



- BEHIND THE SCENES OF “THE WILDFLOWER WOMAN” SHORT FILM
- WHAT IF THE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA NEVER EXISTED?
- FRIENDS WELCOMES NEW CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

introducing

ALASHÍK PRESERVE

PASSAGES



On the morning following the 2024 presidential election, I woke up knowing it hadn't gone as I and so many of our members had hoped for. While I would have preferred staying home and talking to no one, that wasn't an option—Friends of the Columbia Gorge had scheduled the premiere of "The Wildflower Woman," an 18-minute short film about Gorge conservation legend Barbara Robinson that day.

The film, wholly conceived and created by our Digital Content Producer Monique Trevett, chronicles the nearly 50 years of conservation work that Barbara has undertaken in the Gorge. From using her own savings in her early 30s to buy 34 acres of what would eventually become Tom McCall Preserve to shepherding the launch of the Klickitat Trail and the Klickitat Trail Conservancy, Barbara has made the difference time and time again in keeping Gorge lands from being developed. The Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum, where Barbara has tended the landscape for decades, graciously hosted the premiere.

Monique had asked me to speak to filmgoers before the showing, and as I got into my car to drive east into the Gorge, I had absolutely no words of inspiration to share. I was in a funk and upset that we had chosen this day to honor Barbara. However, as I drove, the many places Barbara had saved or improved came into view. I thought about how she had persisted through ten presidential administrations—five Democrat and five Republican. Despite the radically different political landscapes in front of her over those years, she has always acted in the same way, spoke in the same way, and behaved in the same way. I quickly realized that this celebration was indeed perfectly timed as Barbara's example was the tonic to an election hangover so many were feeling.

On that beautiful, sunny day, more than 100 people came together. Some Barbara admirers came early and planted balsamroot seeds with her on the Discovery Center grounds. Others came later for the lunch and the film showing. But all came to be inspired by the woman in bright floral colors who puts her head down year after year and simply does the work.

Barbara has shown all of us what it means to stay the course, adapting gracefully through political changes over the years. With potentially seismic shifts to the structure and funding of federal agencies that we often partner with on the horizon, Friends and other conservation groups would do well to embrace her philosophy. This is a moment to dig in undeterred, remember our purpose, and keep doing the work that protects the Gorge. We're grateful to have your support as we embark on this new chapter.

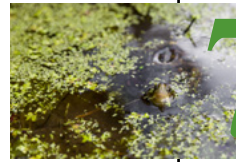
Kevin Gorman, Executive Director

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Photos, top to bottom: Barbara Robinson, Barbara Robinson; Northwestern pond turtle, Vince Ready; Steigerwald AI image, Chane LeBrun; Conservation team, Renée Tkach; Microwave Tower Fire planting, Monique Trevett; Painting by 7th grade student

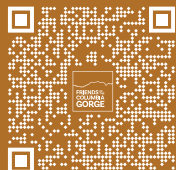


Falls Creek Falls in winter. Photo by Robby Miller.



Friends is honored to have once again been selected for Give!Guide, Willamette Week's annual fundraising campaign for local nonprofits. The campaign is open to donors of all ages, but Give!Guide seeks to inspire those 35 and under in particular to give back to the community and build a culture of active citizenship. Visit GiveGuide.org by December 31 to protect the Gorge and win prizes!

TAP THE QR CODE TO MAKE YOUR DONATION





BEHIND THE SCENES OF *the WILDFLOWER woman*

From Friends of the Columbia Gorge and filmmaker Monique Trevett, “The Wildflower Woman” short film profiles renowned Columbia Gorge conservation icon and Lyle, Washington, resident Barbara Robinson. The film follows Robinson as she reflects on her life’s work preserving and restoring fragile and ecologically important lands in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, including the from-her-own-pocket purchase of Tom McCall Preserve in the 1970s, founding the Klickitat Trail Conservancy, landscaping the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum with native plants, and spreading balsamroot seed across the Gorge. Through the film, we hope to shine a light on the life and contributions of one of the preeminent Gorge conservationists to inspire future generations to follow in her footsteps.

Editor’s note: We encourage you to watch The Wildflower Woman for important context before reading this behind-the-scenes article from Friends’ digital content producer and filmmaker Monique Trevett. Visit gorgefriends.org/thewildflowerwoman or tap the QR code to watch.



Text by
Monique Trevett



Digital Content Producer

A year ago, Friends' Executive Director Kevin Gorman and I were discussing the idea of creating a short-form video featuring longtime Friends collaborator and legendary Eastern Gorge conservationist Barbara Robinson. After an introductory phone call, we set up a time to meet at one of her favorite spots in the Gorge—Catherine Creek. Those who know Barbara won't be surprised to learn that our planned 30-minute meet-and-greet turned into a two-hour wide-ranging educational stroll along the lower section of the Catherine Creek trail, during which she shared her deep knowledge of the Columbia River Gorge's history and geology with me.

