Climate Change Threatens the Gorge
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*Gorge Area Residents

Friends of the Columbia Gorge was founded in 1980 by John Yeon and Nancy Russell, with champions led by Senator Mark Hatfield. We work to protect, preserve, and steward the Columbia Gorge for future generations.

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Take Action

Climate Protections for the Gorge

The Columbia River Gorge Commission is now more than three years into their review of the Gorge-wide management plan. Resource protection standards in the plan are almost 30 years old. These outdated standards need to be revised to reflect the best available science and the threat of climate change. The Gorge Commission needs to prioritize issues related to climate change and salmon protection in their updated management plan.

You can help. Write to the Gorge Commission urging them to update the Columbia Gorge Management Plan to:

• Adopt a climate action plan to better protect resources;
• Update fish and wildlife habitat protection based on best available science;
• Stop urban expansion and promote growth in existing urban areas boundaries;
• Protect scenic views by requiring new development to be screened by topography and existing vegetation; and
• Prioritize enforcement of Gorge protection laws. Don’t leave it up to citizens or the counties to carry out the commission’s mandatory role to enforce violations of the Scenic Area Act.

Please send your comment letter to:
Columbia River Gorge Commission
P.O. Box 730
White Salmon, WA 98672
gorgecommission.org/about-crgc/contact

You can also submit your comments online through our website: gorgefriends.org/takeaction

WHO WE ARE

Friends of the Columbia Gorge has offices in Portland and Hood River, Oregon, and Washougal, Washington. Contact us for locations at gorgefriends.org/contact.

Balsamroot blooming on Coyote Wall, above Catherine Creek.
Photo: Annette Hadaway
This year marks the 40th anniversary of Friends of the Columbia Gorge. While we’re proud of reaching this milestone, it is important that we place those four decades in a greater context. Right now, sturgeon that are twice as old as our organization prowl the depths of the Columbia River. Indigenous communities flourished in the Gorge for thousands of years before our founder first opened our doors. Volcanoes, earthquakes, and molten lava played havoc with the area for millions of years before we led our first hike.

Placing our 40 years against the time span of the Columbia Gorge reminds me of words I heard spoken in the late 1980s by an African-American Southern Baptist preacher. I was attending a friend’s college graduation and the preacher said to the crowd, “Your life is but a moment between two vast infinities. What are you doing with your moment?”

Forty years ago, inspired Oregonians and Washingtonians seized their moment to embrace a vision larger than themselves and launched Friends of the Columbia Gorge. In addition to forming an enduring nonprofit organization, six years later their efforts led to something unique in our country at the time: a bistate National Scenic Area comprised of small towns within large natural areas, cultivated orchards alongside wild orchids, and quiet places of solitude tucked away from busy highways.

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area continues to wrap a framework of protection around the Gorge, but the work is not done. True protection is a continuous human endeavor, a relay race handed from generation to generation. Those who came before us saw sprawling subdivisions as a major threat and they did something about it. In recent decades, the threat of industrial and commercial development became a major threat and we did something about it. Today, we recognize climate change and vehicle congestion as major threats and we are compelled to act.

To meet these new challenges, we must push ourselves to look beyond the familiar faces and strategies that brought us here. We need to explore new solutions, engage new generations, and invite diverse communities into this expanding conversation. The Gorge we inherited and the Gorge we will leave to those who follow is a vast yet vulnerable space, and we live but one brief moment within this space. The question for all of us today, as the good Baptist preacher asked decades ago, is “What are you doing with your moment?”

Kevin Gorman, Executive Director
kevin@gorgefriends.org

Looking east from the Vista House near Corbett.
Photo: Shaari Cohen

Photo: Micheal Drewry
Climate Change Unites

On November 12, 2019, a teenager provided a powerful moment for climate activism in the Columbia Gorge—and it wasn’t the famous Swedish activist Greta Thunberg.

That day, the Hood River City Council was considering an activist-drafted resolution that would have the city declare a climate crisis. Although the council favored the resolution in principle, it had revised its zero carbon-emission target to 2050, a full 20 years past the proposed date of 2030.

To Lottie Bromham, a 17-year-old member of the Earth Action Club at Hood River Valley High School, the delay was unacceptable, and with fellow student Lyric Emmons, she gave forceful testimony urging the council to reconsider the change. The councilors listened carefully.

