

SPRING 2024



*introducing*  
**SHARE THE  
WONDER**

A CAMPAIGN TO ACQUIRE LAND,  
RESTORE HABITAT, AND BUILD TRAILS  
IN THE COLUMBIA GORGE.

SPECIAL EDITION

PASSAGES





**Wonder.** As a recovering advertising copywriter, I am a lover of words and “wonder” is one of my favorites. Wonder became an essential part of Friends’ vocabulary seven years ago with the launch of Preserve the Wonder, a 2017 fundraising campaign to protect seven properties across the Columbia Gorge.

Preserve the Wonder featured a variety of beautiful properties that offered amazing habitat and created opportunities for future trails. But what they all shared was an ability to inspire wonder. While beauty, habitat, and trail opportunities are what you see, wonder is how these places make you feel. Wonder revives us, motivates us, refills us.

Now, we’re coming back to you with a new endeavor to take the next step in our 42-year (and counting) journey of wonder. **Share the Wonder is a \$6.6 million effort** to continue the important land acquisition we do, including saving amazing places like Heartleaf Bluffs (see page 3). Share the Wonder is also about funding stewardship and restoration work to return key lands, surrounded by open public lands, to their natural states. Finally, the Share the Wonder campaign helps bring the longtime dream of a trail system from Mosier to The Dalles to fruition.

As you can see, “share” means many things in this campaign. We are buying lands and restoring them to share with the plants and animals impacted by development and a changing climate. We are sharing our restoration and recreation planning processes with communities that historically have not been invited to the table, from Native and Latino communities to those with mobility issues. In this case, sharing is about thoughtfully and intentionally looking beyond our own self-interests.

This concept of sharing is most greatly exemplified through the generosity of our donors, many of whom have already stepped up. As of the printing of this magazine in early April 2024, Friends has raised 60% of our \$6.6 million goal, or nearly \$4 million. It has been extraordinary to see people who are inspired stretching their support, but more is still needed.

In the last year, I’ve witnessed this organization make the largest land acquisition in our history. I’ve seen our land trust team embrace its most ambitious restoration efforts. And I’ve seen the U.S. Forest Service enter into a partnership with us around recreation planning that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. It is staggering to consider just how far we’ve come. It leaves me in a state of...we’ll you’ve probably guessed it...wonder.

*Kevin*

Kevin Gorman, Executive Director

# contents



3

**Share the Wonder:  
Heartleaf Bluffs: A Gem  
Hiding in Plain Sight**



7

**Share the Wonder:  
Building Climate  
Resilience through  
Habitat Restoration**



11

**Share the Wonder:  
Gorge Towns to Trails  
Coming to Life**

**Refreshing Our  
Outdoor Programs**

15



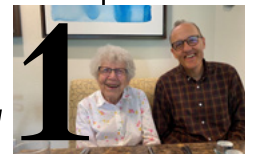
**Friends Litigates to  
Protect Endangered  
Western Gray Squirrels**

17



**A Tribute to Gorge  
Conservationist  
Phyllis Clausen**

21



Photos, top to bottom: Heartleaf Bluffs, Paloma Ayala; Cape Horn, Harold Carlson; Lyle Peak, Friends of the Columbia Gorge; She Who Watches, Chon Clayton; Western gray squirrel, Linda Steider; Phyllis Clausen, Friends of the Columbia Gorge

# Few places on the planet inspire genuine wonder.



That jaw-dropping, heart-stopping beauty that catches your breath and simultaneously shrinks you and expands the universe in one moment. The Columbia Gorge is such a place—truly one of the world’s great natural treasures. This magical corridor through the Cascades, which has served as a human passageway and trade route for tens of thousands of years, is made even more remarkable by its proximity to a major metropolitan area.

If we are to ensure the Columbia Gorge remains a natural wonder, we must protect it while inspiring younger generations and new leaders to carry on this critical work in the years and decades ahead.

The time is now to permanently protect land, restore and expand habitat to strengthen climate resilience, build new trail networks to benefit Gorge communities, and offer new opportunities for all to be immersed in and inspired by the grandeur of the Gorge.

**This is the vision of Share the Wonder.**

**DOWNLOAD THE BROCHURE**

Download the Share the Wonder brochure by clicking/tapping the button above or by visiting [sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/brochure](https://sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/brochure).

**WATCH THE CAMPAIGN VIDEO**

Watch the Share the Wonder anthem video by clicking/tapping the button above or by visiting [sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/anthem](https://sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/anthem).



# HEARTLEAF BLUFFS: A GEM HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

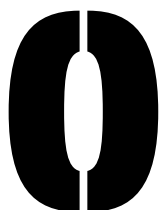




Text by  
Kevin Gorman



Executive Director



**OVER THE PAST CENTURY, THE GORGE HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY.** Roads, dams, power lines, housing development, and recreation trails have altered the landscape. But one 105-acre property in the Eastern Gorge remained unchanged. The same family owned it for decades without any development on the land, with the exception of farm roads and a small quarry. The property, with two large bluffs facing the Columbia, sits just above the Balfour-Klickitat Day Use Area and across the river from the Tom McCall Preserve. With no development applications throughout the history of the National Scenic Area, it was a truly a gem hidden in plain sight. That is, until it was put up for sale last

summer for \$2.4 million.

On a beautiful Monday morning in June 2023, Friends staff visited the property with a realtor. The land was zoned to allow two large homesites on the prominent bluffs boasting stunning vistas east and west down the Gorge. The property came with a “wow” factor that staff had experienced in only a handful of properties, including the land trust’s first purchase, the site of today’s Cape Horn/Nancy Russell Overlook. Before the tour was over, we were convinced we had to do everything in our power to purchase this special property.

However, we were faced with two significant challenges. The first was that our land trust acquisition fund was down to \$18,000—a bit short of the multi-million-dollar asking price. The second challenge, which we learned of later that day, was that the seller already had received a full-price offer for the property. But that offer required financing, while the seller preferred a cash offer. That provided us with a very small window of opportunity.

In the hyper-competitive real estate market of the Columbia Gorge, this is not unusual. Landowners who decide to sell their property typically receive multiple offers and commonly agree to offers above the listing price. Simply put, if you are not a cash buyer, you are most often not competitive. If you cannot





At 105 acres, Heartleaf Bluffs is the second-largest preserve currently owned by Friends. It sits above the Balfour-Klickitat Day Use Area, only one mile away from Friends' largest preserve, Lyle Cherry Orchard. The property is home to a diverse array of wildlife and plant life, including pristine stands of Oregon white oak and the widespread heartleaf buckwheat that inspired the preserve's name.

move quickly, you will miss the opportunity.