When I first envisioned the project, the goal was to collaborate with Barbara on a short video exploring the unique wildflower species in the Gorge. But it quickly became clear there was a much bigger story to tell. By the time we reached the end of the trail and said goodbye, one thought stuck with me: "How in the world am I going to do this?" A single day of filming wouldn't begin to scratch the surface of the immense work she has done to preserve the Gorge. So I decided to pivot to an expanded film.

The following week, we started where her life in conservation began in the 1960s—Tom McCall Preserve. We walked across the Memaloose Hills and Tom McCall as Barbara told me how her love of Balsamroot first took root. A week later, we crossed the Columbia into Washington and made our way to the town of Klickitat, stopping frequently so Barbara could show-and-tell every wildflower she spotted. After the first few days of filming, I realized I needed help to tell her story, so we brought in people who've worked alongside her over the years: Friends' Executive Director Kevin Gorman, Klickitat Trail Conservancy President Ken Hansen, and U.S. Forest Service botanist Brance Morefield.

Hearing everyone's firsthand experiences with Barbara and the crazy stories you hear while spending time with her was truly something special. From hiking Sevenmile Hill, falling 75 feet off a cliff near Horsetail Falls, to scrambling down to the lower bench at Tom McCall while eight months pregnant, Barbara's stories left me speechless.



The book on Barbara's life would have so many chapters, and her relentless pursuit of her goals is a powerful reminder to persist day after day, year after year, no matter what may change around you. For me, it's incredibly inspiring to see how a woman in conservation can make such a profound impact by creating public spaces for everyone to enjoy the beauty of the Gorge.

One memory I'll always carry with me about this project was dreaming about the perfect scene in which Barbara looks out over her first land purchase (Tom McCall Preserve) from across the river in Lyle, Washington. And, as luck would have it, the large bay window in her living room brought that dream to life: a stunning view of Tom McCall that she gets to see every single day. That serendipity gives me chills just thinking about it. You can see a screenshot from the scene below, or watch it in the film at the 14:15 mark, complete with her daughter and grandson.



Barbara Robinson (left) with her daughter and grandson. Tom McCall Preserve, Barbara's first land purchase that began her life in conservation, can be seen across the river. The preserve is now owned by The Nature Conservancy. Image taken from video by Monique Trevett.

Everything came together so well while producing this film, from getting to include Barbara's daughter and grandson who were visiting from Norway to scheduling a short-notice planting party before the premiere at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum. I feel so grateful to have witnessed her receiving the lifetime achievement award at the Washington State Trails Conference (see 15:55 of the film) and for hosting the attendees who watched the premiere of *The Wildflower Woman*. Seeing Barbara in her element as a passionate conservationist and an educator during the stewardship event was something I will never forget. I could not help but be so proud to know her life's work is finally being celebrated by all. Her name and legacy will live on in perpetuity as a giant of Pacific Northwest conservation.

Enjoy a photo gallery from the film premiere and stewardship event on the next page.

