

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

Fall 2001 Newsletter

photo: Ken Denis



Casino advocates originally identified 40 acres of land east of Hood River as a potential casino site over two years ago. The isolated 40-acre parcel has been held in trust by the CTWSR for decades. In the last year, the CTWSR quietly purchased an additional 175 acres of land adjacent to the 40-acre parcel. Now the CTWSR has applied to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to approve the transfer of the newly acquired land into trust for the purpose of ancillary development for a casino. Ancillary development could be any development related to or dependent upon the gaming facility, such as hotels, RV parks, gas stations, restaurants, convention centers, retail centers and other commercial uses that cater to casino patrons and tourists.

Casino Proposal Now Threatens Entire Scenic Area

Hotels, shopping centers and more likely

By Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

In an attempt to open scenic area land to large-scale development, casino advocates with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation (CTWSR) are proposing to withdraw 175 acres of newly acquired land from protection under the National Scenic Area Act (Act).

The action, referred to as a fee-to-trust transfer, has implications far beyond the issue of

siting a casino within the heart of the Columbia River Gorge. Since tribal trust land is exempt from regulations under the Act, approval of the fee-to-trust transfer could set a precedent leading to the withdrawal of thousands of acres of land from National Scenic Area protection, opening the door to commercial and industrial development throughout the Gorge.

Fee-to-Trust Transfer and Development Would Destroy Scenic Landscape

The proposed casino site is adjacent to the reopened Historic Columbia River Highway between Hood River and Mosier. Public and private interests worked for two decades to prevent development in this area and reopen the Highway, including the Mosier Twin Tunnels, to non-motorized recreational use.

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preserving scenic areas

Above: View of land at stake near Hood River: Dots indicate current trust lands; x-marks indicate Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail; additional parcels would be open to unlimited development if trust transfer is approved.

INSIDE
Holiday Gift Insert

Executive Director's Letter

Dear Friends,

It is difficult these days to talk about any issue of substance, even Gorge issues, without coming back to the uneasy state of affairs in our world. It has left all of us feeling vulnerable and out-of-control. None of us knows if or when future attacks on our soil will occur. But we all have control over how we individually carry on. And I've found it very interesting to see how our members have carried on.



Kevin Gorman addresses the Annual Conservators gathering. Pictured with Mary Bishop (c) and Nancy Russell (r).

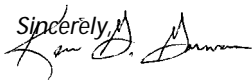
In August, our organization scheduled a Gorge picnic to take place on September 16, which proved to be five days after the September 11 attacks. We considered postponing or canceling the event, but decided it was best to continue as planned. Fortunately, we had beautiful weather that Sunday, a good turnout of members, and it was clear that people came for a respite from the tragic events. They found a very good place to do it.

We held our picnic at the Shire, a 73-acre piece of riverfront property directly across from Multnomah Falls. It was on this site that John Yeon, son of the roadmaster of the Historic Columbia River Highway, convinced our founder Nancy Russell to take up the task of Gorge protection. That meeting in turn led to the creation of Friends of the Columbia Gorge. So, as you might guess, we consider the Shire to be a sacred place.

The Shire is magnificent in its natural and scenic beauty and the picnic gathering allowed people to step out of the frightening and uncertain world that we now live in and remember what we cherish about this world. Everyone seemed to take more time to soak in the surroundings and enjoy the view. In

fact, we were only reminded of our country's crisis when we looked up to see passenger planes flying over the Gorge, a sight we had not seen in several days.

It seemed fitting that on the Sunday following September 11, as millions of people across the country poured into churches, synagogues and mosques, we chose to look for sanctuary in the Gorge. The beauty of the Gorge has always inspired and grounded people, but I can say firsthand that it does so even more in trying times like these.

Sincerely,


Kevin Gorman
Executive Director

Mission Statement

Friends of the Columbia Gorge shall vigorously protect the scenic, natural, cultural and recreational resources within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

We fulfill this mission by ensuring strict implementation of the National Scenic Area Act; promoting responsible stewardship of Gorge lands and waters; encouraging public ownership of sensitive areas; educating the public about the unique natural values of the Columbia River Gorge and the importance of preserving those values; and working with groups and individuals to accomplish mutual preservation goals.