“You have failed the children of this city,” Bromham declared. “Move up the zero-carbon emissions date. Rapid, effective action needs to be taken in order to reverse the effects of climate change. And I can say one thing for sure, if nothing is done, the children of this town will not forgive you.”

That message was persuasive. The resolution passed with a revised target date of 2035.

A growing awareness of the climate crisis

The Hood River resolution capped a productive decade for a diverse community of activists responding to climate change-related threats to the Gorge. Their successes demonstrate that speaking out makes a difference in protecting fragile ecosystems already showing signs of the adverse effects of climate change. The 2017 Eagle Creek fire—human-caused but ignited during a protracted period of very hot, dry weather—provided extra urgency.

“When I retired in 2012, I thought I’d do some sort of sustainability project, but quickly found that if we don’t fix climate change then nothing else will matter,” said Eric Strid, White Salmon, Washington, resident and former semiconductor industry executive. Strid joined Rev. John Boonstra and Friends Field Representative Peter Cornelison, both of Hood River, Oregon, to form the Columbia Gorge Climate Action Network, to educate, organize, and motivate activists to confront the climate crisis.

Strid’s wife, Cyndi, is an artist and activist. “The passion and genius of every child, teen, adult, and elder can contribute to abundance and restoration of the land, the species, and our collective dreams,” she explained. “We’ve created a climate crisis … everyone is needed to lend a helping hand, to plan and act locally and regionally.”

Fuel for activism

As the 2010s dawned, the Gorge witnessed a dramatic increase in rail transport of fossil fuels to existing facilities in the Pacific Northwest, and the number of daily trains either spewing coal dust or shipping volatile, fracked crude oil threatened to grow exponentially, due to several proposals to build or expand facilities handling this carbon-increasing cargo.

Throughout the decade, activists, environmental groups, and grassroots
organizations worked together, forming a broad constituency to oppose the deep pockets of the fossil-fuel industry. Their efforts convinced many Oregon and Washington towns and cities to pass resolutions declaring opposition to fossil-fuel transport. Tribes asserting their treaty rights were crucial allies who often played a decisive role as, one by one, the dozen-plus coal and oil-by-rail projects were either abandoned by proponents or denied by state regulators.

**Tribes affected by climate crisis**

Columbia Treaty Tribes, on both activist and agency levels, recognized early that their traditional ways of gathering food were being adversely affected by the warming climate. Climate change and the National Scenic Area

A current concern for Gorge climate activists is ensuring that the Columbia River Gorge Commission’s ongoing, once-a-decade review and revision of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Plan includes meaningful provisions to deal with the effects of climate change. The current plan does not even mention climate change. “Climate change is likely to impact just about everything in the National Scenic Area,” Friends Conservation Director Michael Lang said. “To protect the outstanding resources of the Gorge, the Forest Service and Gorge Commission must confront the many challenges we can expect from global warming in the decades to come. A good first step would be to improve the protection of salmon and wildlife habitat based on the best available science.”

The daunting challenges posed by climate change appear to invigorate Gorge activists. Sampson-Kruse, the Umatilla activist, said, “There’s been an amazing resurgence, a rise of activism built around protecting land, air, and water. The Creator, when he gave us these gifts, said we must honor them and protect them for the next seven generations, and that is the greatest gift that we could give our children and grandchildren.”

Climate justice activist Cathy Sampson-Kruse, a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, noted that over the past decade, “We’re all experiencing shorter growth periods for natural foods that we traditionally harvest: berries, roots, salmon, and trout.”

Research by the Columbia Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, which manages fishery resources and related treaty rights for the Columbia Tribes, details the stresses that warming temperatures place on salmon and the watersheds in which they live, warning that climate change could undo the millions of dollars and countless hours of work that have gone into restoring salmon populations.
As our Gorge protection work continues, it’s beneficial to occasionally pause and appreciate all that we don’t see in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. There are no sprawling suburbs, power plants, strip malls, or outlet stores. Once you cross the threshold into the Scenic Area, there is an immediate transition into a landscape where nature takes precedence over human development.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge formed 40 years ago in 1980, as conservationists and visionaries saw the need for federal protection of the Columbia River Gorge. That same year, the National Parks Service issued a study of alternatives for the protection of the Columbia River Gorge. The study identified several threats to the resource values of the Gorge including new industrial development, clearcut logging, residential development, surface mining, and energy development. Regional population growth, coupled with completion of the Interstate 205 Bridge, meant rural lands in the Gorge could be soon devoured by sprawling residential and commercial development.

