

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Protecting the Gorge Since 1980

Summer 2009 Newsletter

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LEGAL COUNSEL: GARY KAHN
NEWSLETTER DESIGN: KATHY FORS AND
KATHLEEN KRUSHAS (TO THE POINT PUBLICATIONS)
EDITOR: BETSY TOLL

PORTLAND OFFICE

522 SW FIFTH AVENUE, #720
PORTLAND, OREGON 97204
(503) 241-3762

GORGE OFFICE

205 OAK STREET, #17
HOOD RIVER, OREGON 97031
(541) 386-5268

www.gorgefriends.org



Take Action Today!



*A massive casino
does not belong in
the Columbia Gorge.*

Photo: Kelley Beamer

Stop a Mega-casino Adjacent to New Wilderness

With strong conservation leaders now in the Department of Interior, it is time for Interior to commit to protecting the spectacular Columbia River Gorge from the ruinous impacts of a Las Vegas-style casino.

A new coalition of local and national environmental organizations has formed to ask the Obama administration to deny the proposal for a sprawling casino in the Gorge (see page 4).

Please join the campaign to protect the Gorge and the newly designated Gorge wilderness. Take a few minutes today to write a letter or email to Larry

EchoHawk, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, and ask him to deny the proposal for a massive casino in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge.

Please contact:

Assistant Secretary Larry EchoHawk
Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Room 4160, Mail Stop 4141
Washington, DC 20240

fax: 202-208-5320

email: webteam@ios.doi.gov

Active citizen support makes the difference! Your actions for Gorge protection are crucial to our success. Contact your Senators and Representatives using the information below, or check www.senate.gov or www.house.gov for other offices.

Oregon

Sen. Ron Wyden, (202) 224-5244

<http://wyden.senate.gov/contact/>

Sen. Jeff Merkley, (202) 224-3753

senator@merkley.senate.gov

Rep. David Wu, (202) 225-0855

Rep. Earl Blumenauer, (202) 225-4811

Rep. Greg Walden, (202) 225-6730

Rep. Peter DeFazio, (202) 225-6416

Rep. Kurt Schrader, (202) 225-5711

Washington

Sen. Patty Murray, (202) 224-2621

<http://murray.senate.gov/email/index.cfm>

Sen. Maria Cantwell, (202) 224-3441

<http://cantwell.senate.gov/contact/>

Rep. Brian Baird, (202) 225-3536

Rep. Doc Hastings, (202) 225-5816

Rep. Norm Dicks, (202) 225-5916

Email your **Congressional Representative** by logging on to www.house.gov/writerep/

Cover photo: The Coyote Wall syncline above the river in the eastern Gorge. Photo: Mark McConnell

Director's Letter

I've spent a lot of time lately thinking about a bird, actually two birds.

For more than two decades now, peregrine falcons have faithfully nested on the Cape Horn cliffs. There between the river and Washington SR14, these raptors lay their eggs, raise their chicks, and send them off into the world.

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

At the same time, the Cape Horn trail is becoming increasingly popular for hiking and a section of the user-created lower trail runs near the peregrine nesting area. For at least six years, falcons and hikers have appeared to successfully co-exist, but as the U.S. Forest Service reviews the trail to determine its future, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife biologist David Anderson is recommending that this section of the trail be closed, at least during the January to June nesting season, due to his concern that increasing numbers of hikers on the trail will eventually drive the falcons away.

To learn more about falcons and recreation use, I contacted local author and biologist Marcy Houle, who put me in touch with James Enderson, professor emeritus at Colorado College and co-author of *Peregrine Falcon Populations: Their Management and Recovery*. Enderson helped



Kevin Gorman at Friends' Annual Picnic in July.
Photo: Angie Moore

create a captive breeding program in the 1960s that brought peregrines back from the brink of extinction. He told me that some of the Gorge falcons are undoubtedly descendants of that breeding program.

After three decades of field work, Enderson is a strong believer in the falcon's tolerance of human activities. He sent a letter regarding the Cape Horn peregrines to the U.S. Forest Service Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area office. In the letter, he stated:

"As you know, peregrines now nest in a great variety of situations relating to human activity... Yours is a pair of birds that accepts the ongoing situation including trains, highway, and trail. Those falcons are certainly not unique. Several of the 80-plus eyries on Lake Powell are less than 150 feet directly above fisherman activity and outrageous speedboat traffic."

