

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

Celebrating 25 years 1980-2005

Summer 2005 Newsletter



law that regulates Indian casinos. In particular, the land is not owned by the tribe, is not held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and has not been reviewed for full compliance with IGRA and other applicable federal laws. As the old saying goes, the "cart was in front of the horse." Friends warned the Governor of these legal problems months before he signed the compact. We also expressed these concerns to the Secretary of Interior Gail Norton. The Interior Department agreed with our interpretation of the law and denied the compact on these grounds.

The Warm Springs proposal involves land within the Columbia Gorge that is not owned by the tribes and is more than 60 miles by road from the boundary of their 640,000-acre reservation. While the tribes own land east of Hood River, they are barred from building a casino there due to legal and practical impediments. All nine casinos in Oregon are located on reservation lands. Of the 411 tribal casinos across the country, only three have been allowed to locate off reservation.

Friends is opposed to the 500,000-square-foot megacasinio and its 50 acres of parking because of its environmental effects, visual impacts, transportation and traffic
(continued on page 7)

Feds Say No to Gorge Casino

Despite this decision, efforts still continue to site the megacasinio in the Gorge

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

In a stunning reversal of prior administration policy, the Department of Interior denied the agreement between Governor Kulongoski and the Warm Springs Tribe that would have led to the construction of a mega-casinio within the Columbia River Gorge. The decision sent a shock wave across the country and was reported by hundreds of newspapers and television stations.

The Interior Department denied the compact because it failed to comply with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), the federal

This waterfall far above Cascade Locks flows into Herman Creek, one of the Gorge's best salmon-bearing streams. Herman Creek meets the Columbia River adjacent to Cascade Locks' industrial area; this stream would be significantly affected by the proposed casinio development.

photo: ©Oliver Dalton

preserving a legacy

INSIDE:
Fall Hiking Brochure

Executive Director's Letter

*We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution.
Let the word go forth from this time and place,
to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed
to a new generation...*

President John F. Kennedy
First Inaugural Address
January 21, 1961

Friends of the Columbia Gorge has come a long way in 25 years and our success rests on the shoulders of many people. But no individual has done more to build our organization and protect the Columbia Gorge than our founder Nancy Russell. Advocate, fundraiser, lobbyist, land purchaser, Nancy has done it all, and for years showed no signs of ever slowing down.



*Friends founder Nancy Russell with her grandson Saier at Memaloose Hills in 2004.
Photo: Aubrey Russell*

But even the super humans among us are, of course, simply human. Last year, Nancy was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) or Lou Gehrig's Disease. ALS is a neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. The progressive degeneration is eventually fatal.

The news of Nancy's illness has deeply affected all who know this remarkable woman. But true to form, in the 18 months since her diagnosis, Nancy has continued her laser-focused pursuit to protect the landscapes of the Columbia Gorge. She continues to purchase sensitive lands with her own personal funds. She is participating actively and forcefully on our board. And she is committed to ensuring that our organization will be even stronger in the future than it is today.

In 2005 a torch is again passing from one generation to the next, this time for Friends of the Columbia Gorge. On November 12, 2005, Friends will honor Nancy's accomplishments at our 25th Anniversary Celebration at the new wing of the Portland Art Museum. It will be a grand opportunity to thank her, and it will indeed be a celebration. She would have it no other way. Nancy said to me last week, "I am so thankful for the life I've led."

I hope you will be able to join us for this celebration. Like Nancy, many of you are part of that first "revolution," the group that pushed and prodded the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area into existence. Others, like me, are heirs who now must firmly take hold of the torch, nurture the flame, and make it burn brighter than our ancestors could ever imagine for the generations to come.

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

Outreach & Activities

By Betsy Toll, Outreach Coordinator, betsy@gorgefriends.org
and Peter Cornelison, Field Representative peter@gorgefriends.org

Leading Hikes for Friends

For 25 years hike leaders representing dozens of outdoor organizations have helped make Friends' hiking program successful. Their knowledge, experience, and familiarity with the trails and lore of the Columbia Gorge are invaluable.