Friends and allies stopped several of those early developments and subdivisions from being approved using existing state laws. In 1983, Friends’ founder Nancy Russell and her husband gave a no-interest loan to the Trust for Public Land to buy a proposed subdivision on Cape Horn that Friends had been unable to stop through legal appeals and protected it as public land.

Land once slated for industrial development in Washougal was purchased by The Trust for Public Land, leading to the creation of the Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

For the next six years, Friends and our allies applied unrelenting pressure to pass strong legislation in the face of an anti-environment administration. In 1986, Congress finally passed the National Scenic Area Act into law. This limited industrial development to inside urban areas, stopped subdivisions and commercial development, halted clearcutting on federal forest land, prohibited energy development, made quarries and junkyards into natural areas, removed industrial sites, and expanded public lands.

New threats emerged and were defeated, such as fossil fuel export terminals and their mile-long trains.

In our 40th year and beyond, Friends will continue to advocate for strong laws to better protect Gorge resources and use the courts to stop illegal development.

As we celebrate this significant anniversary, it’s important to remember what first brought us together. The next time you’re enjoying the outstanding natural beauty of the Gorge, reflect for a moment on everything that you don’t see and appreciate how much these four decades of advocacy have protected. Then, consider how much more work there is to do to ensure that the Gorge will be protected for future generations.

Michael Lang, conservation director, michael@gorgefriends.org

In the early early 1950s, local real estate speculators looked to make fortunes selling Gorge land to industrial developers.
Over the holidays we received a wonderful note from a dedicated stewardship volunteer who had spent a sunny December day hiking with her two young granddaughters at Wahclella Falls. They enjoyed the splendid scenery but also talked about weightier issues like destructive wildfires, climate change, and invasive species—concepts that should be more obscure to children than they are in our current reality. She told her grandchildren about the extraordinary effort of Friends’ stewardship volunteers and how she volunteers to help the Gorge’s wildlife.

In the months after the 2017 Eagle Creek fire, land managers knew that seeds from invasive plants, particularly those brought in at trailheads, could quickly establish and crowd out native species and alter the ecology of the Gorge. Over the past two years, more than 1,000 volunteers have put in more than 4,000 hours to combat high-priority invasive plants. The work is substantial. Volunteers get dirty, work rain or shine, and believe in what they’re doing. They give back to the land so the Gorge can remain a special place for their grandchildren.

With the current trajectory of climate change, volunteers know it’s more important now than ever to make every action be impactful and to work together toward collective change.

Fortunately, we have a valuable new tool to help us focus our volunteer stewardship efforts. The Nature Conservancy recently completed an assessment designed to identify areas that are crucial to conservation in the face of climate change. This project looked across the Pacific Northwest to identify areas with a high level of geodiversity—landscapes with a complex profile of soils, elevation, aspect, and bedrock that make them more likely to offer accommodating habitat to plants and animals that will be on the move in response as the climate changes.

Friends has been using this data to sharpen our attention on geodiverse areas in the Gorge that will have lasting value for plants and animals. Places like Larch Mountain, the Eagle Creek basin, and Dog Mountain are key climate resilience anchors. And while removing invasive plants across the span of the Gorge is an enormous endeavor, this data is helping Friends ensure our ongoing stewardship efforts will provide long-term benefits for vegetation, wildlife, and our future generations.
Friends’ Outdoors Program

Friends’ guided outing program is open to all and offers something for everyone: scenic hikes, wildlife and wildflower walks, kayak and rafting trips, family-friendly outings with child-focused exploration, dog-friendly excursions, bike rides, and so much more. Make new friends and create lasting memories.

Registration is staggered throughout the season; register for March & April outings on March 9 starting at 6 a.m. Full details at gorgefriends.org/hikes.

“This was seriously the most fantastic, positive experience, and it made me so pumped and less nervous for the hike I’m doing later this season. I just felt really safe, immediately comfortable, and welcome the whole time.”

—Hike Program participant
Stewardship Volunteer Program

Help preserve the natural beauty and biodiversity of the Gorge this spring by joining a stewardship work party to remove invasive plants. No experience is necessary, and tools are provided. As a special thank you, you’ll earn a Friends of the Columbia Gorge T-shirt after volunteering at three or more stewardship events.

Details & registration at gorgefriends.org/stewardship.

