Friends of the Columbia Gorge

July 2017 – June 2018 | Annual Report
Dear Friends,

As Friends of the Columbia Gorge approaches the end of our fourth decade, you might think years would begin running together, and one year wouldn’t really differ from others. But these past 12 months have truly stood apart, challenging and shaping our organization in ways we never could have imagined. Details in the following pages tell of oil terminals stopped, land acquisition campaigns completed, fires endured, and new programs arising from the ashes. But those successes don’t tell the full story.

One of the most impressive aspects of this past year has been the quantity and quality of the people like you, who stepped up in response to the events. Thousands of individuals gave money, volunteered, and became more actively engaged. Some, like Don and Alona Steinke, devoted more than a thousand hours of personal time to fight the Tesoro oil terminal. Others, like Sarah Fish, who first became aware of Friends because of the Eagle Creek fire, have put in many weekend days this year to work as stewardship volunteers and Trailhead Ambassadors.

It was as if the Columbia Gorge, which has given so much to so many for so long, finally showed its vulnerability, and in response, you and countless others stepped up to say, “We’ve got your back.” Individuals of all ages, cultures, and skills shared a fresh determination to make a difference for the Gorge.

People young and old, recent arrivals and long-time members, consistently echoed two themes: a keen recognition of how much this special place means and a strong sense of duty to care for it for coming generations. One new member summed it up best, saying, “I didn’t know I cared about the Gorge as much as I do.”

The challenges are certainly not over. But in a year when threats rose up like never before and once-in-a-lifetime opportunities presented themselves, you showed up in your activism, volunteerism, and philanthropy. And in all these ways, you became the active definition of a friend of the Columbia Gorge.
Eagle Creek Fire Reveals Friends’ Roots in the Gorge

Long before the Eagle Creek fire, Friends had begun building relationships with Gorge communities, and when the fire erupted last September, these well-established connections quickly pulled everyone together. According to Executive Director Kevin Gorman, “The fire enhanced Friends’ relationships with Gorge agencies, so they see us now as more of a resource than in the past, and they recognize our ability to put out communications fast, with a bigger reach.”

Exhibit A in that regard was our rapid online appeal that raised more than $48,000 for the Hood River County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue Division, which had helped rescue 150 hikers trapped by the flames.

Friends was also a beneficiary, conduit, and catalyst for an unprecedented outpouring of donations from businesses, foundations, and individuals. In the weeks after the fire, more than 116 businesses of all sizes created fundraisers to support our post-fire efforts, from donating proceeds from beer sales, to 300 people making a virtual run for the Gorge, to neighborhood fundraisers in downtown Vancouver and along Portland’s Mississippi Avenue and Foster Road. Supporters ranged from large organizations like the Portland Timbers and Thorns FC, to groups of school kids and small businesses like the Bingen Theater.

From the nearly $348,000 in donations Friends received post fire, $30,000 went to the Oregon’s Kitchen Table campaign to rebuild trails around Multnomah Falls. Funds also supported our public land stewardship, public education, and advocacy efforts. $233,000 was carried forward to continue this work in our next fiscal year.

The great influx of new members and financial support from the business community has given a boost to Friends’ efforts in all these areas. Our grant writer, Kate Harbour, observed:

“New members bring a wave of energy, and we are so encouraged that so many people stepped up. We saw how one action can harm the Gorge, but the Gorge can also be threatened in slower, subtler ways. These gifts and new memberships will help prevent that. What we’re doing now is setting the course for what all of the Gorge – not just the burned areas – will be for decades to come.”

Alpha Media (home of Portland’s KINK 101.9 FM) approached Friends after the Eagle Creek fire for help with a special public education campaign. Sponsored by COUNTRY Financial, the two-month-long “Show the Gorge Some Love” campaign encouraged public support for Gorge communities and businesses affected by the fire, through the holiday season. Alpha Media’s seven Portland radio stations participated in the multimedia campaign. Learn more at showthegorgesomelove.com.
Protecting the Gorge with Advocacy, Litigation, and Allies

For nearly four decades, Friends has used a combination of old-fashioned grassroots advocacy, sophisticated legal strategies, and cutting-edge outreach and education tools to protect the Gorge from reckless development. This past year, working together with our community advocates, members, and partners, we achieved a number of momentous wins.