—Adopted November 20, 1997



Citizen Involvement Update

Friends' Outreach & Volunteer Happenings

By Betsy Toll, Volunteer Coordinator, and Deirdre Murray, AmeriCorps Staff Member

Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers are needed to plan our 2002 season of Spring Wildflower Hikes, Gorge Hiking Weekend, Late-Season Outings and Stewardship projects. We need help scheduling activities, recruiting leaders and other volunteers, confirming hike and stewardship project locations, and creating outreach and media materials.

A volunteer planning group is working on these projects, so call Betsy in our Portland office at 503-241-3762 x107, or Amy in Hood River at 541-386-5268 to get involved. ■

Leaving Friends

by Deirdre Murray

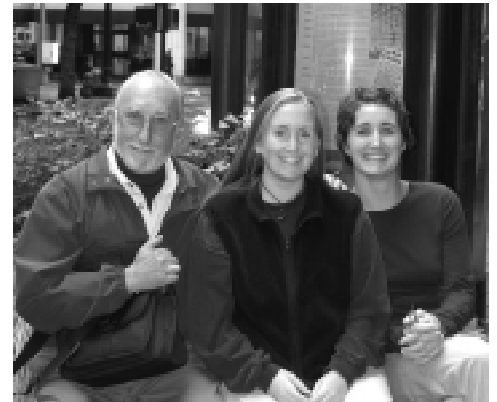
The end of my 11 months of AmeriCorps service with Friends of the Columbia Gorge is coming to an end, and I want to

express my thanks to everyone at Friends for sponsoring my placement here. I have learned so much from listening in and getting involved in the range of issues that Friends undertakes, and I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve here. I hope to stay involved after I head off to my next adventure, wherever that may be! ■

Changing Faces

This is a season of change at Friends, as it is everywhere. Many of our members and hiking volunteers have had the pleasure of getting to know Deirdre Murray, and we send her off with our thanks and very best wishes for the future. We'll keep her on our Email Activist list!

At the same time, we are happy to welcome two new people: a new AmeriCorps member, Amy Brown, as Special Projects Coordinator in our



Above: Ray Spaulding, Amy Brown and Deirdre Murray bring energy and creativity to Friends.

photo: Kym Snow

Hood River office, and volunteer Ray Spaulding, assisting with our Speakers Bureau and contributing his creative talents (see back page).

Friends of the Columbia Gorge is fortunate to enjoy the skills and support of such energetic and talented individuals. ■

Exemplary Volunteer



Board Member Jeanne Norton received special recognition at our annual Conservator party in October for her dedicated support of Friends' work. Jeanne volunteers tirelessly on behalf of protecting the Gorge's natural splendor, serving on our board, attending hearings, tabling at events, phonebanking, helping with mailings and preparing fabulous foods for special events. We're grateful for Jeanne's energy and dedication to protecting the Gorge. ■

Friends Wish List

We need the following items to keep ahead of the challenges of Gorge protection. Please let us know if you can help:

- One or two portable projection screens for our slide presentations.
- One PC Pentium II or better.

Please call us at 503-241-3762 if you can help! ■

Left: Development Director Jane Haley thanks Board member Jeanne Norton for her tireless work for the Gorge.

photo: Ken Denis



Conservation and Legal Program Highlights

In the Courts and in the Field...

By Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org,
and Nathan Baker, Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org

Cluster Developments Guidelines Need Revision

Next year, the Columbia River Gorge Commission will review the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. One of the biggest opportunities during this review will be to revise the “cluster development” guidelines.

Generally speaking, cluster development is a good “big picture” method of preserving large tracts of farmland, forestland, and open space. The basic principle of clustering is to group new lots and new dwellings together on portions of a property in order to prevent encroachment upon productive farmland, forestland, water resources, wildlife habitat, cultural resources

and scenic landscapes. At least 75% of the property must be permanently protected as undeveloped open space.