This fall, with support from REI, Friends will initiate a training program to add new hike leaders to this team. Experienced mentors will take trainees out to hike the trails, and indoor sessions will provide leadership fundamentals, information on Gorge protection efforts, and first aid training for our new leaders.

Shepherds and others who take the training this fall can plan to lead hikes for Friends in the spring. Contact Cathy Robart at 503-241-3762 x106 or cathy@gorgefriends.org for more information. ■



Hood River Valley offers scenic delights along with farm-fresh produce and more.

Photo: Peter Cornelison



Hike leader Nancy Russell has shared Gorge protection information with hikers on the Cherry Orchard trail every spring for 20 years.

Photo: Ken Denis

Summer Harvest

Late summer is harvest time in the Gorge, and the region's bounty is available at many local farms, fruit stands, wineries and open air salmon vendors.

In Hood River Valley, a 35-mile driving loop features 28 fruit stands, wineries, and antique shops. Many farms offer "pick your own" produce including cherries, apricots, and berries in early summer, and fresh vegetables, herbs, and flowers as the season progresses. Check online at www.hoodriverfruitloop.com or call the Hood River Chamber of Commerce at 800-366-3530 for a map.

Columbia Gorge wineries are gaining recognition for high quality wines produced in the great growing conditions of the eastern Gorge. A 40-mile driving loop takes in 15 wineries for sensational tasting. The Columbia Gorge Winegrowers Association's map and directions are available at www.columbiagorgewine.com or by calling 866-413-9463.

Hike Shepherds Needed!

Fall hikes are about to begin and we need shepherds on all outings. Contact Cathy at 503-241-3762 x106 or cathy@gorgefriends.org for more information. ■

Native American vendors sell fresh wild salmon and filets near the Bridge of the Gods in Cascade Locks off I-84. Others sell their fish in Washington along SR-14 west of the White Salmon River, in Oregon at The Dalles end of the Highway 197 bridge, and at Celilo Indian Village, Exit 97 from I-84, 15 miles east of The Dalles.

Take advantage of the summer bounty and support local farmers, vendors, and merchants throughout the Columbia Gorge. ■



Conservation and Legal Program Highlights

In the Courts and in the Field...

Healthy Forest Act Hits the Gorge

By Michael Lang
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and Peter Cornelison
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In December 2003 President Bush signed the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA). While the stated goal of this act is to reduce fire danger and return public and private forests to a healthier state, conservationists suspect it is also an administration effort to circumvent environmental laws and open up more public forests to logging.

This spring the Columbia River Gorge office of the U.S. Forest Service kicked off local implementation of HFRA. The first site chosen was Burdoin Mountain, located just east of Bingen, Washington where the Forest Service owns 466 acres of public land, much of which was acquired through National Scenic Area Act authorization.



The State Circuit Court rejected a Measure 37 claim for intensive development of this scenic farmland at Ruthton Point.

Photo: Diana Karabut

Burdoin Mountain has many varied types of forest of different ages, from pure fir stands to mixed fir and pine, pine/oak, and oak/savanna. While careful thinning may be appropriate in certain areas, the Forest Service is proposing an extensive, one-time treatment. This approach may harm wildlife including western gray squirrels, listed as "threatened" in Washington.

The Forest Service held a series of public meetings for input on their plan. Friends of the Columbia Gorge participated in support of healthy forests and protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat. We continue to have concerns with the Forest Service proposal and will work to ensure that HFRA projects truly protect the health, scenic beauty, and

natural heritage of forests in the Columbia Gorge. ■

National Scenic Area Safe from Measure 37

By Nathan Baker
nathan@gorgefriends.org

The beautiful and fragile resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area will remain largely protected from the harmful effects of Oregon's Ballot Measure 37, thanks to a recent legal victory.

Measure 37, which became state law in January 2005, threatens overdevelopment throughout the State of Oregon. Hundreds of claims have been filed statewide for various development projects, including casinos, mining opera-

(continued on page 5)



The oak, fir, and pine forests of Burdoin Mountain (above) may face aggressive "thinning" under the Healthy Forest Protection Act.