Tesoro oil terminal defeated

In 2013, during the Bakken oil boom in North Dakota, Tesoro Corp. (now Andeavor) and Savage Companies proposed a 42-acre terminal in Vancouver, Washington, to receive, store, and ship up to 15 million gallons of crude oil per day—a project that would have vastly expanded oil train traffic through the Gorge.

Mobilizing quickly with allies in the conservation community, Friends and our partners combined forces to defeat the proposed Tesoro oil terminal and others planned for Pacific Northwest ports. We organized more than one million citizens to sign petitions, attend hearings, participate in rallies, and submit testimony and comments opposing the terminal project. Our team of attorneys and experts, led by Earthjustice, litigated against the terminals.

Supported by this powerful base, in January 2018, Washington Governor Jay Inslee denied the project because of the risks it posed to public safety and the environment, and the Port of Vancouver canceled Tesoro’s lease on the site, unless it could obtain other necessary permits. The following month, Tesoro gave up its lease.
Conservation Director Michael Lang says Friends has become a valued ally to the region’s residents when they face threats to their livability and health. “It’s been a long-term effort to build relationships and trust with Gorge communities. We educated people regarding the risks of hazardous oil trains going through their communities, and organized public opposition with local governments that we hadn’t worked closely with in the past.”

**Longview coal export terminal denied**

In fall 2017, six years after the initial application was filed for the proposed Millennium coal export terminal in Longview, Washington, numerous permits were finally denied by state and county agencies. If built, the Millennium project would have been the largest such terminal in the nation, bringing eight, mile-long, open-topped coal trains through the Columbia Gorge each day, transporting millions of tons of coal destined for Asian markets. The open-topped rail cars would spew toxic coal dust into the Columbia River, tributaries, and wetlands.

Throughout the permitting process, Friends and allies rallied nearly 500,000 public comments and helped fill public hearing rooms with thousands of citizens opposed to the terminal. Coupled with rigorous data showing the adverse impacts the proposal posed to waterways and communities, citizen involvement was a crucial element in defeating this threat to the Gorge.

Millennium has appealed the various denials and filed federal litigation against state officials, seeking exemptions from state laws. Friends and our partners, represented by Earthjustice, have intervened in four of these cases in order to assist state and county officials in defending the permit denials.

Eventually, Clark County approved the plans, so in 2017, Friends challenged the approvals because they violated National Scenic Area rules that protect prime Gorge farmland. The development scheme was “one of the most egregious attempts to game the system I’ve ever seen,” according to Senior Staff Attorney Nathan Baker. In November 2017, the Clark County Hearing Examiner agreed with Friends and denied two proposed dwellings. The third, proposed under a different set of rules than the other two, remains pending.

**Challenging energy facility siting rules**

This May, Friends concluded the Preserve the Wonder campaign to acquire several properties in the Columbia Gorge. According to Executive Director Kevin Gorman, it was “the most ambitious land acquisition campaign we’ve ever done: seven properties, 420 acres, and $5.5 million.”

A completely unexpected bonus came late in the campaign, when the Good family, whose 50-acre Duncan Creek parcel was a purchase within the campaign, donated an additional 50 acres with Duncan Creek running through it. The children of Vern and Virginia Good made the family’s donation with two requests: that the land never be logged, and that it be named “Good’s Woods,” in honor of their parents.

More than 1,900 people from 25 states and the District of Columbia mirrored the Goods’ generosity, with donations that ranged from $5 to as much as $1 million. In spring 2018, when $5 million had been raised, two anonymous families provided a $250,000 matching challenge that fired up our members. Within weeks, the final $500,000 put us over the top.

A capital campaign like this is always a marathon effort. But this marathon was run while all of Friends’ other Gorge protection efforts continued, compounded by responding to the biggest Gorge fire in Friends’ 38-year history. The campaign’s success places land management front and center. “It’s exciting to run a campaign to acquire land,” Kevin said, “but it exacts a toll on staff and board members. This was a huge growth step. Now we’re going to step back and look at managing these new properties for generations.”

