

An aerial photograph of a forest with a waterfall. The forest is a mix of green and brown trees, suggesting a fire impact. A waterfall flows down a rocky cliff face, surrounded by dense vegetation. The overall scene is a mix of natural beauty and the aftermath of a wildfire.

LIVING WITH FIRE

A BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING A RESILIENT FUTURE FOR THE COLUMBIA GORGE

Last year's wildfire season was one of the worst in recent Pacific Northwest history. According to numerous studies, the region will see increasingly drier summers due to climate change. Already in 2018, the Gorge has seen several small blazes, and the Substation fire east of The Dalles grew to over 70,000 acres in just a couple of days. These fires have inspired a remarkable public outpouring of support for protecting and stewarding the Gorge.

The 2017 Eagle Creek fire had a dramatic impact on the Gorge. Shortly after the fire's start, Friends of the Columbia Gorge launched a special initiative to assist community partners, educate the public and advocate for the policies and programs needed to rebuild trails and aid the forest's natural regeneration. In the months since, Friends has worked with its members, partners and the public to:

- Raise over \$48,000 for the Hood River County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Division, the team that led the rescue of 150 hikers trapped on the Eagle Creek trail to safety;
- Mobilize public opinion to block congressional legislation designed to open fire-affected areas of the Gorge to clear-cut logging; and
- Donate \$30,000 to Oregon Kitchen Table's crowdfunding campaign to help restore Multnomah Falls-area trails.

Building on these initial efforts, Friends has collaborated with private, public and nonprofit allies in the region on an array of efforts to strengthen long-term resilience in an age of increased wildfire danger.

Stepping up for Gorge Stewardship & Trail Restoration

The forest floor is more vulnerable than ever to the proliferation of invasive plants, and it will take years for damaged trails to recover. But there is a silver lining. In the months following the Eagle Creek fire, thousands of people reached out asking how they could help. With this outpouring of public support, we have launched a new Gorge stewardship effort to train and deploy teams of volunteers to areas particularly vulnerable to invasive weeds after the fire.

Educating Gorge Hikers on the Trails

The need for up-to-date information is critical as trail conditions change and areas closed by the Eagle Creek fire reopen. To aid ongoing public safety initiatives, Friends has expanded its Trailhead Ambassador program—a collaboration between Friends, the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance, Oregon State Parks and the U.S. Forest Service. The program places volunteers at popular trailheads in the Gorge and Mt. Hood area to educate hikers on *Leave No Trace* principles, emphasize trail safety and highlight other nearby recreational opportunities.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

WHAT'S LEFT OF THE LARCH MOUNTAIN TRAIL SIGN ALONG LARCH MOUNTAIN TRAIL
PHOTO BY TRAILKEEPERS OF OR.

INVASIVE WEED PULLING AT ANGEL'S REST
PHOTO BY MIKA BARRETT



Rethinking Trails & Transportation

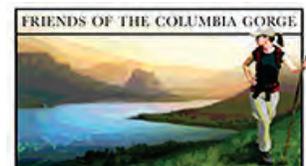
Since the Eagle Creek fire, Friends has been working with community leaders to engage state and federal agencies on new approaches to managing the Gorge's 100-year-old trail system. This includes exploring challenges with existing transportation systems, such as traffic congestion along the Historic Columbia River Highway. We're working to build new systems that disperse hikers, encourage transit use and bring additional dollars to local communities.

DEVILS REST TRAIL, POST EAGLE CREEK FIRE
PHOTO BY LILLIAN PALMER

PASSENGERS DEPARTING THE DOG MOUNTAIN SHUTTLE
PHOTO BY MICHAEL DREWRY

Get Involved

Friends organizes regular opportunities throughout the year to hike trails, combat invasive plants or attend special community forums exploring key Gorge issues. To learn how you can join or support our efforts visit: gorgefriends.org/get-involved.



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