Photo: Peter Cornelison

Conservation and Legal Program Highlights

Measure 37...

(continued from page 4)

tions, and large residential subdivisions on prime agricultural land.

Fortunately, the Gorge is protected by the federal Scenic Area Act and an interstate compact, both of which prevail over state law in the event of a conflict. The text of Measure 37 recognizes this legal principle, and forbids claims challenging regulations required by federal law.

Despite the plain language of the measure, two landowners filed claims to develop land within the National Scenic Area. In response, the Columbia River Gorge Commission filed a declaratory judgment action, in which Friends of the Columbia Gorge intervened.

A State Circuit Court ruled in favor of Friends and the other plaintiffs, holding that Measure 37 does not apply to Scenic Area rules. As a result of this ruling, only logging in the General Management Area and development in the exempt urban areas are potentially allowed under Measure 37. All other land uses and development are off-limits.

The Circuit Court's written opinion is expected to be issued in August. If any appeal of the decision is filed, Friends will remain involved in the case.

This victory for the Gorge is especially significant because the Oregon legislature failed during this year's extended session to resolve any of the problems regarding Measure 37. For lands in Oregon not protected by other statutes, Measure 37 stands as passed by the voters. ■

Congress Approves \$1.5 Million for Gorge Land Acquisition

Figure represents the second largest appropriation for land purchases in the country

By Katy Daily, Conservation Organizer, katy@gorgefriends.org

In late July, Congress included \$1.5 million for the U.S. Forest Service land acquisition program in the Columbia Gorge in the FY06 budget. The Gorge appropriation figure was the second-largest Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriation in the country for the coming year, and \$500,000 more than the Gorge received last year.

Despite a very tight fiscal climate, Friends' energetic lobbying succeeded in generating unprecedented bipartisan support for the acquisition budget. Two key Republicans, Congressmen Doc Hastings (R-WA) and Greg Walden (R-OR) signed a support letter, in addition to Brian Baird (D-WA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), and David Wu (D-OR). U.S. Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Gordon Smith (R-OR), and Ron Wyden (D-OR) also sent a letter of support.

Six priority properties are slated for acquisition with the appropriated funds in 2006, including three parcels along the "waterfall alley" on the Historic Highway in Oregon and a significant property on the river in Washington directly across from Crown Point. The Forest Service must now determine how to best use the \$1.5 million to bring critical landscapes into public ownership in the coming year. ■

THE LEWIS & CLARK LANDSCAPES PROJECT



A key scenic property at Point Vancouver across the river from Crown Point is a priority for purchase into public ownership with Gorge land acquisition appropriation funds in 2006.

Photo: Katy Daily



Funding Gorge Protection

Development Director's Report

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

*Friends of the Columbia Gorge
25th Anniversary Celebration
Saturday November 12th at 6:00 p.m.
Portland Art Museum Grand Ballroom*

25th Anniversary Celebration at Portland Art Museum

This year marks Friends' 25th anniversary and we are pulling out all the stops to acknowledge the occasion.

On Saturday evening, November 12 we will gather in the newly remodeled Grand Ballroom of the Portland Art Museum to celebrate our accomplishments, honor Friends founder Nancy Russell, and launch the Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust.

The evening's theme of Lewis and Clark in the Columbia Gorge will be reflected in textile art and photography displayed throughout the ballroom.

A hosted cocktail hour and dinner will be followed by a special program and the premier of a new video about the Gorge. Long-time Friends member and local philanthropist Al Jubitz will emcee, with music for the evening by Tall Jazz.

Invitations will be mailed to all our members in early October.

Major sponsors of this event include Vernier Software, Al and Nancy Jubitz, PGE and Pendleton Woolen Mills. Additional sponsorship comes from Sigma Investments, Enterprise Car Rental, Reeves Kahn and Hennessy, and the Collins Foundation. ■



On July 23 more than 150 members and friends enjoyed our 25th annual summer picnic at John Yeon's former estate across the river from Multnomah Falls.