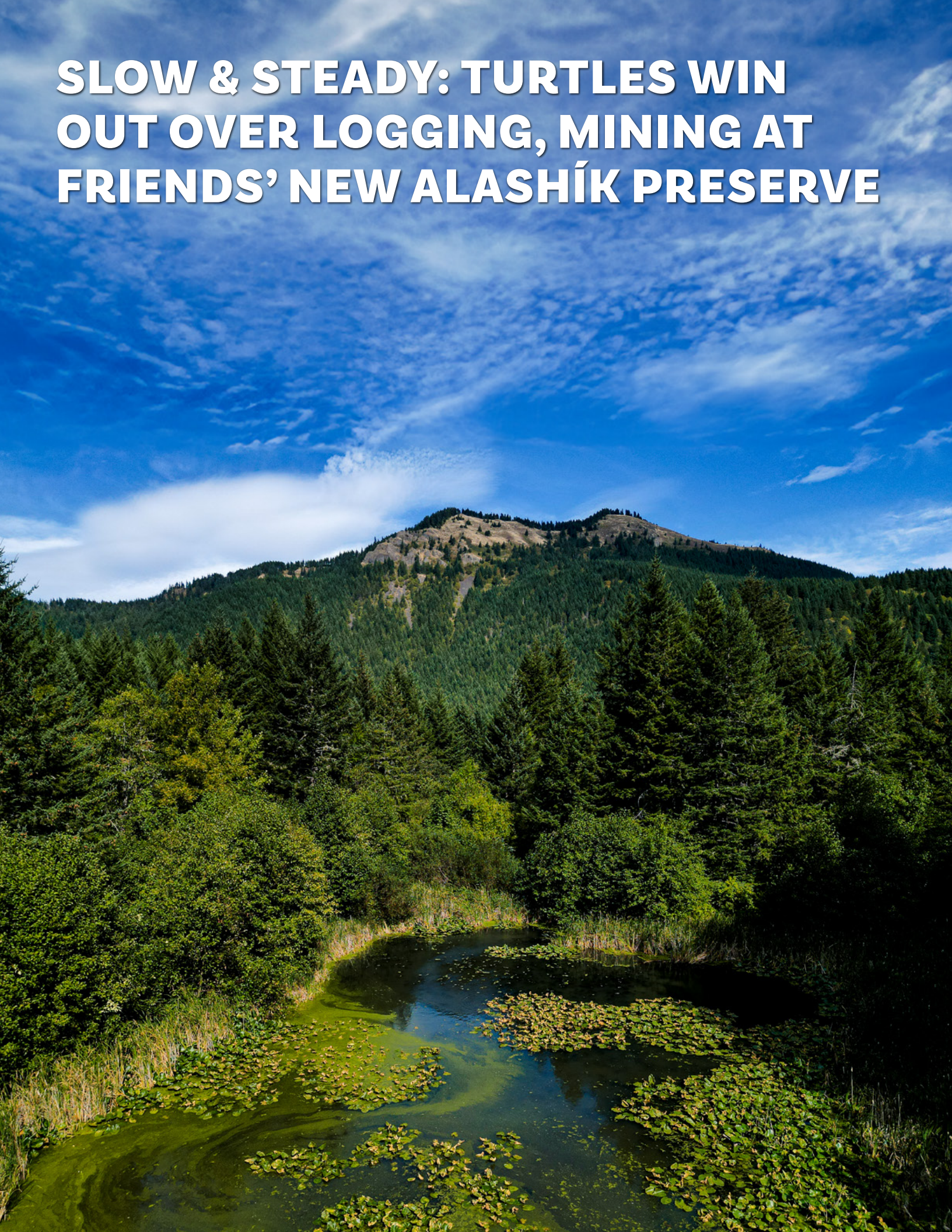




Photos from the premiere of "The Wildflower Woman" short film. More than 50 people joined us for a pre-film balsamroot planting event on the grounds of the Discovery Center (top row, middle left). After the premiere, Oregon City-based woodworker George Starbuck presented Barbara with a hand-carved walking stick (bottom right). Barbara also found time to pose next to the movie poster with Friends' Executive Director Kevin Gorman (bottom left).



SLOW & STEADY: TURTLES WIN OUT OVER LOGGING, MINING AT FRIENDS' NEW ALASHÍK PRESERVE



Text by
Kevin Gorman



Executive Director

ALASHÍK PRESERVE IS FRIENDS' LATEST ACQUISITION THROUGH OUR SHARE THE WONDER CAMPAIGN. VISIT GORGEFRIENDS.ORG/ALASHIK OR TAP THE QR CODE BELOW FOR A 4K AERIAL VIDEO TOUR OF ALASHÍK.



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RIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE LAND TRUST'S MOST RECENT

acquisition is a nod to the little guy. While our scrappy land trust could be considered the little guy in this story as we took on logging and mining interests to successfully acquire this 120-acre gem, the real little guy is the embattled but resilient Northwestern pond turtle. The ponds and forests here that the Washington state-endangered turtles rely on will now be preserved in perpetuity.

The range of the Northwestern pond turtle once stretched from British Columbia to Northern California. But logging, mining, and residential development completely wiped out populations in British Columbia and California, leaving a small handful of turtle populations in Oregon and Washington. The state of Washington has listed the turtle as a state endangered species, while the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is considering a federally threatened species listing.

One of the most productive habitats for these turtles lies between Wind and Dog Mountains in the central Columbia Gorge. In 2015, Friends purchased Turtle Haven, a 60-acre property in Skamania County, and began an aggressive turtle restoration project working with the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Oregon Zoo. Our collaboration led the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife to name us Partner of the Year in 2024.