Unfortunately, the National Scenic Area guidelines for cluster developments have several shortcomings that work to increase residential development on farmland and forestland without adding benefits toward resource protection. One of the problems is a provision that allows for additional lots and dwellings beyond what is normally allowed in agriculture and forest zones. Some developers have attempted to exploit the cluster development guidelines as a way to maximize development at the expense of scenic views, wildlife habitat, native plants, and cultural resource sites.

The hotbed of cluster development principles gone awry is Skamania County. In a recent example, the County Commissioners approved a proposed “cluster” that scatters three dwellings into opposite corners of the lot, and in the process fragments prime farmland and scenic views. One of the proposed dwellings is more than a quarter of a mile apart from the others. Incredibly, the Commissioners accepted the applicant’s argument that this house can be “clustered” with his neighbors’ pre-existing houses, even though these houses are on adjacent lots and were not part of his application.

The Commissioners approved the development, ignoring the neighbors’ complaints about the proposed development’s illegalities and potential effects on their property values and rural way of life. The Commissioners even allowed the applicant to write his own conditions of approval and “staff report” for the land use decision.

Friends joined several neighboring property owners in appealing the county’s decision. The appeal is currently pending before the Gorge Commission.

There is hope for positive improvements to the cluster development guidelines. A planner at Skamania County has set up a workshop in November that will be conducted by Randall Arendt, one of the nation’s leading authorities on cluster development planning. Friends of the Columbia Gorge hopes that Mr. Arendt will shine some light on how to prevent the use of cluster development as a mere tool for sprawl. ■

Some developers have attempted to exploit the cluster development guidelines as a way to maximize development at the expense of scenic views, wildlife habitat, native plants, and cultural resource sites.



Gorge resident Sherri Irish’s property values and rural way of life are threatened by a cluster development “bonus house,” permitted by Skamania County just 15 feet from her fence line.

photo: Larry Keister

Public Input Critical to Strengthening Management Plan

By Tiffany Newton, Field Organizer, tiffany@gorgefriends.org

As of October 1, the Gorge Commission had received more than 800 individual comments collected at six meetings held throughout the Gorge and more than 700 letters, emails, and forms commenting on the issues the public would like included in the Management Plan Review. An overwhelming number of these comments reflect strong public support for strengthening protections in the Gorge.

The Gorge Commission staff aims to identify the most consistently problematic topics, narrowing the list to 26 issues that the Commission will ultimately include in the review. The involvement of Friends' membership and supporters has ensured that many of the issues that we are concerned about are included on this short list. In coming months, the Commission will review specific issues for revision in the Management Plan and it is critical that the Commission continues to hear from the public.

Thank you to those who have taken time to contact the Commission. Those

who care about preserving our national treasure will have numerous opportunities in coming months to submit written comments and attend Gorge Commission meetings.

For information about how to become involved in Plan Review, please contact Tiffany Newton at tiffany@gorgefriends.org or call 541-386-5268. ■

AmeriCorps Member Joins Hood River Office

In September, Friends welcomed AmeriCorps member Amy Brown to our Hood River office. Amy will serve as Special Projects Coordinator until August 2002, coordinating Friends' 2002 Hiking series and implementing a community stewardship program in the Gorge. Her most recent experience includes working as a Naturalist Instructor and volunteering as an AmeriCorps Restoration Team Member in Trout Lake during 1999-2000. She has also taught at the elementary level and worked with California State Parks.

If you are interested in participating in Gorge stewardship projects, contact Amy at (541) 386-5268 or amy@gorgefriends.org ■

photo: Darlene Newman



Conservation and Legal Program Highlights (cont.)

Landowner Withdraws Shoreline Plans

By Nathan Baker, Staff Attorney, nathan@gorgefriends.org

On October 10, a Friends appeal of a Skamania County land use decision resulted in the landowner withdrawing his application. The County Board of Adjustment had allowed the proposed house to be sited only 50 feet from the Columbia River. This siting violated water resource buffer requirements and degraded the scenic shoreline of the River east of Stevenson.