For Friends' land trust, our land acquisition fund provides the capital we need to be competitive—capital that allowed us to secure the Catherine Creek property a few miles down the road. But it wasn't the position we were in as we considered this amazing property.

However, the issue of a depleted land acquisition fund was not as dire as it sounds. We knew we would soon be launching the Share the Wonder campaign and that this preservation opportunity would inspire our supporters to contribute. And

we also knew we could secure a low-interest loan within a few days through Craft3, a nonprofit lender that can provide "bridge loans" for land acquisitions.

But there was already another full-price offer, so what we needed most urgently was someone who could make a cash offer within 24 hours. Then, if the offer was accepted, they could assign the contract to our land trust. So we began seeking out someone with the financial capability and the trust that we would follow through.

That real estate angel came in the form of one of



Opposite: Heartleaf Bluffs shows off its stunning natural beauty in different ways year-round. Main photo taken in July 2023 (Paloma Ayala). Inset photos taken in October 2023 (bottom left, Debbie Asakawa) and February 2024 (bottom right, Debbie Asakawa).



**4K AERIAL TOUR:** Discover the grandeur of Heartleaf Bluffs through 4K drone footage by clicking the button below or visiting [sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/heartleaf](https://sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/heartleaf).

**WATCH THE VIDEO**

our board members who co-owns a real estate development company. Staff asked the board member if their company could make a \$2.5 million cash offer (\$100,000 more than the offer they had already received) on the day following the site visit. They agreed, and from that point on, we moved quickly to secure a loan and get the necessary land trustee and board member approvals to proceed. After visiting the property for the first time on a Monday, by Friday Friends' land trust was in a contract to purchase the property.

With the acquisition secured, it was time to learn more about the property. Staff found an impressive oak forest and a variety of wildflowers, including the heartleaf buckwheat that inspired the preserve's name—Heartleaf Bluffs. Dry swales on the bluffs made us suspect there would be vernal ponds in

the spring, which turned out to be the case. Wildlife seen and expected to be seen includes bald eagles, black-tailed deer, coyotes, Lewis' and pileated woodpeckers, ground squirrels, and rattlesnakes. We have already begun conducting surveys of plant and animal activities and will know more as we go through four seasons of ownership. Decades of grazing have certainly impacted the habitat, but we expect to have on-site restoration volunteer opportunities by spring 2025.

As the most expensive acquisition in our land trust's 19-year history, the task now is to raise the funds to finish this transaction. Consider making a gift to Share the Wonder to help preserve places like Heartleaf Bluffs, as well as future gems hiding in plain sight. 🌿



# BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGH HABITAT RESTORATION

Text by Sara Woods, Stewardship Manager,  
& Frances Fischer, Preserves Manager

IN 2020, FRIENDS ACQUIRED TWO SPECTACULAR PROPERTIES AT CAPE HORN AND CATHERINE CREEK. EACH HOLDS EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITIES FOR HABITAT RESTORATION AND ACCESSIBLE RECREATION. DONATIONS TO SHARE THE WONDER WILL SET THE STAGE FOR NATURAL RECOVERY OF THESE LANDS AND MAKE THEM MORE RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

Throughout this article, you'll encounter the term "climate resilience." What does it mean? Watch a short explainer video by visiting [sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/climate-resilience](https://sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/climate-resilience) or by clicking the button below.

WHAT IS CLIMATE RESILIENCE?

S

INCE FRIENDS' LAND TRUST WAS FOUNDED, we have prioritized purchasing land for ecological resources and, on a handful of occasions, to build recreational hiking trails. Our stewardship goals for these projects have typically been to improve an already natural landscape. Share the Wonder will fund a brand-new horizon for Friends: restoring and developing degraded lands to boost climate resilience and complement existing public recreation sites.

In recent years, Friends has acquired two preserves adjacent to popular U.S. Forest Service-owned Gorge trails at Cape Horn and Catherine Creek.

Both properties came with multiple buildings and highly degraded areas, including a hayfield at Cape Horn and an old horse pen and abandoned quarry at Catherine Creek. Friends members like you have learned a lot about the planned development of accessible recreation opportunities at these sites, but this article will focus more on the ecological restoration plans for Cape Horn and Catherine Creek. Not only will there be beautiful, accessible facilities at both of these preserves, but there will be oak groves and meadows and restored habitat for wildlife.

Over the last few years, our stewardship staff has worked to prepare Cape Horn and Catherine Creek for restoration. Our goal for stewardship