In early 2024, a 120-acre property adjacent to Turtle Haven came on

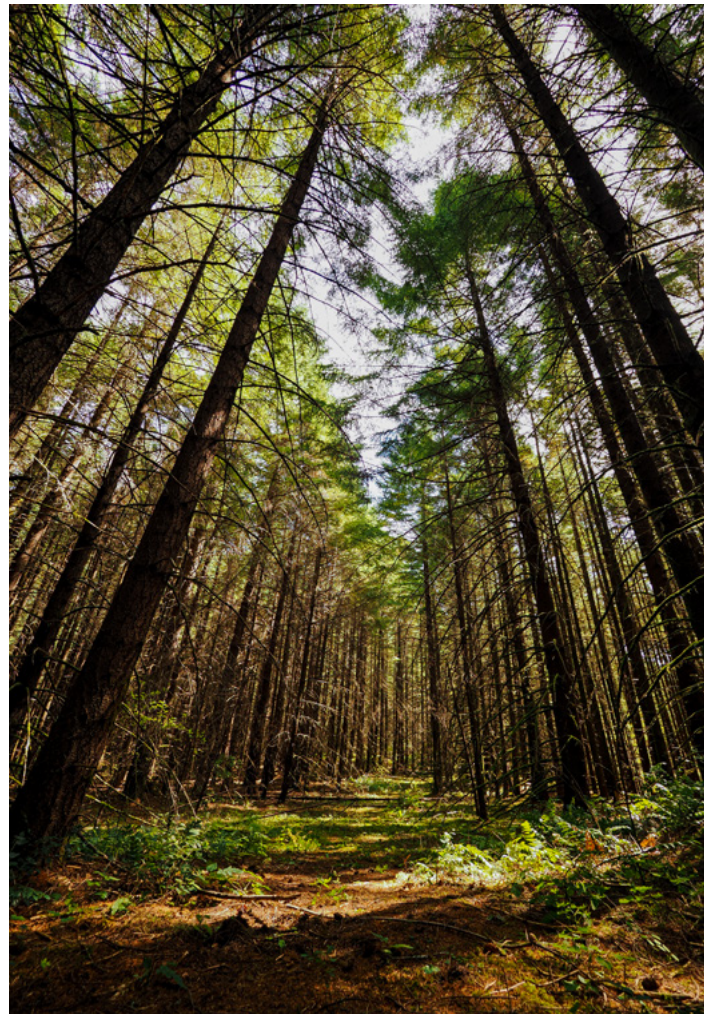
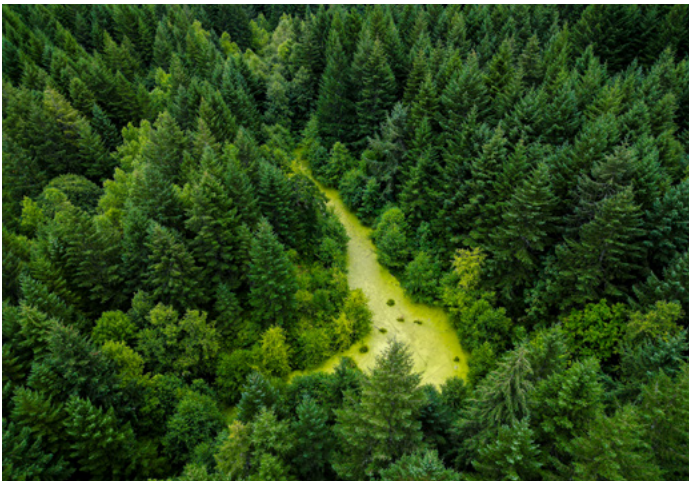
the market. It was owned for decades by a longtime timber family in the Gorge and was marketed for its logging potential. The owners stated that they intended to keep the mineral rights, meaning that after the future owner logged it, the original owners would have the right to come in and intensively mine the gravel on the property. Thus, the assumed best value of the property was to take this glorious mishmash of stream channels, wetlands, ponds, forests, and boulders and strip it of all value. As the property sits adjacent to and above Turtle Haven, the logging and mining runoff would have tumbled down onto our restored preserve.

So Friends went to work to purchase the property. Negotiations stalled as a timber buyer offered to purchase it and leave the mineral rights to the original owners. But the deal fell through and Friends eventually convinced the land owner to sell us the

land and give up the mineral rights.

Turtle biologists, never having been allowed on the property previously, were thrilled with our purchase as there are numerous ponds ideal for turtle rearing. Today, they are walking the lands and kayaking the ponds of Alashík for the first time. More endangered turtles have been found, and in this small pocket of the Gorge, there is renewed hope that in this battle for survival, the turtle might just win the race.

Over the coming months, Friends will release more information on Alashík, beginning with a series of videos spotlighting Northwestern pond turtle conservation, bullfrog eradication, and forest management. We'll also feature a piece on the climate resilience potential of the preserve in our spring 2025 Passages magazine.



Before our acquisition, this forest property was marketed to be clearcut, which is allowed under Gorge rules, and the owners wanted to keep the mineral rights to the land so they could mine the gravel once the land was logged. 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. Photos by Monique Trevett.



ALASHÍK

ETYMOLOGICAL ORIGIN

Alashík (turtle) comes from the Sahaptin language (referred to by native speakers as Ichishkiin), spoken primarily by Yakama people along the Columbia River in south-central Washington and northern Oregon.

Visit gorgefriends.org/sahaptin or tap the QR code on the right to hear the correct pronunciation of alashík by late Yakama elder, linguist, and Sahaptin dictionary co-author Virginia Beavert.