“One of the most satisfying things was discovering that many of the baby plants we planted in March were thriving in November!”
— Stewardship Volunteer

“One of my favorite moments was the opportunity to work with my grandchildren on a volunteer project. It helped me appreciate their spirit of kindness and desire to help the environment.”
— Stewardship Volunteer
Friends’ board of directors brings together a wide range of interests, skills, and knowledge that intersect the mission and vision of our organization.

This year, we are excited to welcome John Baugher, Pleschette Fontenet, Jen Lovejoy, and Sarah Quist as the newest members of our board.

**John Baugher** has been serving as a trustee for our land trust and formerly served as a project manager for Bonneville Power Administration’s fish and wildlife program.

**Pleschette Fontenet** has been active on the board’s ad hoc philanthropy committee and brings skills honed as an account executive for Lenovo software, along with experience in philanthropy and communications.

**Jen Lovejoy** grew up on a 10,000-acre ranch in Eastern Washington and is an associate professor in the Department of Communications at the University of Portland. She has prior board experience in the areas of strategic planning and innovation leadership.

**Sarah Quist** comes to Friends with a background in individual wealth management, asset management, and financial planning as the director of client relationships principal at Vision Capital Management.

In November, we welcomed **Natasha Stone** as Friends’ community engagement specialist. She manages Friends’ outdoor youth education efforts and works to build a diverse and inclusive network of community partners. With a Bachelor of Science in Ethnic Studies, Natasha is passionate about working with underrepresented communities and has seen firsthand how outdoor recreation and education can be empowering tools for communities to strengthen and connect.

**Coila Ash** was welcomed in January as our temporary, part-time hike program associate. Coila will fill in for Kate Lindberg, who will be on family leave until May, and will be working with hike leaders and shepherds to organize spring hikes and outdoor programs. A dedicated Friends supporter and volunteer, in 2019, Coila was honored as one of three Volunteers of the Year. She joins us with skills in organizational development, alliance building, and project and campaign coordination and implementation.

Lastly, we say a fond farewell to **Natalie Ferraro**, who joined us in February 2019 as our trailhead ambassador coordinator. Natalie guided 112 trained volunteers who interacted with more than 19,000 visitors at 12 different sites over the past year. She has transitioned to a full-time position with Trailkeepers of Oregon, and we wish her well in this new role.
Capturing the Gorge’s Beauty En Plein Air

Burt Edwards, communications director, burt@gorgefriends.org

The Columbia Gorge’s stunning light, inspiring vistas, and vibrant mix of community and cultures makes it one of the Pacific Northwest’s most beloved treasures, as well as a magnet for artists.

Seeking to deepen the connection between art and nature, Hood River artist Cathleen Rehfeld launched the Pacific Northwest Plein Air in the Columbia River Gorge competition in 2006. This annual paint-out and exhibit has evolved into one of the premier landscape art competitions on the west coast. Since 2016, the event has been hosted by the Maryhill Museum of Art in Goldendale, Washington.

Last February, Friends staff met with Rehfeld and Maryhill staff to explore potential partnership projects to further bring together artists and conservationists around protecting the wonders of the Gorge. As a result, a new “Friends of the Columbia Gorge” ribbon award was created to annually honor a painting that celebrates the natural beauty and sense of wonder that has helped inspire over 40 years of community activism and stewardship to protect and preserve the Gorge for future generations.

Last August at the 2019 Plein Air festival, the inaugural Friends ribbon was awarded to Lilli-anne Price of Salinas, California for her acrylic painting, “Bingen Skyline.” Elo Wobig of Portland, Oregon, was selected as runner-up for her oil painting, “Shoulders of the Columbia River.” Friends, Maryhill, and Rehfeld are currently working on public engagement efforts around the 2020 Gorge Plein Air festival scheduled for this summer.

Plein air artist Lilli-anne Price painting outdoors above Bingen, WA.
Photo: Courtesy of Lilli-anne Price
When Michele Wier moved to Portland from the Midwest in 2007, she quickly found a sanctuary in the Columbia Gorge. Her first Gorge hike was at Angel’s Rest, and after that she started hiking on a regular basis to find inspiration and recharge from daily life.

It wasn’t long before Michele realized how important it is to protect this nature lover’s paradise by joining Friends as a member. She recognized the imminent threats posed by logging and mining, as well as the more complicated issues caused by overcrowding and congestion.