Cape Horn © Kenji Sugahara

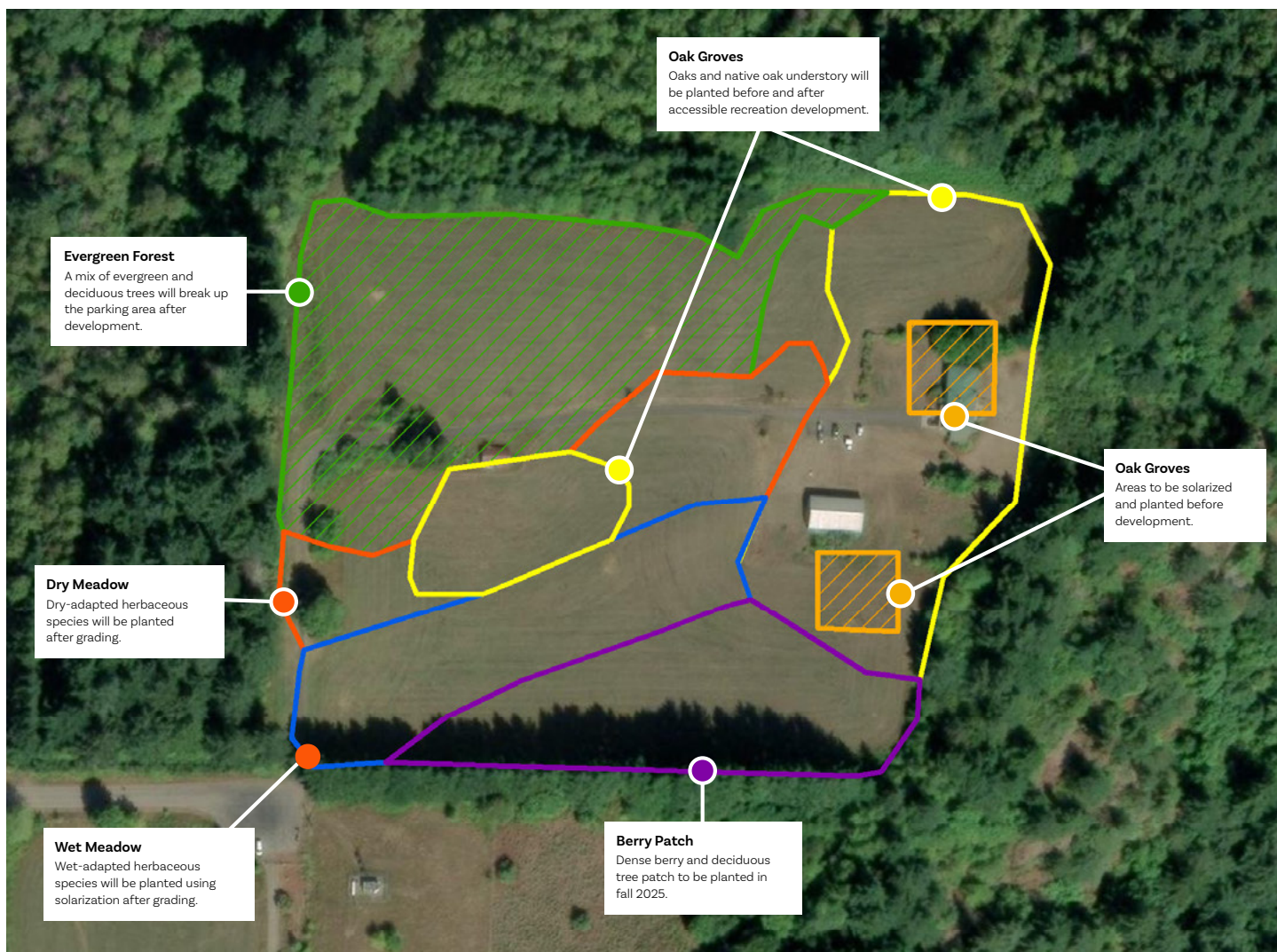
at these sites is to improve habitat by increasing biodiversity and restoring ecosystem functions that build climate resilience by controlling invasive weed infestations and removing human-made materials (fences and buildings) on site so that native species can be reintroduced. Given the high level of invasive weeds and buildings at both sites, this strategy was more daunting than at other properties our land trust has acquired over the years. First, we needed to stabilize the sites to prepare them for large-scale stewardship. We gathered information through conducting botanical, wildlife, and cultural surveys. Then we started the great removal. For Cape Horn, that meant removing a quarter mile of fence, infestations of Himalayan blackberry, and large overgrown ornamental plants. For Catherine Creek, that meant removing horse barns, pole barns, garages, telephone poles, and a home-spun plumbing system (whew)!

This year, thanks to generous contributions to Share the Wonder, the stewardship team will continue these projects by removing more buildings, preparing sections of Cape Horn's hayfield for planting, and implementing forest

management practices. Houses and outbuildings are scheduled to be deconstructed at both sites while repurposing and recycling as much of the unwanted material as possible. This work is very labor intensive and costly—even more so than a typical demolition since more time and effort is required to salvage materials.

Although we still have more to remove, we are all feeling ready to add to these places and create something new! Much of the restoration work in 2024 will focus on Cape Horn. The preserve's 12-acre hayfield is our first target. Part of the area will be developed as an accessible recreation site, and the rest will be restored to a mixture of evergreen forest, native meadows, and most prominently, climate-resilient oak groves. Oregon white oaks were once abundant in the Western Gorge, but many of these slow-growing, drought-tolerant trees were logged from the landscape around 100 years ago. Introducing more oaks to Cape Horn will increase native biodiversity and climate resilience. And we're not alone. The U.S. Forest Service, the Washington Department of Natural Resources, and others are also part of this multi-agency effort to boost the oak population in the area.





Funded by donations to Share the Wonder, our habitat restoration work at Cape Horn will include an evergreen forest, a berry patch, wet and dry meadows, and multiple oak groves.

This spring, in collaboration with a forester, we'll begin strategically cutting some Douglas firs to open the canopy and reduce competition among the remaining trees, allowing them to grow in a natural pattern. A handful of trees will become "snags," the term for a standing dead tree that allows animals like birds, squirrels, and more to use the tree as both a food source (through insects that live in the dead wood) and a habitat (through cavity nests). This project will create a healthier, more biodiverse forest well on its way to old-growth status.

Much of the Cape Horn Preserve that is now hayfield will become open oak groves and native meadows, but some areas will be converted into more densely growing forest similar to the species already present along the Cape Horn Trail. In one section of the hayfield, we are starting what we are

calling the "berry patch." Once the invasive weeds in this acre-sized area are controlled, we'll plant deciduous trees and shrubs like maples, dogwoods, alders, and cherry species along with a variety of native berries. We are hoping to create a jungle feel for visitors on this section of accessible trail with towering and creeping native berries including elderberry, blackcap raspberry, salmonberry, and thimbleberry.

Finally, we are beginning to plan oak groves. Oaks are slow growers, which is not particularly convenient when you hope to create a park with a little shade out of a hayfield. We plan to get as many oaks planted as soon as possible before construction begins to get a head start. We began this project in fall 2023 when we collected acorns from Cape Horn and other areas of the Gorge and planted them in small pots. These acorns will be

tended to for a few years before we transfer them to their new home in our oak groves.

We are preparing our flagship oak grove locations this spring by installing solarization patches that control invasive weeds by exhausting the seed bed in the top layer of soil, a strategy that we have been testing at our Mosier Plateau property. This is done in spring by tilling the area, wetting the surface, and covering the area with a large sheet of plastic. This approach creates a greenhouse effect that is conducive to seed germination (warm and damp) but not plant growth (very hot). Under the plastic, seeds sprout and the weed seedlings begin to have some initial growth. But soon, the summer heat makes the temperatures unbearable for the young plants and they wither away.



Solarization patch installation at Mosier Plateau. Photo by Frances Fischer.

