance with applicable law.



CURBING RESIDENTIAL SPRAWL

Friends and a real estate development company agreed to an important settlement that will substantially reduce the threat of residential sprawl in Wasco County's portion of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Originally, the Wasco County Planning Commission approved the Prince Heights subdivision, which would have ushered in development of numerous new dwellings on a scenic bluff overlooking the Columbia River and The Dalles. The worst possible outcome could have been 66 buildable lots in this area alone, plus the establishment of a negative precedent encouraging similar development in other parts of Wasco County.

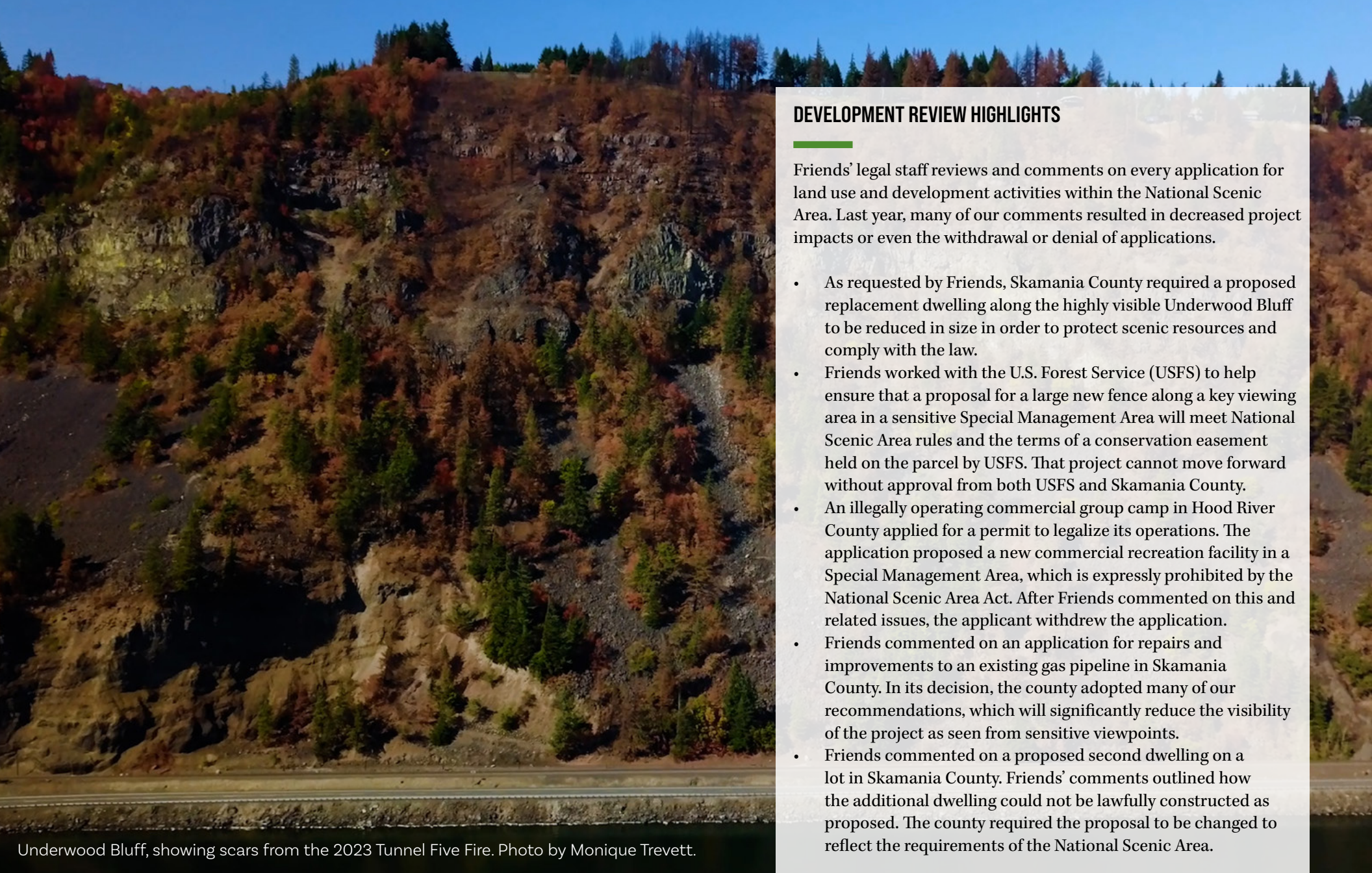
Friends commented that the proposal violated the law, and we appealed the Planning Commission's approval to the Board of County Commissioners. The parties' attorneys then conferred about potential common ground and were able to reach a settlement agreement before the proposal went before the County Board.