She still fondly recalls that first hike at Angel’s Rest, when she was almost alone on the trail. Now, she finds once-quiet paths are often filled with large crowds.

Michele believes that education is critical for all who spend time in the Gorge—that’s a primary reason why she supports Friends’ work. She wants everyone who cares about the Gorge to be able to experience it in a way that doesn’t harm the environment.

Even though Michele is younger than most folks planning their estate, she is conscious of the fact that the Columbia Gorge will be here long after she is gone. As someone deeply invested in the fight to protect our unique landscapes and trails, the idea of leaving a lasting legacy resonated with her immediately.

By including Friends in her estate plans, Michele is ensuring that the Columbia Gorge will remain a place of wild beauty, accessible for future generations to enjoy sustainably and responsibly.

Thank you, Michele, for your far-sighted generosity that will care for the Gorge now and in the future!
With the December approval of a new federal budget, stakeholders involved in the Steigerwald Floodplain Restoration Project are celebrating some critical final pieces falling into place. This summer, the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership will begin construction on the largest environmental restoration project ever within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust was instrumental in this project through the purchase of the 160-acre Steigerwald Shores property as part of our Preserve the Wonder campaign. The new budget provides funding from the Land & Water Conservation Fund that will allow us to add that property to Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge this spring.

The Steigerwald project is a collaborative effort with dozens of partners and supporters. In addition to the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Sen. Patty Murray, Sen. Maria Cantwell, Gov. Jay Inslee, Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, the Port of Camas-Washougal, the City of Washougal, Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for their critical role in securing the final funding to get this project underway.

Exploring the Columbia Gorge without a personal vehicle is getting easier. Hood River-based Columbia Area Transit (CAT) has expanded the Columbia Gorge Express and now offers transportation between Portland and The Dalles seven days a week, with eight daily weekday runs and six weekends runs.

The Columbia Gorge Express travels between Portland’s Gateway Transit Center and the Lewis & Clark Festival Park in The Dalles, with a stop in Mosier on request, and regular stops in Hood River, Cascade Locks, and Multnomah Falls. All buses provide Wi-Fi and bike racks and offer convenient access to such trails as the Multnomah-Wahekeena Falls Loop, Dry Creek Falls Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, Historic Columbia River State Trail in Cascade Locks and Hood River, Mosier Plateau, and The Dalles Riverfront Trail.

This spring, a special Gorge Pass will offer unlimited rides on the Columbia Gorge Express through 2020. Passes purchased before May 18 will be $30 for adults and $15 for seniors, children under 17, and Hood River residents. After May 18, the cost of a pass will increase to $90 for adults and $45 for seniors, children, and residents.

Learn more and buy a pass at ridecatbus.org/columbia-gorge-express.
Special Gifts

November 1, 2019 – January 23, 2020

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IN HONOR OF JAMES ARNDT
Ron Lowy

IN HONOR OF DEBBIE ASAKAWA
Carl Asakawa
Mark Bajorek and Susan Palmiter
Catherine Cauder
Kaye and Michael Carlisle
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James Lieber

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Patricia O’Shea
IN MEMORY OF JOHN L. AND
SARAH P. ANDERSON
Peggy Anderson
IN MEMORY OF ROBIN SELIM
Irena Flury

These gifts were received in the fall and are greatly appreciated. We regret the delay in these acknowledgements.

July 22 – October 31, 2019

IN MEMORY

IN MEMORY OF DON CANNARD
Ted Klump
IN MEMORY OF SANDY COHEN
Ken Molsberry
IN MEMORY OF BILL AND SADIE DUERDEN
Barbara Duerden
IN MEMORY OF FRED ROTHCHILD
George Cummings
IN MEMORIAL OF HAZEL SEAVER
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Mona Warner
IN HONOR OF BEVERLY WONG
Emily Lifton

Special Gifts
Join us for a FREE Legacy Planning Seminar from 11:00 a.m.–Noon.

40th Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Sunday, April 19 | 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. | Skamania Lodge, Stevenson, WA

Information fair, socializing, and no-host bar in the lobby beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Forty years ago a group of forward-thinking visionaries set out to protect the Columbia Gorge. Join us as we give a nod to those pioneers and learn about plans for ensuring that the Gorge remains a place protected—wondrous, wild, and accessible for all.

Members: $40 per person
Non-Member Special: $60 per person includes an annual membership

Please register by April 8 at gorgefriends.org/annualmtg