This happens over and over until most of the seeds are exhausted. We will leave the plastic in place for a year or two, then in the fall, remove it and plant our oak seedlings along with their shorter herbaceous plant buddies. In the meantime, we need to protect the thin plastic and our little plant seedlings from our wildlife friends like deer and elk, so if you visit Cape Horn this summer, you will see some tall fencing surrounding our solarization plots.

As you can see, we have our work cut out for us at Cape Horn and Catherine Creek (*read the box on the right for details on the upcoming house removal at Catherine Creek*). But with your generous support through Share the Wonder, we're ready to tackle these critical projects to turn both sites into climate-resilient havens for both native wildlife and people. We're so excited for what's to come, and we're glad you're here with us. 🌱

## CATHERINE CREEK UPDATE

When Friends of the Columbia Gorge purchased the Catherine Creek property in fall 2020, the four-acre parcel was packed with structures. A half dozen outbuildings, including dilapidated sheds, barns, and a garage were removed in 2021. This reduced the visual impact of the property from nearby trails and allowed native vegetation to move into those areas.

In the next stage of restoration at Catherine Creek, the final building on site—a residential house (see *photo below*)—will be removed later this year. The residence was constructed around 2006 and has never been in compliance with building standards in the National Scenic Area. Its tall glass windows are visible from the Historic Columbia River Highway across the river, and the structure dominates the visual experience on some portions of the Catherine Creek Universal Access Trail. Removal of the house could take up to six weeks, and all suitable materials will be recycled or reused after deconstruction. Once the house is removed (and the materials recycled), the western portion of the property will be planted with native vegetation that can thrive at this hot, dry site. Recognizing those conditions are only going to worsen with climate change, there will be an emphasis on planting and establishing Oregon white oak.



By the time the wildflowers bloom in 2025, people on the Catherine Creek trail system will enjoy the magnificent views—this time without the house for the first time in nearly 20 years.



# GORGE TOWNS TO TRAILS COMING TO LIFE

Text by Renée Tkach,  
Gorge Towns to Trails Project Manager



Hiking at Tom McCall Preserve. © Friends of the Columbia Gorge

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**S ONE OF THE THREE PILLARS OF SHARE THE WONDER, GORGE TOWNS TO TRAILS IS POSITIONED TO TAKE A** major step forward with the success of the campaign. Once completed, the 200-mile loop trail network will connect communities with recreation, promote alternative transportation options, and create a spectacular hiking experience for people from around the world. It will also help alleviate overcrowding at popular trails, ease traffic congestion on the Historic Columbia River Highway, and introduce people to spectacular but less visited areas of the Gorge in both Oregon and Washington. To date, 80% of the lands necessary to complete the loop are already secured and 45% of the trail miles are in place.

The time is now to take the next leap toward making our vision a reality.

A trail linking the Eastern Gorge towns of Mosier and The Dalles is one of the most critical gaps in the loop. Filling this gap with a connecting trail would mark a major milestone in this ambitious project. Funding from Share the Wonder will support planning with the U.S. Forest Service on the Mosier-to-The Dalles trail, including identifying trail corridors and conducting land surveys to map geologic hazards, wetlands, and other natural infrastructure that will dictate trail routing.

The goal is not only a remarkable recreation opportunity but also economic and social benefits for the people and communities of the entire Gorge region. Continue reading to explore a timeline of Gorge Towns to Trails progress since 2011.

## **2011: Friends' Launches Gorge Towns to Trails**

Since its 2011 launch, support for Gorge Towns to Trails has grown and become intertwined with city, county, and regional planning efforts. It was recently named one of Oregon's Signature Trails.



### 2013: Mosier Plateau Trail

In 2013, Friends' land trust opened the Mosier Plateau Trail to the public. Mosier Plateau attracts visitors from all over the Columbia Gorge for its vibrant wildflower displays. The trailhead is located in the heart of the charming town of Mosier, Oregon. The trail passes through the historic town cemetery and near the Mosier Creek Falls swimming hole before continuing onto our 45-acre preserve.

### 2016: Gorge Tourism Studio: Priority Recreation Project

The 2016 Gorge Tourism Studio, hosted by Travel Oregon, brought sustainable tourism development to the forefront for Gorge communities. Numerous government agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations came together to create a vision for what the region should look like in 15 years. Gorge Towns to Trails was identified as a priority recreation project within the vision plan.

### 2016: Washougal Waterfront Trail

Formerly home to a lumber mill, the Washougal Waterfront Trail opened up a stretch of Columbia River shoreline formerly inaccessible to hikers. The Port of Camas-Washougal and the City of Washougal partnered with Friends to bring this trail to life and positioned it as the launching pad for Gorge Towns to Trails on the Washington side.

### 1980s-Present: Historic Columbia River Highway

The restoration of the Historic Columbia River Highway began in the 1980s. When the Mitchell Point Tunnel opens later this year, nearly 20 of 22 miles of abandoned and destroyed sections will have been reconnected with two miles left for the final connection to Hood River. Gorge Towns to Trails and the Historic Highway State Trail projects are interconnected through the shared goal of providing access and recreation opportunities to connect the Gorge through a system of trails.

### 2020: Steigerwald Lake Restoration and Trail

In 2020, Friends transferred a 160-acre riverfront property called Steigerwald Shores to U.S. Fish and Wildlife. This property offers nearly a mile of riverfront, with dramatic views of Crown Point, Vista House, and the



Mosier Plateau Trail. Photo by Cate Hotchkiss.



The Compass, part of the Washougal Waterfront Trail. Photo by Mitch Hammontree.



Restoration of the Mosier Twin Tunnels was a significant milestone in the effort to rebuild the Historic Highway from Troutdale to The Dalles. (Oregon State Archives)



Gibbons Creek Trail at Steigerwald. Photo by Debbie Asakawa.





**Mosier has long supported the local “Plateau Trail” created and maintained by our Gorge partner, Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Local recreation not only supports our economy, it fosters health and wellness and appreciation for this magnificent landscape. Our continued partnership will yield fabulous outdoor opportunities for generations to come.”**

- MOSIER MAYOR WITT ANDERSON



Two additional loops were added to Friends' Lyle Cherry Orchard in 2020 and 2021. Photo by Cate Hotchkiss.



Pictured here, Mt. Ulka will connect the Discovery Center to The Dalles Riverfront Trail. Photo by Cate Hotchkiss.

peak of Mt. Hood. Within the Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge, the property gave U.S. Fish & Wildlife a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to expand the refuge and undertake the largest-ever habitat restoration project on the lower Columbia River. The project converted farmland back to wetland and reconnected over 900 acres of floodplain to the Columbia River. In addition to habitat restoration, the project relocated and expanded the existing trail and brought us one step closer to a Washougal-to-Stevenson Gorge Towns to Trails connection.