Board Vice Chair Debbie Asakawa, who co-chaired the Preserve the Wonder campaign, hikes in the Gorge 100 days a year. Viewing this campaign with a long lens, Debbie notes that on the trail, “There’s always some moment of wonder that fills me with gratitude for those who came before us. This is our generation’s opportunity to pay it forward to future generations.” Thanks to those 1,900 donors, we will. Reflecting our appreciation for Friends founder Nancy Russell and the remarkable groundwork her generation laid for Gorge protection, Debbie continued, “The generation that comes after us will be so happy and feel so grateful for what we’ve done.”
Thank you to everyone who supported our Preserve the Wonder campaign this year. A special thanks for the following gifts:

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Supporting Sustainable Recreation

Gorge Towns to Trails

The tiny Gorge town of Mosier, Oregon, once struggled to attract enough traffic to support its year-round businesses. But in the past year, a popular new restaurant has opened and a revamped market is thriving – both benefiting, in part, from the consistent stream of hikers heading on foot from the town up to the trails on Mosier Plateau, a preserve managed by the Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust.

The Mosier story is just one small example of the potential benefits of the Gorge Towns to Trails initiative, an effort to build a world-class destination trekking network encircling the Columbia Gorge.

This year, significant progress was made on this long-term project. In May, White Salmon, Washington, joined six other Gorge towns that are supporting partners of Gorge Towns to Trails, endorsing the creation of trail links within its community to complete a larger loop. Some partners, such as the town of Washougal, Washington, are incorporating Gorge Towns to Trails into their urban recreation goals. Others, like The Dalles, Oregon, are embedding the vision into their focus on recreation as an engine of local economic development.

Project manager Renee Tkach says, “Since Gorge Towns to Trails was launched in 2011, the role Friends plays in the Gorge has shifted, and Friends is now seen by many Gorge communities as a leader in helping them expand their economies through recreational tourism.” Our leadership roles on the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance and the Gorge Outdoor Action Team further strengthen Friends’ partnerships with Gorge communities.

Getting folks out to Gorge trailheads safely and unstressed by congestion is another of Friends’ goals. We were at the table early this year during initial efforts to address transportation challenges on both sides of the Columbia River. It is the beginning, as Renee says, of “a monster of a conversation.” This spring, during the peak bloom at Dog Mountain, Friends and our partners in the Dog Mountain Shuttle were pleased to see huge numbers of hikers using public transportation.
Trailhead Ambassadors

In 2017, Friends launched a pilot program at the Dog Mountain trailhead, providing volunteer “ambassadors” to promote use of the Gorge shuttles and provide trail information. Based on the program’s success, this year it expanded to include partner organizations and two trails on Mount Hood.

Ambassador volunteers in the Gorge welcomed hikers at the trailheads for Dry Creek Falls, Latourell Falls, Multnomah Falls, and Starvation Creek Falls in Oregon, and at Cape Horn and Dog Mountain in Washington.

Trailhead Ambassadors sign up for six-hour shifts on weekends and holidays from mid-April through Labor Day. Besides answering questions about parking passes, hike alternatives, and trail difficulty, they provide information on Leave No Trace ethics. The most frequent questions are “Where can I see a waterfall?” and “Is this hike family-friendly?” One ambassador noted after her shift, “I was fully engaged with visitor... I loved feeling like I was making a difference.”

Training for Trailhead Ambassadors is thorough and ongoing, with a four-hour training session in spring, a detailed training manual, and frequent updates about upcoming events and facts on Gorge ecology and geology, shared via an e-newsletter and a private Facebook group. A program coordinator was hired this year, and the project gained three new partners: the Mt. Hood and Columbia Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance, Oregon Parks and Recreation, and the U.S. Forest Service.

KATU Hits the Trails

Trailhead Ambassador partners worked with local media to support the overall effort, getting the word out to the public and recruiting volunteers. KATU sent a crew to the Gorge in April and again in August to interview volunteers about their experiences at trailheads around the Gorge. Watch the videos at gorgefriends.org/ambassador.
Fire Creates New Stewardship Opportunities

Volunteers tackle invasive plants

Last year’s Eagle Creek fire delivered a huge infusion of nutrients to Gorge soils—ideal for the return of mosses, ferns, and other first-successional species. Combined with increased sunlight reaching the forest floor, the result of this has been heartening, with lush plant growth emerging in burned areas. However, these conditions are also ideal for invasive plant species, which crowd out native vegetation and often don’t provide food sources that native wildlife need.

As a partner in a new Gorge-wide weed management effort, Friends sprang into action this past winter, training and deploying scores of new volunteer stewards. With funds donated after the fire, in February, we hired our first stewardship volunteer coordinator, Mika Barrett. Her role is to harness the passion and energy of the many new volunteers who wanted to assist in Gorge recovery efforts. Six weeks later, the first crew of volunteer stewards began pulling invasive plants.