Friends was forced to file an appeal of the decision because the County had ignored numerous

provisions of its scenic area ordinance in allowing the illegal development. Even the landowner's attorney, who also works for the property rights group Pacific Legal Foundation, recognized that the County's decision was not defensible, and advised his client to withdraw the application.

Friends has learned that the landowner, a Napa Valley, California resident, plans to submit a new application. We will closely monitor the matter to see whether he still pushes for a site so close to the shoreline. ■

Friends Will Miss Elmer Lierman

Board member Elmer Lierman passed away on October 10, 2001, in Hood River, OR at the age of 85. Elmer was a long-time resident of Mosier, OR, and had been on the board of Friends of the Columbia Gorge since our inception in 1980. A strong supporter of Gorge protection, Elmer was at one time the mayor of Mosier and was very involved in community activities there. We appreciate Elmer's many contributions to Gorge protection and send our condolences to his family. ■



Funding Gorge Protection

Development Director's Report

By Jane Haley, Development Director, jane@gorgefriends.org

Annual Conservator Party

In early October, Friends' supporters gathered at the historic Cobb Estate in Southwest Portland to celebrate Gorge protections and hear about the challenges ahead. More than 80 of our major donors, some of whom had played as children on the grounds of this beautiful home, received updates on emerging issues and helped raise money for continued Gorge protection.

"This party is always a great pleasure for me," stated founder Nancy Russell. "There are always new faces, but many of these members have been with us since the beginning." ■

A Legacy for the Gorge

There are several easy ways that you can leave a lasting legacy of protection for the Gorge.

- Provide for Friends in your will (your attorney can add a Friends bequest to an existing will).

- Name Friends as a beneficiary of an IRA, 401(k) or other retirement plan.
- Designate Friends as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy.
- Make a gift of appreciated stock or real estate, either outright or in trust. A gift in trust can provide you with income for life, and provide considerable tax savings. ■

EarthShare for Friends

Friends has been a member of the Environmental Federation of Oregon (EFO) for more than 10 years, and this year EFO has a new name: EarthShare of Oregon.

Annual payroll contributions to Friends can continue this year by designating Friends of the Columbia Gorge on your workplace charitable giving form. Some employers will match contributions. For more information, call EarthShare at 503-223-9015. ■

Ensuring the Future

As you begin thinking about end-of-the-year gifts, please consider an extra gift to Friends' endowment. We need to build this fund, which is now at \$400,000, in order to provide basic operating funds to ensure Gorge protections in perpetuity.

Endowment gifts can be enclosed in the return envelope included with this newsletter, or can be made through a planned gift in a will or a gift of stock or real estate.

Gifts of appreciated assets can provide considerable tax savings to the donor while they are put to work protecting the Gorge for coming generations. ■

For more information on these donation options, or for a booklet on planned giving, contact Jane Haley, Development Director at 503-241-3762 x 102 or jane@gorgefriends.org



The historic Cobb Estate in Portland was the setting for this year's Conservator Party.



Supporters enjoy good food and conversation at Friends Annual major donor Conservator Party. Pictured left to right: Laird Brodie, Phyllis Towne, Ray Hayden and Mary Brodie.

photos: Ken Denis

Casino Threatens Scenic Area

(continued from page 1)

Casino advocates have proposed reopening the Historic Highway to motorized uses and their proposal estimates annual visitation of 2.2 million people visiting a 200,000 square-foot casino complex.

Unprecedented Threat to the Columbia River Gorge

The potential withdrawal of the newly acquired lands in Hood River from National Scenic Area protection for the purpose of large-scale commercial development is one of the biggest threats to Gorge protection since the passage of the Act in 1986. If the fee-to-trust transfer is approved by the BIA, unregulated development will be allowed in an area revered for its natural beauty, abundant wildlife and recreation opportunities. Toni Vakos, coordinator of the Hood River-based group, No Casino, put it in perspective by saying, "It is the equivalent of putting a casino right in the middle of Yosemite or Yellowstone."