Sara Woods
Stewardship
Manager

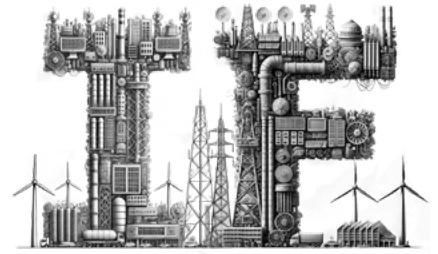
The opportunity to conserve Alashík came to Friends in a hasty and unexpected way—a typical yet perpetually challenging scenario in our land acquisition world. Friends could not pass up the opportunity to purchase and preserve this highly desired but somewhat mysterious parcel. We have now owned the property for a mere seven months and this is what we know:

The property is 120 acres dominated by Douglas fir forest of varying stand age (45- to 100-year-old trees) with patches of Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*) and other deciduous species. The property is covered in water features including several ponds, streams and creeks, and wetlands.

Botanical, wildlife, and cultural inventory reports have commenced and the initial findings have confirmed our hopes....we have turtles! Northwestern pond turtles and western painted turtles have historically been documented on the preserve. To date, staff and volunteers have confirmed the presence of painted turtles but we believe their shy cousins are still hiding out waiting to make their debut.

Other interesting species detected on site include black bear, mountain lion, elk, deer, beaver, river otter, various passerines, raptors including owls, waterfowl, frogs and salamanders, and unfortunately, non-native American bullfrogs. Finally, there is the potential for 12 different rare, threatened, or endangered botanical species based on the general habitat found on the preserve, but more work needs to be done to confirm.

WHAT



THE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA NEVER EXISTED?

THE COLUMBIA GORGE WOULD BE A VERY DIFFERENT PLACE WITHOUT THE PROTECTIONS OF THE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA. UNCHECKED RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT WOULD HAVE CONSUMED PARTS OF IT, TRANSFORMING CLIFFS, FORESTS, MEADOWS, AND DESERTLANDS INTO CROWDED COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL EXPANSES STRIPPED OF SCENIC BEAUTY AND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY.

THANKS TO AI IMAGE GENERATION, HERE'S OUR CRYSTAL BALL OF WHAT THE COLUMBIA GORGE MIGHT LOOK LIKE TODAY IF FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE AND THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA NEVER EXISTED.

Text by
Kevin Gorman
—
Executive Director

All AI image editing by Chane LeBrun.

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IFTY YEARS AGO, THE COLUMBIA GORGE was at a crossroads few people could see or understand. Standing on his riverfront property across from Multnomah Falls, John Yeon clearly saw the inflection point. As a child, he watched his father lead the efforts to build the Columbia River Highway. He spent his lifetime working to limit the impacts of dams and interstate highways in the Gorge, but the looming threats were too much for this brilliant, determined man to take on alone. The area we now know as Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge was being considered for a nuclear power plant. Across the river in Oregon, after the Reynolds aluminum plant poisoned nearby water and land, and eventually killed all the cattle grazing in its open fields, the company was forced to purchase the area we now know as the Sandy River Delta. The large, undeveloped Steigerwald and Sandy River Delta lands were zoned for industrial use. They were literal and figurative gateways: if developed, sprawl would march east. If protected, there was a chance for larger-scale Gorge protection.

Just west of the Gorge, a large interstate bridge (now the I-205 bridge) was being planned, ensuring the small, sleepy towns of Camas and Washougal would become burgeoning suburbs for the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area. Subdivision proposals would soon pop up on the Washington side of the Western Gorge as land-use laws were nonexistent and access to Portland and Vancouver was to become exponentially easier.

Anticipating these emerging challenges, John Yeon set out to ensure progress did not smother the Gorge. He recruited Nancy Russell to spearhead large-scale efforts to protect the Gorge by launching Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Nancy took the baton and worked tirelessly to ensure Congress passed and President Reagan signed the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act into law.

While we all benefit from the foresight and tenacious advocacy of John, Nancy, and countless others, I often wonder what would have happened had those early conservationists not taken the steps they did. Here

are a few major differences we would likely see today.

GORGE GATEWAYS GO AWAY

It is possible that without the early momentum of National Scenic Area protection efforts, Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge and the Sandy River Delta could have been lost forever to industrial development. It is easy to imagine Washougal and Troutdale's industrial parks jumping Gibbons Creek and the Sandy River and taking over these lands, wiping out what are now critical bird migration and recreation areas.

IDEA OF WHAT THE GORGE IS SHRINKS

Today, we think of the Gorge as stretching 85 east-to-west miles from the Sandy River to the Deschutes River. Without the National Scenic Area, most people's perception of what the Gorge is would be the 15-mile waterfall corridor between Latourell Falls and Eagle Creek.

HISTORIC HIGHWAY A SHELL OF ITSELF

The National Scenic Area Act came with a mandate overlooked by many: to restore and reconnect the old, neglected Columbia River Highway. The road was in disrepair in the early 1980s in the waterfall area and, without the National Scenic Area, restoration efforts would be piecemeal. The popular section from Hood River to Mosier of the Historic Columbia River Highway would still be lost, in private hands, and filled with gravel pits that have since been reclaimed.