In the past year, Friends held 12 work parties on five Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust properties, where volunteer stewards took down fences, collected and sowed seed, installed bird boxes, and pulled invasive plants. Then, between April and June, 19 additional work parties focused on eradicating invasive plants on public lands affected by fire. This coming fall and winter, native plants will be planted in areas where invasives were removed.

A Gorge-wide approach to stewardship

Land Trust Stewardship Coordinator Sara Woods feels that Friends’ new partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and other public agencies, nonprofits, and private landowners is an excellent model for invasive species management across the entire Gorge. “Weeds don’t stop at property boundaries,” Sara notes. “We needed to evolve from individual agencies and organizations working only on their own lands to a Gorge-wide stewardship approach to invasives, native plants, and wildlife.”

The Columbia Gorge is resilient, and while humans create many challenges for it, volunteer stewards are a part of that resilience, as they dig in to help the Gorge recover from the fire and thrive. Working alongside volunteers in fire-affected areas, Mika recently commented, “It’s incredibly powerful to see how much Mother Nature knows about bouncing back.”
We are honored to welcome this year’s new Norman Yeon Legacy Circle members to the growing list of dedicated supporters whose visionary planning will sustain Gorge protection beyond their own lifetimes. Your generosity and foresight help guarantee that the Gorge will remain a scenic and healthy treasure for future generations to cherish and enjoy. Thank you for your steadfast commitment!

In Memoriam

Esteemed members of the Norman Yeon Legacy Circle who have passed away over the years hold a special place in our hearts. The visionary planning and generous gifts of these members provide an enduring legacy for the future of Gorge protection.

We’re sad to announce the passing this year of two dedicated supporters of Gorge protection, Elizabeth (Katie) Barker and Robert G. Miller.

Katie Barker and Robert Miller each included estate gifts to Friends in their legacy planning. Through Friends’ work, their commitment to keeping the Columbia Gorge unspoiled and beautiful for generations to come will live on.
This spring and summer, the Trailhead Ambassadors program placed friendly volunteers at six popular trailheads in the Gorge to educate hikers on Leave No Trace principles, underscore trail safety tips, and highlight other nearby recreational opportunities through online resources such as Ready, Set, Gorge.
Preserve the Wonder Campaign Protects Key Gorge Lands

Friends’ most ambitious land conservation effort to date, the Preserve the Wonder campaign successfully raised more than $5.5 million, reaching the goal to acquire and protect seven unique properties totalling 420 acres along the Washington side of the Gorge, which are now being managed by Friends’ Land Trust.

Outdoor Youth Programs Highlight Wonders of the Gorge

In the past year, Friends’ outdoor education programs brought more than 320 middle school youth from Washougal and Portland into the Gorge for a full nature-immersion experience, including hikes, to learn about the wonders of the Gorge.

Mark Across the Gorge

Oil Train Proposals Threaten the Gorge

Friends and our coalition partners scored a major victory when Washington Gov. Jay Inslee rejected Tesoro Savage’s Vancouver oil terminal proposal on January 29, 2018. The largest oil shipping terminal proposed in North America, the plant would have brought more than 131 million barrels of oil per year through the Gorge. Friends also defeated a Union Pacific proposal to add a second main-line track through Mosier, Oregon, and adjacent Scenic Area lands.

Stewardship Efforts Focus on Giving Weeds the Boot

In response to the 2017 Eagle Creek fire, our public land stewardship program was launched to minimize the spread of invasive plants in the burned area. Work parties were hosted throughout the Gorge, on both public lands and our land trust properties.
Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge at the west end of the Gorge has long been a wildlife haven, with 200 bird species visiting annually. Now, significant improvements are coming to the refuge with the restoration of 965 acres of floodplain that had been cut off from the Columbia River by a 1966 levee. In 2020, when a 2.25-mile-wide breach in the levee lets the river back in, salmon will again return to the floodplain to rest and grow in its quiet waters. Construction is expected to be complete in 2021.

The habitat restoration would never have happened without the Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust’s multiyear negotiations to purchase Steigerwald Shores, a 160-acre parcel east of the refuge. In 2018, with the success of the $5.5 million Preserve the Wonder campaign, the purchase was finalized. Close to 40 percent of the levee to be removed is on Steigerwald Shores’ one mile of river frontage, and collaborations with our friends at the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership are contributing to the project’s success.