### **2020: Lyle Cherry Orchard Trail Expansions Completed**

In 2020, the Washington Trails Association (WTA) completed construction of the Cherry Loop on the existing trail, creating an additional .8 miles of new trail and rerouting problematic sections. In 2021, WTA completed construction of the Lyle Loop, which added two more miles to the Lyle Cherry Orchard trail system.

### **2022: Signature Trail Designation**

Through the 2022 Oregon Signature Trails Inventory process, Gorge Towns to Trails was identified as one of 15 trails with the existing infrastructure, support, and momentum to provide access to iconic landscapes and world-class trail experiences.

### **2023: Mosier to The Dalles Trail Conceptual Design**

Friends and the U.S. Forest Service Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area have jointly announced an initiative to engage the community in the planning and development of a new link in Gorge Towns to Trails connecting Mosier to The Dalles, Oregon. Learn more at [mosiertothedallestrail.org](https://mosiertothedallestrail.org).

### **2024: Mount Ulka Overlook & Trail**

A proposal to connect a trail from the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum and The Dalles Riverfront Trail to a Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust preserve on Seven Mile Hill is under consideration and in the design phase. With the assistance of Trailkeepers of Oregon, we have developed a viable six-mile roundtrip route exploring endless views of the Gorge, Mt. Hood, and The Dalles area. 🌲

# Share the Wonder.

It's far more than a name for our campaign. It's an ideological beacon that guides our work every day, and an ethos that underpins the reality that the Gorge is for all only if we join together to make it so.

Now, the time is right to acquire new properties, restore Cape Horn and Catherine Creek to their full potential as spaces for both wildlife and people, and forge new Gorge Towns to Trails connections.

Share the Wonder is our moment to unite around a common vision for the future of the Gorge that we all hold dear. By investing in the campaign, you join an inner circle of citizen conservationists who fuel our work to preserve this ecological wonder for today and future generations. We are grateful to have you on our team, and welcome you aboard the journey to write the next chapter of the story of Gorge conservation.

**Make a gift to help ensure that the Gorge stays wondrous, wild, and open to all for generations to come.**

Explore the campaign, learn more about ways to give, and make your contribution by visiting **[sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org](https://sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org)** or by clicking the button on the right.

**EXPLORE  
SHARE THE  
WONDER**



# REFRESHING OUR OUTDOOR PROGRAMS: EMBRACING CHANGE AND COMMUNITY

Text by  
Melissa Gonzalez

Outdoor Programs Manager

**I**N OUR CONTINUOUS PURSUIT OF PROVIDING ENRICHING outdoor experiences in the Gorge, Friends has sought to refresh our outdoor programs. This decision emerged from acknowledging our staff's struggle to meet the high demand for our hike-centered schedule, leading us to reevaluate our program's purpose and the communities we engage with.

## Change was Needed

Our decision to revamp our outdoor programs stemmed from recognizing that our staff was stretched thin due to overwhelming demand for our previous schedule. What became clear was that the pace at which we were leading hikes was unsustainable. The pandemic gave us time to reflect, so we paused our programming and reevaluated our purpose. We learned that by solely offering hikes, we were missing opportunities to connect with a diverse range of community members who may not or cannot connect with nature through hiking. By shifting our focus to offering a wider array of outdoor experiences, which we now call “guided outings,” we would have more opportunities to introduce more people from diverse communities that we haven’t historically worked with while still engaging our existing dedicated supporters through hikes.

## An Expansion of Outdoor Opportunities

In addition to continuing our decadeslong tradition of leading hikes, we are gradually expanding our offerings to include a variety of guided outings tailored to different interests and abilities. These outings include birding, art in the outdoors, mindfulness walks, bike rides, outings fully in Spanish, and much more. Our guided outings offer a connection to nature and new

## SAMPLE 2024 OUTINGS

### FOREST BATHING HIKE AT SAMS WALKER

- Join us on an easy hike through the Sams Walker Day Use area to practice and engage with the concept of slow hiking or forest bathing. We'll hike portions of the trail in silence, whisper when communicating, and have individual sessions of static forest bathing.

### THE HANGING GARDENS OF THE GORGE – UPPER McCORD FALLS TRAIL

- Join us on an unforgettable adventure to uncover a hidden gem along the Upper McCord Falls Trail. Be prepared to be mesmerized by a kaleidoscope of wildflowers adorning the trail's walls.

### CAMINEMOS JUNTOS (LET'S WALK TOGETHER): CAMINATA SALUDABLE EN EL PARQUE (HEALTHY WALK IN THE PARK)

- Únete a nosotros para una caminata relajante en el parque mientras hablamos sobre la importancia de la actividad física para la salud. (Join us for a relaxing walk in the park as we discuss the importance of physical activity for health. Spanish only.)

### SPRING BIKE RIDE ON THE HISTORIC HIGHWAY

- Enjoy a 12-mile roundtrip bike ride from Wyeth Trailhead to Viento State Park, a paved, non-motorized section of the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail.

### OPENING TO NATURE MINDFULNESS WALK AT DOETSCH DAY-USE

- Join us for “Opening to Nature,” a two-hour event designed to reduce stress, calm the mind, and foster a deeper connection with the natural world.

To view the latest spring-summer guided outings schedule, visit [gorgefriends.org/outings](https://gorgefriends.org/outings). To receive updates when we open new events for registration, subscribe to our mailing list at [gorgefriends.org/subscribe](https://gorgefriends.org/subscribe).



Participants in a Friends guided outing enjoy the rugged beauty of Dancing Rock in the Eastern Gorge. Photo by Melissa Gonzalez.

experiences for everyone. By broadening our scope, we aim to engage a wider audience and create opportunities for people of all backgrounds to connect with the outdoors.

We are also thrilled to collaborate with many community groups and agency partners to offer guided outings, as we recognize that we are not the sole experts in all types of outdoor experiences. By partnering with other organizations, we aim to enrich our offerings and ensure a diverse range of high-quality outdoor experiences for all participants. With the help of our partners, we can also dismantle barriers to the outdoors and create a more equitable outdoor experience for all.