The key parts of the agreement are that, in perpetuity, no construction is allowed in Prince Heights that would be visible from key viewing areas, the 66 potential lots were reduced to only six buildable lots, and the Fruitland Park Addition, another highly visible subdivision adjacent to Prince Heights, will be protected from development.

This win-win outcome comports with Gorge protections and eliminates the threat of excessive overdevelopment of this sensitive site.



The site of the proposed Prince Heights subdivision. Photo by Monique Trevett.



DEVELOPMENT REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

Friends' legal staff reviews and comments on every application for land use and development activities within the National Scenic Area. Last year, many of our comments resulted in decreased project impacts or even the withdrawal or denial of applications.

- As requested by Friends, Skamania County required a proposed replacement dwelling along the highly visible Underwood Bluff to be reduced in size in order to protect scenic resources and comply with the law.
- Friends worked with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to help ensure that a proposal for a large new fence along a key viewing area in a sensitive Special Management Area will meet National Scenic Area rules and the terms of a conservation easement held on the parcel by USFS. That project cannot move forward without approval from both USFS and Skamania County.
- An illegally operating commercial group camp in Hood River County applied for a permit to legalize its operations. The application proposed a new commercial recreation facility in a Special Management Area, which is expressly prohibited by the National Scenic Area Act. After Friends commented on this and related issues, the applicant withdrew the application.
- Friends commented on an application for repairs and improvements to an existing gas pipeline in Skamania County. In its decision, the county adopted many of our recommendations, which will significantly reduce the visibility of the project as seen from sensitive viewpoints.
- Friends commented on a proposed second dwelling on a lot in Skamania County. Friends' comments outlined how the additional dwelling could not be lawfully constructed as proposed. The county required the proposal to be changed to reflect the requirements of the National Scenic Area.

PROTECTING IMPERILED WILDLIFE SPECIES

This year, Friends took important actions to help safeguard two imperiled wildlife species native to the Columbia Gorge and vital to our conservation work: the northwestern pond turtle and the western gray squirrel.

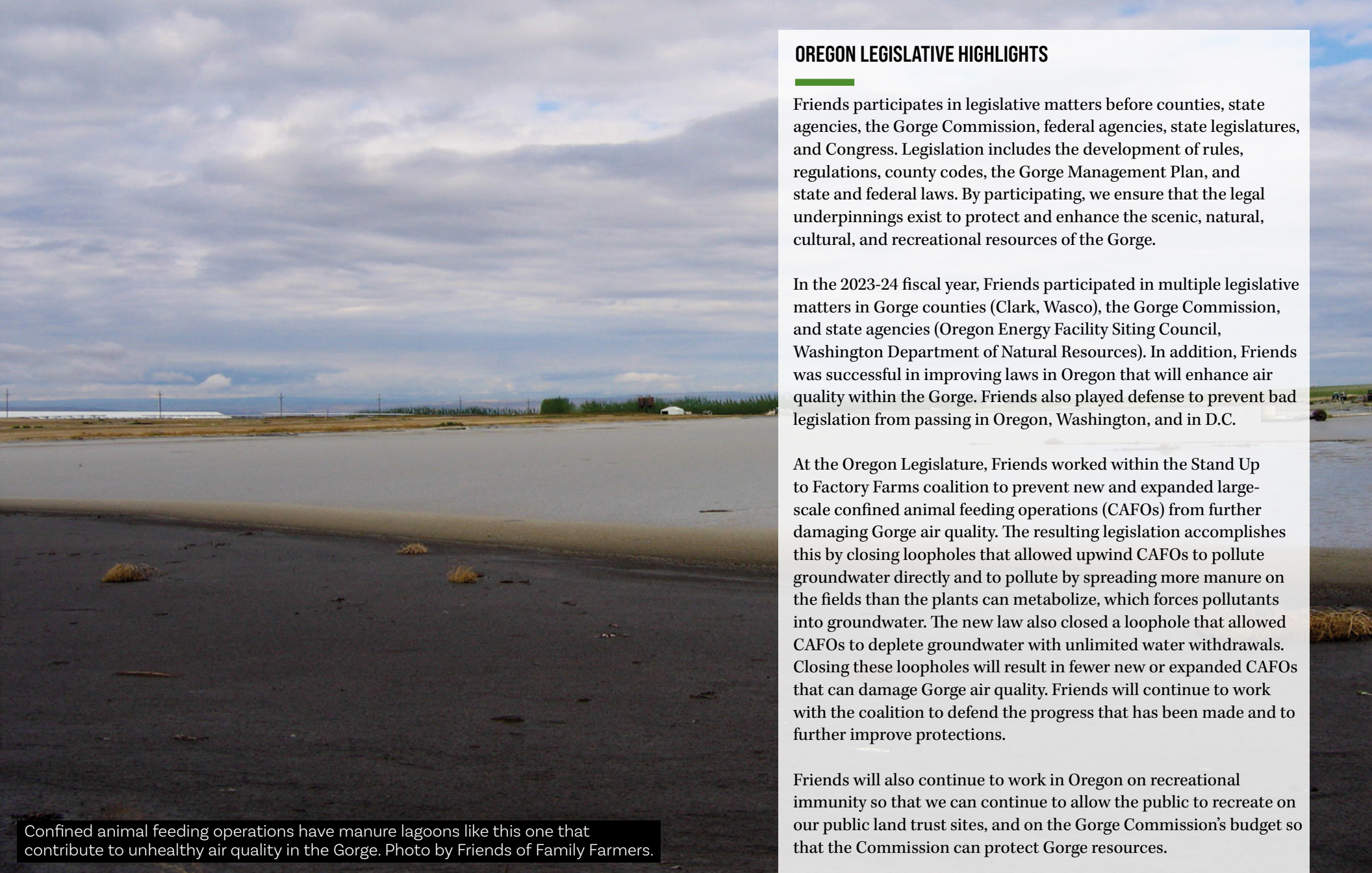
In October 2023, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing the northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The proposed listing, if adopted, should ultimately lead to a formal designation of critical habitat and a species recovery plan. Friends submitted multiple letters in support and recruited our members and supporters to do the same. A final decision on the listing is expected by April 2025.