The Steigerwald refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Three years ago, it was selected as one of the nation’s Urban Wildlife Refuges, places close to large metropolitan areas that offer excellent opportunities to engage urban communities as partners in wildlife conservation. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge project leader Christopher Lapp says, “Our focus is on making conservation relevant, to bring people to the refuge and have them take their role in conservation back home with them. We want to erase the separation between people and wildlife.”

In addition to the massive habitat enrichments, Lapp says the changes at Steigerwald meet Fish and Wildlife Service’s goals for environmental education and interpretation. With its position as a Gorge gateway and its flat, accessible trails, Steigerwald is an ideal introduction to the Columbia Gorge’s natural habitats and viewsheds for everyone – traditional users like birders and hikers, as well as people new to exploring the Gorge.

Lapp adds, “From land acquisitions to the benefits of long-term connectivity with Gorge trails, we have a very healthy partnership with Friends. When it comes to creating a positive public experience for Gorge visitors, we’re all on the same page.”

Read more about Friends’ work with partners to protect and steward the Gorge at gorgefriends.org/partners.
Thank You, Donors!

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Many thanks to all our members and contributors who supported our work this year. From advocacy and education to stewardship and Preserve the Wonder, thank you for preserving the Gorge for future generations.
Autumn fog at Cape Horn. PHOTO: DARCI GOTTMAN

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Every gift is greatly appreciated and supports our work for Gorge protection.
Financial Report

Fiscal year July 1, 2017–June 30, 2018

The Eagle Creek fire in September 2017 prompted an outpouring of generosity to support Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Those donations and the acquisition of the final property in the Preserve the Wonder campaign were major factors in our net assets rising to $21.6 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018.

Consolidated results in fiscal year 2017-18 have operating income increasing to $2.11 million, up from $1.39 million and operating expenses increasing to $2.26 million from $2.09 million the previous year. The planned shortfall between income and expenses was made up from a staged release of funds from an unrestricted bequest and our annual draw of no more than 5 percent from our endowments. In addition to operating income, $2.27 million was raised for the Preserve the Wonder campaign, adding to the organizational income for the year of $4.53 million.

Although some lands owned by Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust are eligible for property tax exemption, we paid $52,000 in property taxes to support local communities and schools.

Our $5.8 million endowments include the Marjorie Abramovitz Fund for land trust activities and the Vic Clausen Fund for outdoor youth education. Endowment funds for general operations include the Conservation Director Endowment, the Mary D. and Thomas W. Holman Fund, the Nancy Russell Fund, and the Barbara Pooley Wilson Fund.

Endowment funds are managed by Ferguson Wellman Capital Management and monitored by Friends’ board finance committee.

### Consolidated Statement of Financial Position*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>June 30, 2018</th>
<th>June 30, 2017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land and related assets</td>
<td>$9,900,931</td>
<td>$9,493,532</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash and investments</td>
<td>$11,056,591</td>
<td>$8,946,434</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other assets</td>
<td>$645,225</td>
<td>$1,596,431</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total assets</td>
<td>$21,602,747</td>
<td>$20,036,397</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liabilities</td>
<td>$1,258,183</td>
<td>$1,717,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net assets</td>
<td>$20,344,564</td>
<td>$18,319,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total liabilities and net assets</td>
<td>$21,602,747</td>
<td>$20,036,397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is an unaudited financial statement. Friends’ board engages Kern & Thompson, LLC, to perform an annual independent audit.*
A Banner Year for Friends Volunteers

On nearly 700 occasions this year, Friends volunteers worked as land stewards in burned areas, hike leaders and shepherds on trails, and as seasonal Trailhead Ambassadors at trailheads and events. Others taught students in the field, took photographs for our publications, and worked in our offices.

These incredible volunteers collectively contributed 5,022 hours this year. To create a sense of community and prepare them for potential challenges that arise in the field, Friends provides specialized training sessions for hike leaders and shepherds, tabling volunteers, and Trailhead Ambassadors. Other volunteers just hit the ground running, learning about the Gorge as they pull invasive weeds or use their skills in the office or in the field.

We salute our volunteers by hosting an annual celebration of their service and offering a discount pass to the Columbia Sportswear employee store, and by expressing our heartfelt recognition of their contribution. New volunteer Donna Acord says, “Friends’ approach will keep volunteers returning. We are treated with respect and appreciation – and it’s fun!”

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Working to ensure that the beautiful and wild Columbia Gorge remains a place apart, an unspoiled treasure for generations to come.

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