Photo: Diana Karabut

Thank You for your special contributions

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ADDITIONAL SPECIAL GIFTS
LISTED ON BACK COVER

Casino...

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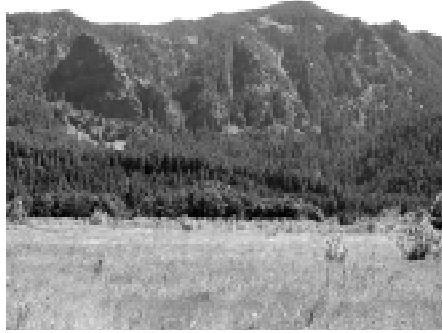
concerns, impacts to recreation, and the rapid population growth pressures that it will introduce into the Columbia Gorge. For example, the site is located next to active bald eagle, osprey, and great blue heron nesting habitat that is likely to be harmed by a huge casino resort. Highway expansion to accommodate the casino resort would likely impact salmon and steelhead in Herman Creek.

The casino would draw an estimated three million visitors annually and employ an estimated 1,740 workers. This would result in a dramatic increase in traffic on I-84 that would worsen the severe air pollution and traffic problems that already exists in the Gorge. The proposed location right next to the Columbia River could result in runoff and pollution flowing into the river. Population growth and development pressure will lead to urban sprawl in the Gorge. The precedent-setting nature of this off-reservation casino proposal could lead to more casinos in the Gorge and throughout the region.

Coalition Against the Compact

In April, Friends joined with other environmental groups, small businesses, faith-based groups, and the Grande Ronde Tribe to form the Coalition for Oregon's Future. This diverse group is united toward a common goal: opposition to an off-reservation casino in the Columbia Gorge. One of the first steps was to conduct a public opinion poll of 400 Oregonians to gauge their opinion of an off-reservation casino in the Columbia Gorge. The result of this poll was dramatic, although not unexpected: 63% of Oregonians oppose a casino in the Gorge.

The coalition's members generated thousands of letters to the Department of Interior and elected officials. According to the Interior Department staff, they received a



This open meadow below classic Gorge cliffs is the proposed site for a 500,000-square-foot casino.

Photo: Kevin Gorman

record number of letters in opposition to a casino compact. We have produced television, radio, and newspaper ads to educate people on the effects of the casino proposal and we will continue to work to ensure that a mega casino is never built in the Columbia Gorge.

The Next Step

The casino fight is far from over; casino supporters have invested too much to back out now. Public meetings will be held in September to determine the scope of the environmental analysis that will be required to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. This will be the first of several opportunities for the public to voice its concerns over the proposed megacase and its enormous environmental impacts. ■

Help stop the casino!

Citizen comments and strong turnout at public meetings in September are crucial to keeping the casino out of the Gorge. Subscribe to our email action alert list to help stop the casino.

Log on to

www.gorgefriends.org/involve/signup to get on the list today.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

www.gorgefriends.org

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ADDITIONAL SPECIAL GIFTS ON PAGE 6

Then & Now



Left: Due to diligent work by Friends and others, the beauty of scenic landscapes like Mt. Pleasant across from the Vista House remains largely unspoiled.

Photo: Ken Denis

Below: The farmland of Mt. Pleasant today still looks much as it did in this photo taken nearly 100 years ago.

Photo: Friends of the Columbia Gorge archives

How 25 Years has Protected Gorge Landscapes

The challenge of simply keeping things the same

Since the late 1800s, pastoral farmlands have graced the hillsides of Mount Pleasant, seen across from the Vista House in Oregon. With the opening of the Vista House in 1918, Mount Pleasant became a signature landscape in the Gorge because of its bucolic meadowlands.

When Friends of the Columbia Gorge was created 25 years ago, one of our first legal challenges was to block a proposed subdivision on these farmlands. We succeeded, and with the creation of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, the U.S. Forest Service began buying scenic easements to protect farmland and preserve scenic beauty. While this area is largely protected, some Forest Service easements are being tested as development proposals to scatter over sized houses across the fields are popping up again. ■