In December 2023, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife listed the western gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*) as state-endangered, following strong advocacy from Friends and our members, supporters, and allies. However, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) failed to formally recommend critical habitat for the species within 30 days of the listing as required by law.

In February 2024, Friends joined several other conservation groups in filing a lawsuit against the DNR and the Washington Public Lands Commissioner for this oversight. An appeal in the case is now pending as we continue our efforts to ensure proper habitat protection for this sensitive and rare species.



Northwestern pond turtle. Photo by Vince Ready.



Confined animal feeding operations have manure lagoons like this one that contribute to unhealthy air quality in the Gorge. Photo by Friends of Family Farmers.

OREGON LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Friends participates in legislative matters before counties, state agencies, the Gorge Commission, federal agencies, state legislatures, and Congress. Legislation includes the development of rules, regulations, county codes, the Gorge Management Plan, and state and federal laws. By participating, we ensure that the legal underpinnings exist to protect and enhance the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Gorge.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, Friends participated in multiple legislative matters in Gorge counties (Clark, Wasco), the Gorge Commission, and state agencies (Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council, Washington Department of Natural Resources). In addition, Friends was successful in improving laws in Oregon that will enhance air quality within the Gorge. Friends also played defense to prevent bad legislation from passing in Oregon, Washington, and in D.C.

At the Oregon Legislature, Friends worked within the Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition to prevent new and expanded large-scale confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) from further damaging Gorge air quality. The resulting legislation accomplishes this by closing loopholes that allowed upwind CAFOs to pollute groundwater directly and to pollute by spreading more manure on the fields than the plants can metabolize, which forces pollutants into groundwater. The new law also closed a loophole that allowed CAFOs to deplete groundwater with unlimited water withdrawals. Closing these loopholes will result in fewer new or expanded CAFOs that can damage Gorge air quality. Friends will continue to work with the coalition to defend the progress that has been made and to further improve protections.

Friends will also continue to work in Oregon on recreational immunity so that we can continue to allow the public to recreate on our public land trust sites, and on the Gorge Commission's budget so that the Commission can protect Gorge resources.

RESTORATION AT CAPE HORN & CATHERINE CREEK

The Gorge Accessibility Project (GAP) is well on its way as key pieces of the restoration of both Cape Horn and Catherine Creek are scheduled for this fall. The houses on both properties will be removed beginning in October and the areas will be replanted with native seed. In other restoration news, we have started native shrubbery planting at Catherine Creek and are working on tackling the many invasive weeds.

At Cape Horn, we finished the forest restoration and tree thinning over the summer and are working with U.S. Forest Service botanist Brance Morefield to plan for future forest health. We have of course been working on eradicating the many weeds, but most exciting is the new occultation patch that has been placed on a section of the hayfield. This 100'x100' has been tilled, watered, and covered in black plastic to smother the weeds. The area has also been heavily fenced. In a couple of years, we will remove the plastic and plant an oak grove. The fencing will keep the deer off the plastic for now and off our plants when we plant our oaks.

More updates to come for GAP as we are working on agreements with the Forest Service for long-term management of both sites. Exciting changes ahead!



Cape Horn Preserve, with the first occultation plot visible to the right of the barn. Photo by Monique Trevett.



VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM RECAP

Each season, volunteers from Gorge and Portland metro communities come together to dedicate a half day to stewarding Gorge lands at a Friends stewardship work party or a site they have adopted through Friends' Land Steward Program. Equipped with work gloves and tools, many hands were in the soil planting, pulling, and bringing important stewardship projects to fruition at Cape Horn, St. Cloud and Sams Walker Day Use Areas, Beacon Rock State Park, Turtle Haven, Dog Mountain, Coyote Wall, Balfour-Klickitat Day Use Area, and Mosier Plateau, to name a few.

Friends and partners highly value engaging the public on a variety of projects that focus on restoring and maintaining native plant biodiversity for pollinators and wildlife, and encouraging climate-resilient ecosystems—and the impact is huge! In 2024 (so far) volunteers have planted over 1,000 milkweed and lupine in meadows and oak understory at Sams Walker; Carson, Washington, 7th graders returned to Turtle Haven and along with Land Stewards, planted over 600 native wildflowers to support northwestern pond turtle habitat; over 200 pounds of native grass seed were spread in burn areas near Coyote Wall and a whopping 500 hours of invasive plant removal took place across all sites!

While recreating along a Gorge trail or taking respite in this scenic landscape, one must take a moment to appreciate all the time, effort, sweat, and care that goes into nurturing these ecosystems that so many of us enjoy and revere.

GORGE TOWNS TO TRAILS: CONNECTING MOSIER TO THE DALLES

We are excited to share progress on the Gorge Towns to Trails initiative, specifically the project connecting Mosier to The Dalles. Our team is working closely with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and a diverse group of partners to develop a conceptual design for this critical trail corridor.

A key part of this process has been gathering input from the local community, and we are particularly grateful for the valuable insights provided by our Latino focus group. Their feedback is helping to ensure that the trail design is inclusive and reflective of the needs and interests of all community members.

The proposed trail will provide a scenic and accessible route for both locals and visitors, enhancing the connection between these vibrant communities while showcasing the natural beauty of the Columbia River Gorge. Our collaborative efforts with the USFS, our partners, and the Latino focus group aim to ensure that the trail aligns with environmental, cultural, and recreational values.

This initiative marks a significant step forward in our vision of a connected trail network throughout the Gorge. Stay tuned for more updates as we move from conceptual design to the next phases of development.



The Latino focus group enjoying a day in the Gorge. Photo by Monique Trevett.

NEW INTERPRETIVE TRAIL SIGNAGE AT LYLE CHERRY ORCHARD

Exciting news from the Lyle Cherry Orchard! Along with the recent addition of two scenic loop trails, we've unveiled stunning new signage that enhances your hiking adventure. In early April, Friends members, local community members, and our sign collaborators gathered for an unforgettable unveiling ceremony that kicked off with a guided hike.

Attendees were treated to exclusive performances that brought the signs to life. Award-winning Indigenous flutist Sherrie Davis captivated us with her original piece, "Canyons in the Wind," inspired by the majestic hills of Lyle Cherry Orchard. Shoshone-Bannock elder Ed Edmo, alongside his son John, wove native legends and a ceremonial chant into the experience, deepening our connection to the land.

As we trekked along the Discovery Loop, we marveled at the breathtaking views of the Gorge and explored the preserve's natural and cultural treasures. The seven interpretive signs illuminate the rich history of the area, focusing on Indigenous stories, wildfire ecology, and geological wonders, all enhanced by multimedia elements like songs, poetry, and short videos. We hope you'll be able to visit Lyle Cherry Orchard soon to explore the new signs.



EXPANDING OUTREACH THROUGH COMMUNITY EVENTS

Throughout the year, Friends has strategically used tabling opportunities to raise awareness about our conservation efforts in the Columbia Gorge, particularly in areas where our presence is less established. These events offer a platform to connect with new audiences, including potential activists, volunteers, and donors, while reinforcing our engagement at familiar community gatherings. A key goal is also to expand our eNews subscription base to keep supporters informed and engaged.

This summer, our Conservation and Public Engagement team participated in numerous tabling events across the region, including Hood River's First Friday, PCT Days in Cascade Locks, National Night Out in Vancouver, El Grito in White Salmon, and the All Gorge Creatures Great and Small event hosted by the Hood River Library, among others.

One of the highlights was El Grito, a celebration of Mexican independence. This event provided a unique opportunity to connect with the Latino community, engaging families and individuals of all ages in meaningful conversations about conservation. The enthusiastic turnout underscored the importance of broadening our outreach efforts to ensure that the Gorge's protection resonates with diverse communities.



Friends' staff members (from left to right) Madison Kenney, Kenzie Hammond, and Josiah Masie at PCT Days. Photo by Monique Trevett.



FRIENDS SUMMER PICNIC REIMAGINED

In the 1980s, our Founder Nancy Russell envisioned an annual event where Friends supporters could come together to celebrate summer, enjoy each other's company, and learn more about our conservation work in the Gorge. She called the event "Friends' Annual Picnic," a name that will be familiar to many of you.