ENERGY CORRIDOR

Perhaps the most impactful difference we would see in the Gorge is the preponderance of energy infrastructure. The Gorge has three assets that makes it uniquely attractive to energy developers: lots of water, cheap power, and a sea-level transportation corridor through the Cascade Mountains. Energy projects from coal and oil terminals and natural gas plants to industrial wind and solar farms would have descended upon most of the Gorge. That would have been followed by energy-intensive data centers which in turn would require even more energy production.

MANSIONS ON THE CLIFFS: PRIVATE SLICES OF HEAVEN

The absence of the National Scenic Area would have created a run on viewscape mansions on the cliffs and bluffs of the Gorge. With so much of the Gorge gated off into private communities, residential development would have preceded the emerging wine industry, meaning many of the wineries we enjoy today, particularly on the Washington side, would have never had the chance to establish themselves because agricultural lands would have been replaced by subdivisions and view lots.

GORGE RECREATION BRAND

The Gorge's waterfall area would likely still be a major tourism area without the National Scenic Area, but the question remains: without the land-use laws the National Scenic Area created, what would have become of the outlying areas? One only has to look at what lies at the base of the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee where the once-small communities of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge have gone into tourism overdrive to capitalize on the draw of the nearby Great Smoky Mountains National Park.



Pigeon Forge, TN. Photo by Pigeon Forge Department of Tourism.

While these scenarios may seem overdramatic as the Gorge has always had individuals and communities interested in its preservation, it is critical to understand that it is only because of the strength of federal legislation that strong protections on both sides of the river have kept the Gorge from being exploited and overrun. The impact and legacy of the National Scenic Area Act cannot be overstated.

Read on to explore an alternate timeline of the Gorge if the National Scenic Area never existed. To view full-size images online, visit gorgefriends.org/whatif or tap the QR code.



AI IMAGE

STEIGERWALD LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE: The site of a proposed nuclear power plant in the 1970s, the land at Steigerwald was once zoned for industrial use and sits next to the Port of Camas-Washougal industrial park.



SANDY RIVER DELTA: Across from Troutdale's industrial area, this land was once zoned industrial and was purchased by Reynolds Aluminum as environmental mitigation when emissions from its aluminum plant killed the cattle grazing on the property.



COYOTE WALL: With no land-use zoning in Klickitat County in the early 1980s, the development possibilities at Coyote Wall were endless. Mining, subdivisions, and energy development could have quickly subsumed this landscape.



BEACON ROCK: The area near Beacon Rock was the site of a proposed subdivision in the early 1980s, a time when Skamania County had little to no zoning. With its proximity to the Columbia River, North Bonneville, and transmission lines, the area was very susceptible to intensive development.



AI IMAGE



WASHINGTON FROM VISTA HOUSE: A primary driver of the efforts to create the National Scenic Area in the early 1980s was concerns over sprawling subdivisions taking over the Western Gorge in Washington. No place was more susceptible than the farmlands across from Oregon's Vista House.

AI IMAGE



HEARTLEAF BLUFFS: One of Friends' newest preserves, this property sits in Klickitat County, where there were no zoning restrictions in the early 1980s. This area was ripe for development.



AI IMAGE



CAPE HORN OVERLOOK: The farmlands below Cape Horn sit just 30 minutes from the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area and would have been susceptible to all kinds of development pressure, including industrial development.



AI IMAGE

CAPE HORN FROM RIVER: The Cape Horn Bluffs would have been an ideal location for large homes overlooking the river and the Gorge.

A NEW ERA OF CONSERVATION FOR FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

Text by Renée Tkach,
Conservation Director

FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS, RENÉE TKACH HAS ANCHORED FRIENDS' RECREATION AND ADVOCACY WORK ACROSS THE GORGE. NEWLY ELEVATED TO CONSERVATION DIRECTOR, RENÉE HAS A BRAND NEW VISION FOR OUR CONSERVATION PROGRAM GOING FORWARD.

Columbia River.
Photo by Paloma Ayala.

The Columbia Gorge represents history, resilience, and awe-inspiring natural beauty, holding a special place in the hearts of those who cherish it. Over the years, many have dedicated themselves to protecting this unique landscape. Now, with a renewed focus on inclusivity, the organization is embracing a forward-looking path to safeguard and celebrate this remarkable place for future generations.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge has a legacy of inspiring individuals to take a stand for conservation. However, our approach to activism must evolve with the changing needs of the communities in and around the Gorge. This new chapter for us is about opening doors wider, welcoming all voices, and building relationships that will sustain the Gorge for future generations. Our priorities are threefold: expanding our activist base to include diverse communities and voices; strengthening partnerships with allies at local, regional, state, and national levels; and building deeper relationships with local Tribes.

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

The most effective environmental protection movements require a wide network of participants. With the increasing threats of climate change, population pressures, and development, it's crucial that our movement reflects all the communities connected to the Gorge. We need to invite more people to the table

and ensure they feel welcome in our work, regardless of background.