Scenic Area Approval Required

On October 5, the Forest Service sent a letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs informing the agency that the proposal would be inconsistent with the purposes of the Act in that the protection of the scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources on the 175 acres would no longer be assured. The BIA has delayed its decision until at least November 7.

Friends Oppose Fee-to-Trust Transfer and Casino

Friends of the Columbia Gorge staff is working to organize opposition to the fee-to-trust land transfer. At the same time, we have continued dialogue with casino advocates and other interested parties in an attempt to resolve this issue in a manner consistent with our Gorge protection goals."

The Casino No One Wants

A recent *Oregonian* editorial distilled the issue down to this statement: "The tribes are poised to make a \$150 million investment in a Gorge casino. They have a long, long history of stewardship in the gorge. They also have a reputation as modern tribes that work closely with their neighbors. They shouldn't gamble all that away on a misplaced casino." ■

Contact your elected officials

If the Northwest Congressional delegation raises concern over the implications of granting trust status to these lands, it could convince the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to deny the fee-to-trust transfer. That would not preclude the Tribes from developing the lands; it would only require them to follow the laws that their neighboring landowners follow.

In Washington state, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell has officially opposed the fee-to-trust transfer, and U.S. Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Brian Baird have raised serious concerns. Senator Gordon Smith is the lone Oregon delegate to voice concern. If you live in Oregon, contact your representative and Senator Wyden and urge them to support Gorge protection by telling the BIA to deny the fee-to-trust transfer. Continued inaction on this issue means support for a casino in the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area!

Please contact your elected officials and voice your concerns immediately. Visit our website (www.gorgefriends.org) for contact information. ■

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

www.gorgefriends.org

Portland Office

522 SW Fifth Avenue, #820
Portland, Oregon 97204
503-241-3762

Gorge Office

416 Oak Street
Hood River, OR 97031
541-386-5268

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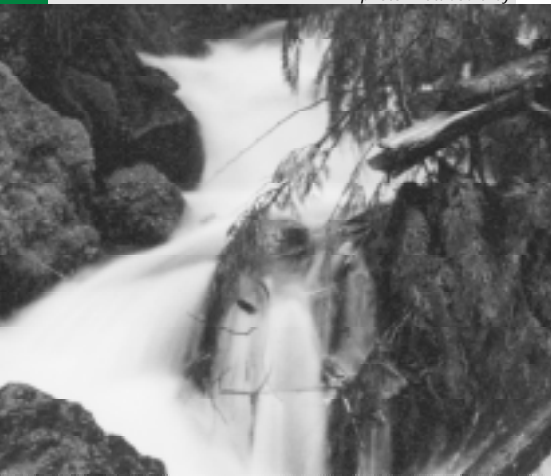
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Know Your Gorge

Long-time Gorge Residents Making a Comeback



The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), in conjunction with the Oregon Zoo, has created a program to reintroduce endangered Western pond turtles to the Columbia Gorge.

Pond turtles begin reproducing at approximately 15 years of age, and can live to the ripe old age of 50 years. In the wild, pond turtles have only a 10% survival rate due to predation of young by non-native bullfrogs, human disturbance and related factors.

Through the reintroduction program, females in the wild are tracked each spring as they lay up to six eggs. Nests are marked and, once hatched, the little turtles are placed in Oregon Zoo's reintroduction "head start" program for the first year of their lives. After the first year, with larger bodies and hardened shells to deter the bullfrogs, the turtles are returned to out-of-the-way areas in the Gorge, where their survival rate improves to 90%. Once populations stabilize at a sustainable level and the survival rate is not dependent on the Zoo nursery, monitoring will continue to ensure long term survival of these Gorge natives.

For more information on Western pond turtles, check out:
www.wa.gov/wdfw/wlm/diversty/soc/recovery/pondturt/wptxsum.htm
Above: Pond turtle drawing by Ray Spaulding