After 40+ years of holding the event, we decided it was time for a refresh. We brought in a jam band, Family Mystic, to get folks dancing; rented kids' games and a bounce house to help be more welcoming to young families; offered barbecue and tamales from local Washougal food trucks; and invited other conservation organizations and Indigenous art vendors. Although August 24 was an unseasonably chilly evening, guests had a wonderful time enjoying the festivities and the beautiful vista from Friends' Cape Horn Preserve. We hope to see all of you at next year's event!



OUTDOOR PROGRAMS RECAP

In 2024, we celebrated another exciting season of outdoor adventures, hosting 25 guided outings with over 300 participants exploring the natural wonders of the Gorge. Our commitment to offering a wider variety of events was at the forefront this year. In addition to beloved classics like Silver Star Mountain and Dalles Mountain Ranch, we also offered mindfulness walks and our first-ever forest bathing hike, emphasizing the mind-body connection and showcasing nature's calming power. Creativity thrived outdoors, too, with watercolor sessions along the Catherine Creek Universal Access Trail. As part of our mission to make nature more inclusive, we partnered with local agencies to host an American Sign Language sensory walk.

We even made room for our four-legged friends with dog-friendly outings that allowed both people and pets to enjoy exercise and fresh air. A major highlight of the year was the launch of Caminemos Juntos (Let's Walk Together), our new program designed to connect the Gorge Latino community to the outdoors.

As the seasons change, we're already planning the next round of outdoor experiences for our supporters and the greater Gorge community, and we look forward to seeing what the coming year has in store for our growing programs.



Wildflowers at Dalles Mountain Ranch. Photo by Monique Trevett.



YOUTH & COMMUNITY EDUCATION RECAP

This year, Friends worked with over 1,000 students through youth education programs. We coordinated our two signature programs—The Great Gorge Wahoo, a biannual field outing with St. Andrew Nativity School, and Explore the Gorge, an annual multi-day outing with Canyon Creek and Jemtegaard Middle Schools. Explore the Gorge is generously supported by the Camas Washougal Community Chest, while The Great Gorge Wahoo is generously supported by the Winthrop family and Carrie Nobles.

In addition to our flagship programs, our youth and community education specialist led several other workshops, including a salmon biology course at Eagle Creek for the World Salmon Council's Salmon Watch Program, a human health and the environment course at Hood River Valley High School, and a course on ecological restoration at Wind River Middle School. We also connected with over 500 students at White Salmon High School's 6th-12th grade career fair.

Finally, we relaunched our Gorgeous Wildlife Webinar series with three sessions. Our first webinar, titled "Fungus Among Us," featured mycologist Dr. Michael Beug and viticulturist Krista Cushman, who educated viewers about fungi in the Columbia Gorge. Our second webinar, titled "Wings over the Columbia Gorge," included Morgan Olson from the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum, biologist Dr. Shawn Smallwood, and Hannah Dinell from the Oregon Zoo, who discussed bald eagle and raptor conservation. Our third webinar, titled "Pika-ture Perfect Comeback," featured biologist Dr. Johanna Varner and Keri Sprenger from Cascades Pika Watch, who taught viewers about pikas in the Gorge and provided information about community science.



MEMBERS ARE THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR WORK TO PROTECT THE GORGE

Our members are the driving force of our work to keep the splendor of the Gorge alive. Your financial support allows us to work toward protecting the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Gorge every day and we aim to keep our membership active, engaged, and informed.

This past year, we relaunched our monthly giving program, The Beacon. This program offers supporters a way to provide consistent and reliable financial backing to Friends. Members of The Beacon play a pivotal role in sustaining our long-term conservation projects and advocacy work.

We are profoundly grateful for the ongoing support of all our members, whether they contribute through annual donations, give monthly, or donate their time and energy as volunteers. Together, we form a powerful force for the protection and stewardship of the Columbia Gorge, ensuring that its natural beauty and ecological importance are recognized and preserved for future generations to enjoy and cherish.





FRIENDS JOINS COALITION TO LAUNCH “GIVE FOR THE GORGE” FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

The Columbia River Gorge has a new way for visitors, locals and online customers to give back to the region and its communities. Give for the Gorge is a new point-of-sale fundraising program that offers people an easy way to make a positive difference in a place they love. The program launched this spring with over 20 local businesses – everything from tour outfitters and hotels to shuttle services and wedding photographers. A full list of current participating businesses is available at GiveforTheGorge.org.

“Give for the Gorge was created to help ensure that the Columbia River Gorge and its communities are preserved for future generations of visitors and residents,” said founder and project manager, Sandi Scheinberg. “It is providing a much-needed, ongoing source of funding to seven Gorge-area nonprofits focused on the three areas of greatest need in the Gorge: housing, food security and the environment.”