### Join Us in this New Chapter

In reimagining our outdoor programs, we set out on a path of growth, inclusivity, and exploration. By listening to our community and embracing change while also staying true to our core values, we're confident that our revamped guided outings will inspire and engage adventurers of all ages and backgrounds. While we expand our offerings to reach new communities, we also value maintaining connections with those who have supported us throughout our journey. We hope you'll join us as we embark on this new chapter in Friends' outdoor programs. ■



Cycling on the Historic Columbia River Highway Trail from Wyeth to Viento State Park (top right). Capturing fall hues during a watercolor painting lesson at Benson State Recreation Area (bottom right). Photos by Melissa Gonzalez.





Text by Nathan Baker,  
Senior Staff Attorney, and  
Kenzie Hammond, Youth &  
Community Education Specialist

# FRIENDS LITIGATES TO PROTECT ENDANGERED WESTERN GRAY SQUIRRELS

Western gray squirrel © Linda Steider

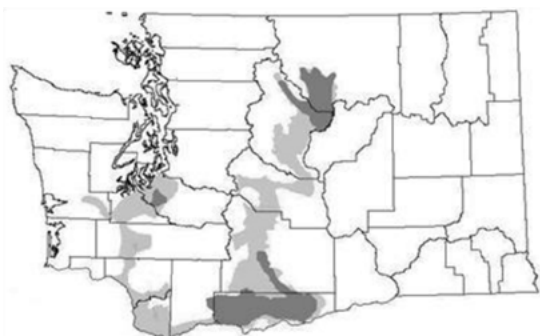
**I**N LATE FEBRUARY, FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA Gorge, along with a coalition of several other conservation organizations, filed suit against the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and its Commissioner of Public Lands for failing to comply with state law for protecting endangered wildlife species. The case, filed in Clark County Superior Court, involves DNR's failure to propose critical habitat for the western gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*), which was officially listed as "endangered" in the state of Washington in late 2023.

The western gray squirrel was previously listed as state "threatened" in Washington beginning in 1993. However, in large part because state agencies never adopted any protections for the species

following that listing, its numbers continued to decline. Today, only a few hundred western gray squirrels remain in Washington scattered into three isolated populations, one of which is in the Eastern Columbia Gorge.

The western gray is the largest native species of tree squirrel in Washington, and it can be identified by its long, bushy, mostly gray, silver-tipped fur, and its white underbelly. The western gray should not be confused with the invasive and very prevalent eastern gray squirrel, which can be found throughout the Pacific Northwest, including in urban areas and even in your backyard. Unlike western grays, eastern grays have reddish-brown fur on their faces, backs, and tails.

Western gray squirrels depend on full-canopy forests that transition from dry coniferous trees (such as ponderosa pines) to deciduous trees (such as Oregon white oak). They rely on oak trees as natal den sites and their acorns as a food source. In addition to oak acorns, they also eat nuts, berries, tree buds, and other plant material. Mixed oak-pine-fir woodlands are an increasingly diminishing habitat in the Columbia River Gorge. In this sense, the continued population decline of the western gray squirrel is an indicator of the health of this rare habitat.



Historic (light) and current (dark; estimated in 2010) range of the western gray squirrel in Washington (WDFW).

The biggest threat to the western gray squirrel is habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation. In many areas within the Columbia Gorge and elsewhere in Washington, oak woodlands have been converted to softwood stands of Douglas fir trees due to fire suppression and commercial logging practices. State wildlife studies have determined that the biggest factor specifically affecting the Gorge population of western grays is forest practices, including clearcuts and thinning on private lands. These forest practices are regulated by the DNR and the Washington Forest Practices Board.



Western gray squirrels rely on mixed oak-pine-fir woodlands as both a nesting site and a food source. On the left, a western gray nest rests in the branches of a ponderosa pine (photo by Gary Bell, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife). The photo on the right (Cate Hotchkiss) shows an Oregon white oak ecosystem, another critical habitat for the endangered species.

proposing critical habitat has passed, the DNR still has not taken this required action and has not announced any plans for doing so, despite reminders from more than 100 Friends members and other concerned citizens.

The DNR's failures to comply with state law left Friends with no other option than to file suit. Friends, joined by the Vancouver Audubon Society, Friends of the White Salmon River, the Center for Biological Diversity, and WildEarth Guardians, filed the case on February 23, 2024. The case has been assigned to Superior Court



Given the western gray squirrel's declining numbers for decades, state wildlife agencies recently determined that a change in its listing status was due. In late 2023, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission listed the western gray as state "endangered" under state law because it is "native to the state of Washington," it is "seriously threatened with extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range within the state," and it is "in need of protection and/or management to ensure [the species'] survival as free-ranging populations in Washington."

Following that endangered listing, which was effective December 28, 2023, the DNR had 30 days under state law to propose critical habitat for the western gray squirrel as an immediate, emergency measure to help protect the species from the harmful effects of logging in the short term while the agencies develop a plan for the species' long-term survival and ultimate recovery.

Unfortunately, although the 30-day deadline for

Judge Derek J. Vanderwood. Among other requested relief, Friends and our co-petitioners seek a court order requiring the DNR to comply with the law.

So far, the DNR has taken the position that it is not required to propose critical habitat, even though the law expressly requires such a proposal within 30 days. The DNR also contends that it lacks the scientific expertise to know how to comply with its own rules, and argues that Friends and the other petitioners lack standing to enforce these rules. The case will be litigated over the coming weeks and months.

Rare wildlife species that are on the brink of extinction in the state of Washington, including the western gray squirrel in the Columbia River Gorge, should not have to wait for state agencies like the DNR to comply with their express legal duties and deadlines. Friends will continue to advocate and litigate for the protection of the western gray and other important wildlife species in the Gorge. ■





**NEW INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE:** Friends is proud to introduce new state-of-the-art trail signage—the first on a Friends preserve—that makes Lyle Cherry Orchard one of the most interactive trails in the Pacific Northwest. Seven interpretive panels offer insight into the rich history of the preserve and the Columbia Gorge as a whole through multimedia content focusing on Indigenous legends of the Gorge, wildfire ecology, geological history, and more. Next time you're in the Eastern Gorge, be sure to check it out! Stay tuned for a full story on the process of creating the panels in the summer 2024 Passages magazine. Photos by Paloma Ayala (top right, top left) and Monique Trevett (top left, bottom left).