One priority is to create an activist base that reflects the diversity of the Gorge itself. This means developing programs to engage communities of color, immigrant communities, young people, and others who have been historically underrepresented in conservation. Threats to the environment affect us all, but some communities feel a disproportionate amount of the impact. Our activist base should mirror that reality and create space for those most impacted to have a voice in the environment's protection.

Currently, we are taking steps to make our programs more accessible to everyone, including translating materials into Spanish and collaborating with community partners to identify how we can better serve diverse communities. Looking ahead, Friends' conservation team is particularly excited about our plans to expand youth outreach, engage schools, and inspire the next generation to lead the conservation charge.

REBUILDING & STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

A thriving Gorge depends on strong, collaborative partnerships. Over the years, Friends has had the privilege of working with countless agencies, nonprofits, and elected officials who share our passion for this place. Now, it's time to strengthen those relationships and build



new ones that reflect the urgent and multifaceted challenges we face.

With the support of partners at every level—local, regional, state, and national—we have an opportunity to advocate for policies that will support environmental stewardship and resilience. These connections are critical to protecting the Gorge from climate-related challenges, illegal development, and threats to air quality, as well as ensuring that future generations can experience the Gorge in all its natural splendor.

HONORING & BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL TRIBES

Indigenous peoples have stewarded these lands since time immemorial, and their deep-rooted understanding of the Columbia Gorge is invaluable to our conservation efforts. As we embark on this new chapter, it's essential to build respectful, long-lasting relationships with local Tribes. By acknowledging and honoring their role as the original caretakers of this land, we can work together to protect areas of cultural, ecological, and spiritual significance.

Our goal is to create spaces for meaningful dialogue with Tribal leaders and communities, learn from their knowledge as original stewards of the land, and incorporate that knowledge into our projects and policies. Conservation is not just about the land—it's about the people connected to that land. With genuine,



Friends' Conservation team: Renée Tkach (right) with Conservation Organizers Sofia Urrutia-Lopez (left) and Madison Kenney (middle) at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center with Mt. Ulka in the background.

ongoing partnerships with local Tribes, we can build a foundation of shared responsibility and a mutual commitment to preserving the Gorge.

A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Columbia Gorge is not only a natural wonder; it's a place where diverse communities converge, each bringing their own unique connection to this landscape. We have an opportunity to unite these connections into a shared vision for the future—one where everyone, regardless of their background, feels invested in the Gorge's protection.

Our mission is rooted in love and respect for this place, and it's an honor to carry this mission forward in a way that reflects the strength, diversity, and resilience of our community. Together, we can protect the Columbia Gorge for generations to come.

Share the Wonder.

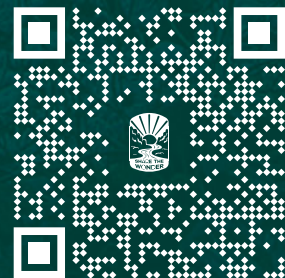
It's far more than a name for our campaign. It's a promise that guides our work every day and a reminder that the Gorge is for all only if we make it so.

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** or by tapping the QR code.



The incredible diversity of wildflowers in the Gorge is one of the most beloved elements of the landscape that leaves us mesmerized all spring and summer long. And the stewardship theme this season was planting “forbs,” the botanical word for wildflowers. As we settle into winter, let’s take a moment to celebrate the accomplishments of the amazing volunteers that stewarded Friends preserves and public lands this season, and the sheer number of native wildflowers and grasses that are now in the ground growing roots for spring!

Seventy-five volunteers, layered in rain and wind gear, planted over 3,500 forbs and spread 350 pounds of native grass and forb seed at six preserves! For the last several years, stewardship work at Sams Walker Day Use Area, Turtle Haven, Dancing Rock Preserve, and Mosier Plateau has focused on reducing a variety of invasive species. The impact of these plantings is now visible, with improved plant diversity in meadow and understory habitats and an increase in native seeds in the soil that supports wildlife and pollinators.

In addition to plantings, volunteers also came out to learn about fire ecology up close by joining seeding work parties in the Microwave Tower and Top of the World burn areas in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. After touring the burn areas and discussing forestry, fire ecology, and burn severity, volunteer crews seeded in native grasses, yarrow, and balsamroots to boost the existing native seed bank in the soil with the hopes that they can outcompete the invasive weeds that are also in those areas.

Planting and seeding projects are a joyful and rewarding way for folks of all ages to participate in stewardship. Our youngest volunteer this season was about to turn 1 year old and kept the crew smiling as her older brothers eagerly planted lupines. Reflecting after a work party at Sams Walker, a volunteer shared, “I’m grateful to be a contributor to something bigger... and meeting other volunteers. This was my first and definitely not my last.”

A sincere thank you to all our volunteers for making this planting season a huge success. We look forward to more planting and seeding next spring!