Friends is proud to not only be a nonprofit partner, but also the fiscal sponsor of the program. “Give for the Gorge is the first local program that gives visitors and locals alike an easy way to give back to the place they treasure,” said Kevin Gorman, executive director of Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

Twenty-one Gorge-based business, including Bike the Gorge (pictured here), are participating in Give for the Gorge. Photo courtesy of Bike the Gorge.

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE 2023-24 STAFF

Hannah Anderson-Dana, *Membership Coordinator*
Nathan Baker, *Senior Staff Attorney*
Dan Bell, *Land Trust Director (fmr.)*
Pam Davee, *Special Gifts Officer (fmr.)*
Tim Dobyns, *Communications & Engagement Director*
Frances Fischer, *Preserves Manager*
Melissa Gonzalez, *Outdoor Programs Manager*
Kevin Gorman, *Executive Director*
Fernanda Gwinner, *Philanthropy Engagement Manager*
Nathaniel Hamlett, *Philanthropy & Database Coordinator*
Kenzie Hammond, *Youth & Community Education Specialist*
Madison Kenney, *Conservation Organizer*
Haley Lebsack, *Grant Writer*
Denise López, *Conservation Organizer (fmr.)*
Josiah Masie, *Stewardship Coordinator*
Steve McCoy, *Staff Attorney*
Heather Odden, *HR/Operations Lead*
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Renée Tkach, *Conservation Director*
Monique Trevett, *Digital Content Producer*
Paige Unangst, *Finance Director*
Sofia Urrutia-Lopez, *Conservation Organizer*
Lori Warner, *Director of Philanthropy*

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All of us at Friends of the Columbia Gorge are incredibly grateful for the role each and every one of you—donors, supporters, and volunteers—have played in bringing Gorge protection and preservation to where it is today. Your generosity and shared understanding of the Gorge’s irreplaceable importance have made a lasting impact.

Thanks to your support, we’ve been able to preserve spectacular, heart-grabbing places within the Gorge, ensuring that its natural landscapes, oak stands, wildlife (including fairy shrimp!), and breathtaking views will be enjoyed by future generations. Your commitment is the driving force behind this progress, and its impact will echo for years to come.

Our newest land acquisition (see more on page 6), home to endangered northwestern pond turtles, is a testament to what’s possible when passionate individuals come together. It’s remarkable to reflect on how your shared vision for the Gorge has empowered us to secure and rejuvenate such vital habitats.

Your support is not just about funding projects; it’s safeguarding the future of the Gorge and the diverse ecosystems it harbors. Together, we are ensuring that the wonder of these lands is preserved for those who will walk these trails long after us.

Your dedication is also leading us toward launching the final phase of our Share the Wonder campaign, and we are honored to have you alongside us.

Thank you for being such an inspiring force in Gorge preservation.



Lori Warner
Director of Philanthropy
lori@gorgefriends.org



Full moon rising over Government Cove. Photo by Jeremiah Leipold.

FINANCIAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024

Friends of the Columbia Gorge is fortunate to have the support and generosity of our donors, volunteers, activists, and partners. We have settled into a hybrid working model for staff, being relational rather than transactional with partners, and working with a mindset of diversity, equity, and inclusion while never losing sight of the ever-changing needs in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Consolidated results in fiscal year 2023-2024 show operating income at \$3 million and operating expenses at \$3 million. Operating income includes the planned annual draw from endowments and reserve funds set aside to cover current-year projects. Along with operating income Friends had donations and pledges of just over \$4 million for the Share the Wonder capital campaign and \$112 thousand gifted to our endowment fund.

Friends wants to do our part in being good citizens and paid \$67,650 in property taxes when we legally could be exempt from payment. These taxes help support Gorge communities and schools.

Our \$6.76 million endowments include the Matthew Winthrop Fund and Vic Clausen Fund for outdoor youth education and the Marjorie Abramovitz Fund for land trust activities. Endowments for general operations include the Conservation Director Endowment, the Mary D. and Thomas W. Holman Fund, the Nancy Russell Fund, and the Barbara Pooley Wilson Fund.

Friends takes an annual draw to help fund our work protecting, preserving, and stewarding the Gorge. Endowment funds are managed by Ferguson Wellman Capital Management and monitored by Friends’ board finance committee.

OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Friends believes that transparency is essential for ensuring accountability to our members, donors, partners, and the communities we work with. Friends of the Columbia Gorge is a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity and an Accredited Land Trust—a distinction awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

For additional information, including past annual reports, 990s, and other financial statements, visit gorgefriends.org/accountability.