# FRIENDS SUPPORTING NEW WASHOUGAL NONPROFIT SEEKING TO STOP DEVELOPMENT OF 'ADVENTURE PARK'

Despite intense community pushback, serial lawbreaker Derek Hoyte is continuing his plans to operate an amusement park on a 150-acre site at 4101 Canyon Creek Road along the banks of the Washougal River. The park would feature a “mountain coaster,” zip line course, net park, and event venue. This effort comes after numerous run-ins with the law over nonpermitted zip lines in both the Columbia Gorge and Maui, Hawaii, over the past 15 years.



Neighbors are concerned about noise, traffic impacts, safety, environmental degradation, increased demand for public safety resources, and a likely end to the rural character everyone in the area holds dear. In response, residents Teresa Robbins and Keith Brown created a nonprofit to oppose the project, Preserving Washougal and West End Rural Character (PWWERC).

PWWERC organized neighbors, gathered information, and spread the word about the adventure park, which became conditionally allowable as an outdoor recreational facility through a loophole created by a 2021 zoning change that allowed outdoor recreation in the West End Community Comprehensive Subarea Plan (WECCSP). PWWERC has been working diligently to encourage the Skamania County Planning Commission to make appropriate changes that would not allow large-scale recreational facilities next to residential areas.



**THE LOCATION CHANGES, BUT DEREK HOYTE'S STORY REMAINS THE SAME: HE FINDS A PICTURESQUE PIECE OF LAND, STRINGS UP A FEW ZIP LINES AND OPERATES NONPERMITTED TOURS UNTIL THE COUNTY COMES KNOCKING."**

**READ THE  
STORY**

- THE MAUI NEWS, JULY 13, 2016 (click the button for the full story)

PWWERC's actions and appeal to the Skamania County Board of Commissioners, who unanimously voted to put a moratorium on any recreational development while the county reviews and potentially modifies definitions of “recreational facilities” and “recreational activities” and closes a gap in any misunderstandings of what the plan intended. PWWERC is also asking county planners to remove 17 conditional uses that it feels conflict with the WECCSP.

While all that sounds promising, the effort is far from done. Skamania County has still not changed its definitions or language in its ordinances. Until that happens, the threat of a rural character-ending amusement park still persists.

If you want to help or get more information, please reach out to our friends at PWWERC by visiting their website at [preservewashougalriver.org](https://preservewashougalriver.org).



# A GIANT IN ALMOST EVERY WAY: A TRIBUTE TO GORGE CONSERVATIONIST PHYLLIS CLAUSEN

Thousands of people have interacted with Friends of the Columbia Gorge over the decades, but few made the kind of impact that Phyllis Clausen did. Phyllis passed away in late 2023 in Olympia, Washington, at the age of 99.

Sharing the diminutive stature and fierce determination of former Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Phyllis helped transform our organization as well as the Gorge landscapes.



Phyllis Clausen with Friends Executive Director Kevin Gorman. Photo by Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

Phyllis began volunteering with Friends in the mid-1980s as she and her husband Vic raised their three daughters in Vancouver, Washington. She and Vic later moved to Trout Lake and her love affair with the Gorge and the White Salmon River deepened.

In the 1990s, Phyllis made it her mission to ensure the demolition of the Condit Dam, a century-old dam along the White Salmon River with no fish passage. She rallied numerous conservation



Phyllis was instrumental in the removal of the Condit Dam. Photo by Hydropower Reform Coalition.

## TRIBUTE GIFTS

November 30, 2023 - March 24, 2024

**In honor of Paul Ahnberg & Peggy Shashy**  
Cole Ahnberg

**In honor of Debbie Akasawa**  
Monica Kaul

**In honor of Nathan Baker and Steve McCoy**  
Jodi and Vince Ready

**In honor of Stephen E. Blackman**  
Janet Metzger

**In honor of Keith Brown and Teresa Robbins**  
Jill Turner

**In honor of Sid Bruckert-Frisk**  
Robert Bullard

**In honor of Hal Carman**  
Anne Goetz

**In honor of Steve Carples**  
Harris Newman

**In honor of Don & Shirley Clark**  
Sandra Morey

**In honor of Holly Coit**  
Susan Coit

**In honor of Frank Cole**  
Valerie Soll

**In honor of Bruce Connelly**  
Kathleen Schueler

**In honor of Peter Cornelison**  
Gigi Pomerantz

**In honor of Joe Dyer**  
Jackie Willwerth

**In honor of Marvel Gillespie**  
Anne Millman

**In honor of Donald Gonthier**  
Diane Gonthier

**In honor of John Harrison**  
Jerry and Lisa Eckstein

**In honor of Edward Holden**  
Linda Holden

**In honor of Christina Iskandar**  
Helen Fibbs

**In honor of Kevin Gorman & Michelle Kinsella**  
Justin Carroll and Keren Rosenblum

**In honor of Alvin and Helen Lechner**  
Don and Priscilla Bee

**In honor of Hannah May**  
Patricia Toccalino

**In honor of Marilyn McFarlane**  
John Parkhurst

**In honor of Mark M. Miller**  
Maureen Esser

**In honor of Michele Miller and Robert Schlichting**  
Kathryn Schlichting

**In honor of Kathleen Millet**  
Mary Marchant

**In honor of Mills family**  
Norma and Arnold Zack

**In honor of Ellen and Walt Peck**  
Barb Wayson and Mike Wyman

**In honor of Mark Pyrch**  
Steven and Cynthia Addams

**In honor of Jagadeeswari & Ramakrishna Rao**  
Kamesh Pidaparthi

**In honor of Sharon Ross**  
Debbie and Steve Asakawa; Bruce Cantwell and Elizabeth Laskey; Jim Carlisle and Kayleen Shiiba; Joan and Steve Carples; Diane Koopman; Patricia Kramer and Clifford Temple; James Jarzabek and Teresa Meyer; Dave and Karen Johnson; Linda and Tom Lovett; Suzanne McNally; Marjory and Mark Morford; Jolette Owen; Susan Palmiter; Ellen and Charles Stearns; Stephen Rallison and Sharon Stern; Kate Swabey; Elaine Vislocky; Carolyn

organizations, including Friends of the Columbia Gorge, to join her cause and nearly 20 years later, when the dam finally came down, Phyllis had a front-row seat. She then successfully campaigned to obtain Wild and Scenic protection for a portion of the upper river. She later wrote, *“In my last moments on earth, I believe creative emotions will allow me to sit on the high bank next to the White Salmon, smiling down on those free-flowing waters.”*