Longtime Friends volunteer Steve Haber has planted hundreds of tiny lupine plugs at Sams Walker with this perfectly shaped “dibble bar,” provided by Clark College Native Plant Center which also grows the wildflowers for restoration at Sams Walker and other preserves. Photo by Sarah Skelly.



Volunteer crews work in the midst of fall colors at the Microwave Tower Fire Burn area (left) and Turtle Haven (right). Photos by Monique Trevett and Sarah Skelly.

CAPE HORN & CATHERINE CREEK UPDATE: The buildings at Cape Horn and Catherine Creek are being taken apart piece by piece as you read this magazine! Instead of knocking the buildings over with heavy equipment and hauling the debris away, the crew at A1 Demolition are meticulously deconstructing the buildings at both sites by hand so that the materials can be reused and recycled as much as possible. Once the buildings have been stripped to ground level, the crew will then bring equipment in for the heavy-duty work of breaking up the concrete basements. The deconstruction takes time, but by early next spring, there will be little evidence of residence at Cape Horn and Catherine Creek!

BRINGING ART TO YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by *Kenzie Hammond*
Youth & Community Education Specialist

Everyone connects with the outdoors in different ways, from hiking to bird watching, biking, or even plein-air painting. Historically, one of our youth education programs, The Great Gorge Wahoo!, was centered around a long hike, which didn't meet the interests of all our St. Andrew Nativity School students. So, when we restructured the activities and schedule for the day, we aimed to offer a variety of activities so every student would have a part of the day to get excited about! This year's program incorporated history, geology, wildlife watching, a raptor program and scavenger hunt at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum, and something brand new: art.

This year, we added a watercolor painting station at our Horsethief Lake stop during the field trip after students had the chance to see the pictographs at the park. Students were encouraged to paint either the scenery in front of them or something else that inspired them during the trip. We held a small competition, and our top two paintings won a Salt & Straw gift card, a wildlife plushie, and a frame for their paintings. The winners were chosen by Friends' staff and our youth program donors Loring and Margaret Winthrop. This year's winner is Larry, and second place is Nevaeh. See their paintings on the right.

We believe that incorporating a variety of subjects throughout the day, including art, will strengthen students' connection to the Columbia Gorge and inspire them to protect the area's scenic, cultural, and recreational resources. In our upcoming spring 2025 programs, we will bring back our smartphone photography station and add more artistic components to all our other youth programs, as we've seen how valuable art can be in helping students connect with nature.



St. Andrew Nativity School students participate in a watercolor painting station at The Great Gorge Wahoo! education program (top). The two winning paintings from students Larry (middle) and Nevaeh (bottom).

WILDLIFE SPOTLIGHT



A chinook salmon jumps up a ledge in the river. Photo from Friends archives.

by Kenzie Hammond, Youth & Community Education Specialist

One of the most iconic animals in the Columbia Gorge is the chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). Also known as king salmon, chinook is the most common of the five Pacific salmon species that pass through the Columbia River Gorge. Other salmon in the river include pink, sockeye, chum, and coho. Chinook are the largest of all five, with an average length of 3 feet and a weight of around 30 pounds. Fun fact: the largest known chinook ever caught weighed over 100 pounds! Their native range extends from Alaska all the way down to Northern California.

Chinook salmon begin their lifecycle in river tributaries such as Eagle Creek or the White Salmon River before slowly working their way out to the Pacific Ocean, where they will spend, on average, three to four years. After this time, they migrate back to the stream where they were hatched. Once back in their native stream, female salmon create nests, called redds, for their eggs by digging into shallow gravel with their tails. Male salmon fight for the opportunity to spawn with the females, and the dominant male releases his milt (sperm) at the same time the female releases her eggs. On average, a female salmon will lay between 3,500 and 6,000 eggs. After spawning, all adult chinook salmon die soon die, completing their lifecycle. The eggs hatch approximately 12 weeks later, with only around 15% of the eggs surviving. Of the thousands of eggs initially laid, only a handful make it to adulthood to spawn the next generation.

Salmon carcasses are a major source of nutrition for many animals during spawning season, including black bears and bald eagles. After the salmon die, animals drag the carcasses onto shore to feed. Once they finish eating, the remaining portion decomposes into the soil, acting as excellent fertilizer for our forests. The chinook salmon is currently listed as threatened in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, while other species of chinook, such as spring-run chinook in the Upper Columbia River, are listed as endangered. The biggest threats to chinook salmon include overfishing, habitat loss, dams, pollution, and climate change.

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August 16, 2024 - November 19, 2024

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**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 our Share the Wonder campaign, 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 or by tapping the QR code on the right.
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Winter at the confluence of the Klickitat and Columbia Rivers. Photo by Robby Miller (robbymillerphotography.com).

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.



Passages is a triannual 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 to learn more. Send inquiries to info@gorgefriends.org or call 503.241.3762.

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