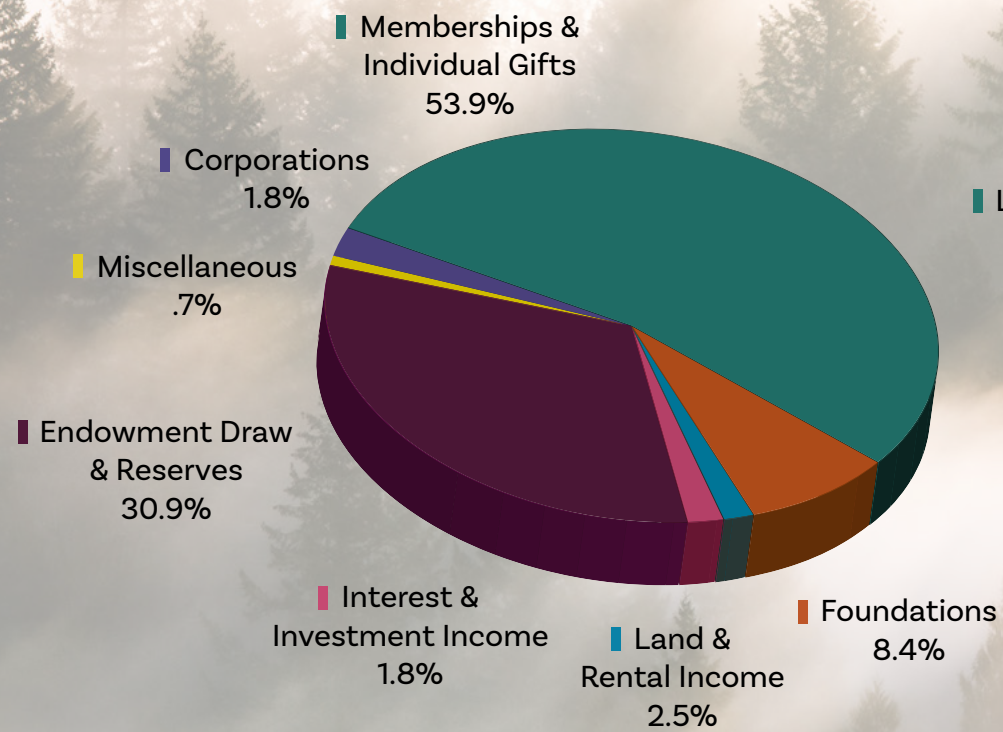


Paige Unangst
Finance Director

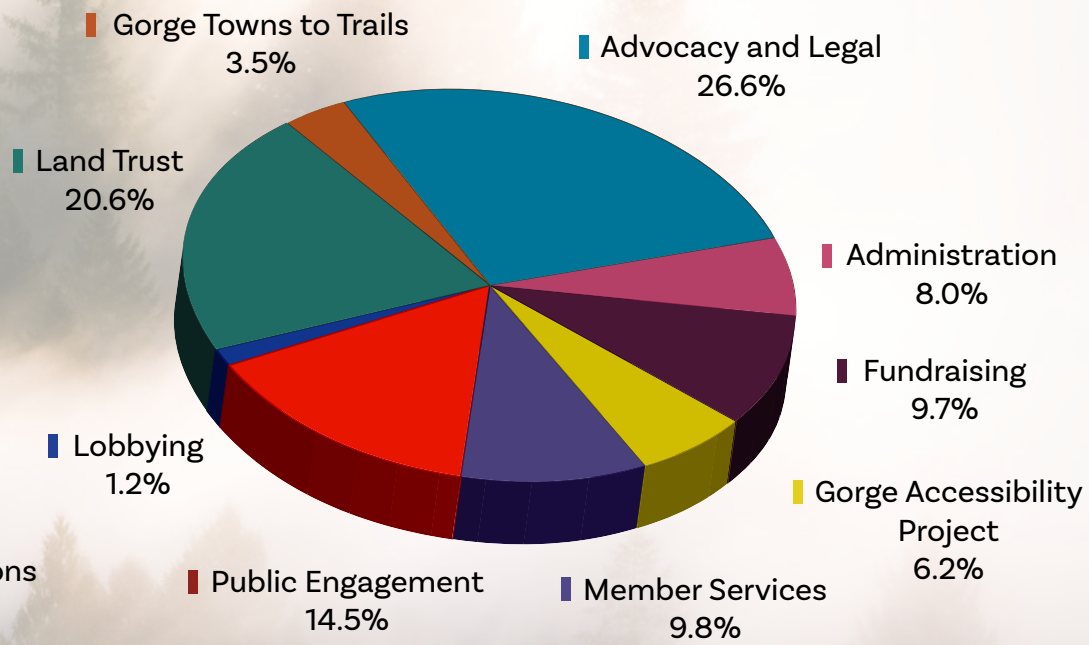
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	June 30, 2024	June 30, 2023
Land and Related Assets	\$ 14,299,339	\$ 10,239,744
Cash and Investments	\$ 9,992,338	\$ 9,886,822
Other Assets	\$ 3,011,470	\$ 1,618,677
Total Assets	\$ 27,303,147	\$ 21,745,243
Liabilities	\$ 2,164,809	\$ 421,846
Net Assets	\$ 25,138,338	\$ 21,323,397
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 27,303,147	\$ 21,745,243