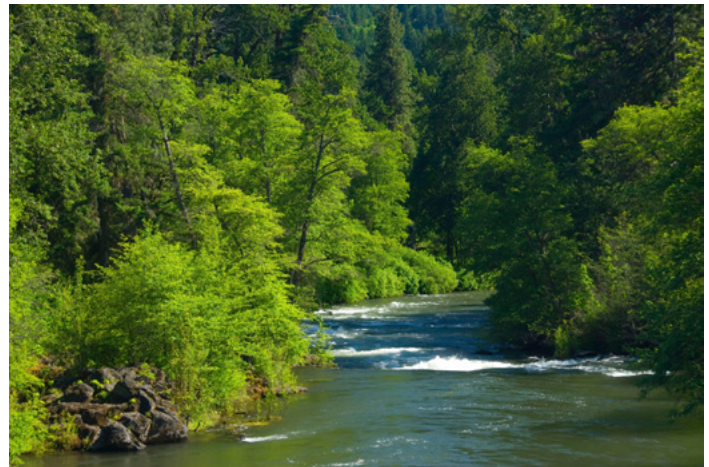
Her attention then turned to future generations. A chat she had with Friends’ Founder Nancy Russell led both of them to wonder if future generations would care about Gorge protection. The conversation spurred Phyllis to work with

Friends’ staff and fund a youth education program called “Explore the Gorge” directed at Washougal school children. Her vision and generosity have helped thousands of children over the last decade discover the Gorge in ways they never had, from the subtle natural beauty of Steigerwald to the geologic grandeur of Beacon Rock. She created a program that is now interwoven into the fabric of the Washougal community.

Phyllis Clausen was indeed a giant in almost every way and her decades of activism and service mentality will benefit all of us for years to come.



Through an endowment gift, Phyllis and husband Vic created Friends’ “Explore the Gorge” program with Washougal students. Photo by Paloma Ayala.



“In my last moments on earth, I believe creative emotions will allow me to sit on the high bank next to the White Salmon, smiling down on those free-flowing waters.” Photo by George Ostertag.

November 30, 2023 – March 24, 2024

## TRIBUTE GIFTS

Wills; Jean and Rob Wilson; Kathryn Wray

**In honor of Jennifer and Robert Stangel**

Joe Karp and Judy Burchell

**In honor of Wayne Stewart**

Ken Bierly

**In honor of ThinkShout**

Marti Frank and Lev Tsypin

**In honor of Earl Zentzis**

Daniel Monaghan

**In memory of Sue Alperin**

Leigh Knox

**In memory of Tovey Barron**

Tom Barron

**In memory of Jeremy Bechtel**

Myron Fehr and Ivy Velarde

**In memory of Ruth Blackburn**

Mary Montgomery

**In memory of Tim Boutz**

Tim Hohl

**In memory of Jo and Vaden Callister**

Nancy Buley

**In memory of Christine**

Luanne Lundberg

**In memory of Franklin Coale**

Lisa Coale

**In memory of Barbara Bruch Connelly**

John Connelly JR

**In memory of Stacy Dunn**

Stephen Mbah

**In memory of Chris Edwardsen**

Michael and Kay Carlisle; James Jacobson

**In memory of Lainey Hayley**

Raisa Premysler

**In memory of Joan Stephen**

Rallison and Sharon Stern

**In memory of Mac McLemore**

Jean, E. and Eugene McLemore

**In memory of Jay Nelson**

Bob and Betty Geltz; Klaus Frueh  
William Britt; Joanne Strussenberg

**In memory of Teri O’Leary**

Kathleen Brown

**In memory of Nancy Russell**

Anne and Ernest Munch

**In memory of William Savery**

Daniel Johnson and Leslie McBride

**In memory of George Schmidt**

Marcia Schmidt

**In memory of Paul Scholtens**

Meredith Savery

**In memory of Ronald Schroeder**

Shayne Flaherty

**In memory of Sam Seamons**

Tim Hohl

**In memory of Robert Shoemaker**

Joan Hoffman

**In memory of Janice Staver**

Jennifer Hohenlohe

**In memory of Richard Stratton**

Jim Stratton

**In memory of Mason Van Buren**

Emily Van Buren; Evans Van Buren and Marsha Warner

**In memory of Lena Williams**

Diane Reichenberger

**In memory of Matthew Winthrop**

Amy Winthrop; Howard and Jean Baumann; Anne and  
Kevin Winthrop; Amy and Kevin Kohnstamm



# FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

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## GIVE YOUR WAY

DONATE TO SHARE THE WONDER BY PHONE, MAIL, OR ONLINE

Welcome to Share the Wonder. Thank you for joining us to protect the Columbia Gorge.  
We're honored to have you on our team. Your support makes our work possible.

- To donate by phone or connect with our philanthropy team to learn more about ways to give to Share the Wonder, including stocks, QCD gifts, or donor-advised funds, call **503.241.3762**.
- Please address mailed donations to: Friends of the Columbia Gorge, 123 NE 3rd Ave., Suite 108, Portland, OR 97232, with checks payable to "Friends of the Columbia Gorge."
- Give now or make a donation pledge online on Friends' secure website at [sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/give](http://sharethewonder.gorgefriends.org/give) or by clicking the button on the right.
- Credit card gifts: Friends accepts Visa, Mastercard, and American Express. Make one-time gifts or schedule monthly installments.

**GIVE NOW**

Wildflowers at Tom McCall Preserve © Mitch Hammontree

There are many ways to include Friends of the Columbia Gorge in your legacy plans. When you include Friends in your will or estate plan, you're making an investment in the future of the Gorge's wondrous and wild living places for generations to come.

We would be happy to talk with you about the Norman Yeon Legacy Circle or other gift planning options.  
Call **503-241-3762** or email Lori Warner at [giftplanning@gorgefriends.org](mailto:giftplanning@gorgefriends.org).



Passages is a quarterly publication produced for members and supporters of Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

Founded in 1980, Friends of the Columbia Gorge is the only conservation organization entirely dedicated to protecting, preserving, and stewarding the Columbia Gorge for future generations. Friends has offices in Portland and Hood River, Oregon, and Washougal, Washington. Visit [gorgefriends.org](http://gorgefriends.org) to learn more. Send inquiries to [info@gorgefriends.org](mailto:info@gorgefriends.org) or call 503.241.3762.

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