OPERATING REVENUE: \$3,001,464



OPERATING EXPENSES: \$3,001,464



■ This is an unaudited financial statement. Friends' board engages Kern and Thompson, LLC, to perform an annual independent audit.



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The Norman Yeon Legacy Circle (NYLC) is a dedicated group of Friends supporters who have made a lasting commitment to conservation of the Columbia Gorge by making a provision for Friends of the Columbia Gorge in their estate plans. Through their gift planning, they will ensure the protection of this beautiful and wild landscape for generations to come.

We are thankful for the generous gifts of all our NYLC members. Thanks to their support, the Gorge will remain a vibrant, living place for future generations.



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James Chase
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Merle Clifton
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Jocelyn and William Cox
Kathy Cushman and Paul Miller
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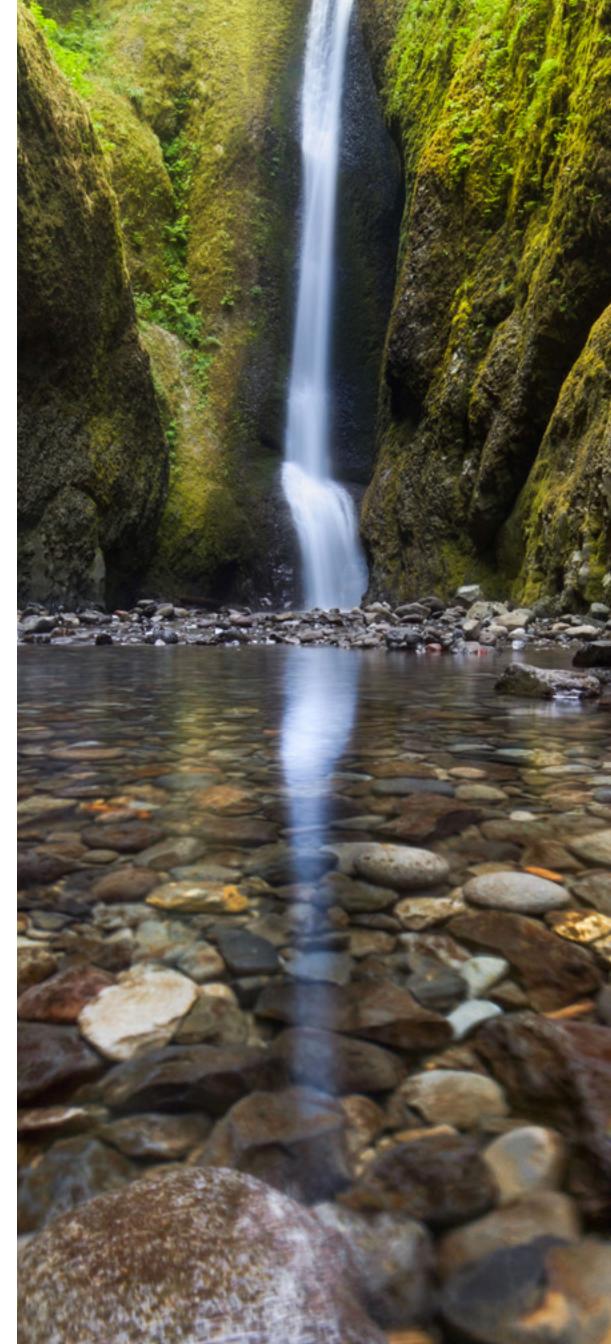
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Kelly Dennis
Michael Dianich
Mary Dickson
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Oneonta Falls. Photo by Max Peters.





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Diana Wolford
Beverly Wong
Sandy Wright
Jean Zylka
23 anonymous members

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Darvel Lloyd
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The generous support of our members makes all of our work possible. Thank you to our entire community for your passion and dedication to protecting the Gorge for today and future generations.



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\$50,000+

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THANK YOU!

We are deeply grateful to the incredible community that powers our legal, conservation, and education programs. A heartfelt thank you to all our members, advocates, volunteers, funders, and community partners for playing a vital role in protecting the Gorge. Your support is what makes it possible to keep the Gorge vibrant and accessible for all!

Bald eagles on a snowy morning in the Gorge. Photo by Gary Gilardi.