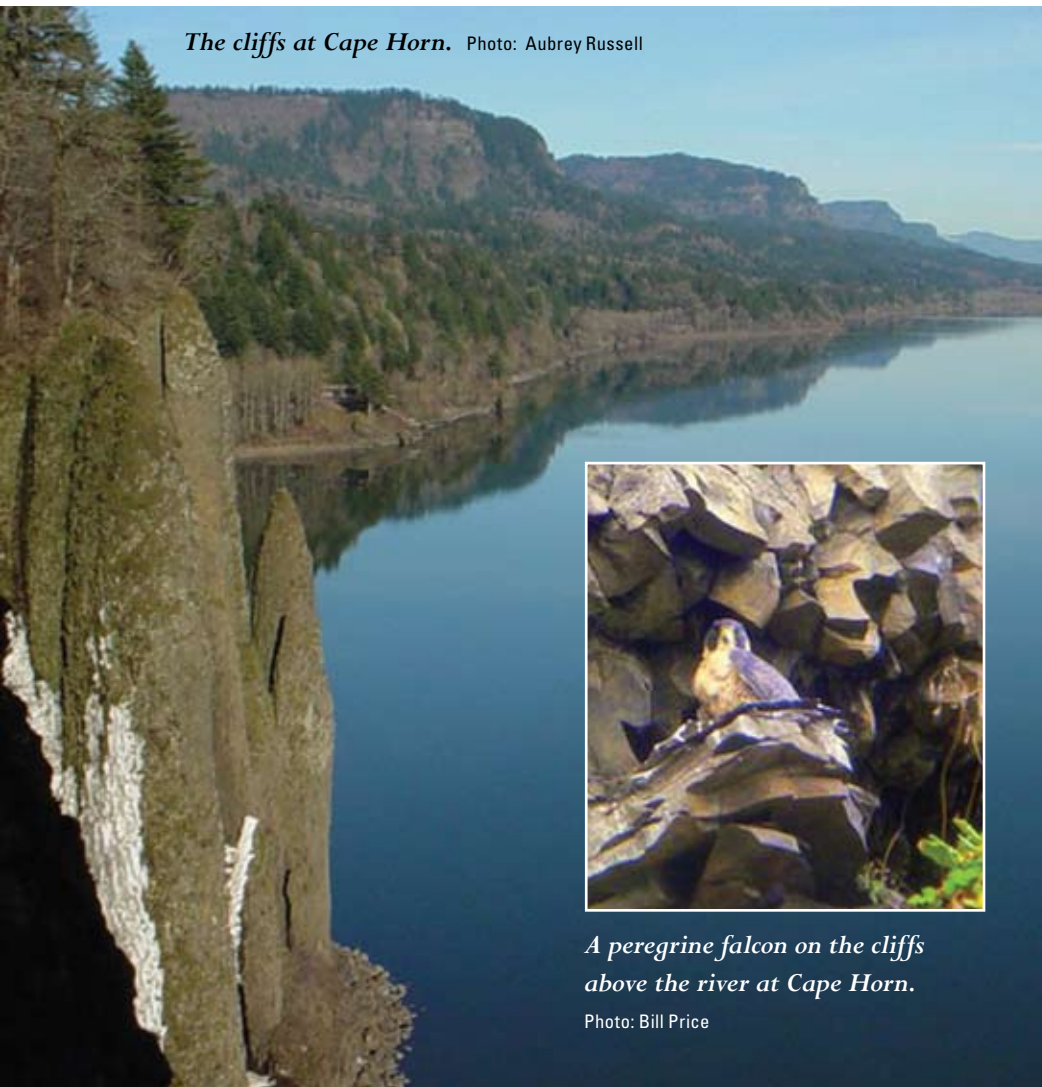
With biologists' opinions varied, we anxiously waited to see what spring 2009 would bring for the Cape Horn falcons. To our surprise, the parent pair nested even closer to the trail than they had in 2008, even building their nest during a busy hiking season. I'm pleased to report that two chicks were successfully hatched and are "getting their wings" as I write.

The Forest Service says it will make its decision on the trail this year. Stay tuned.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Gorman".

Kevin Gorman
Executive Director

The cliffs at Cape Horn. Photo: Aubrey Russell



A peregrine falcon on the cliffs above the river at Cape Horn.

Photo: Bill Price

National Opposition to Proposed Gorge Casino Grows

Kelley Beamer, Conservation Organizer, kelley@gorgefriends.org
and Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

Friends of the Columbia Gorge has teamed up with former Secretary of Interior and four-term Idaho governor Cecil Andrus and other conservation groups to finally bring the casino debate to a conclusion.

Governor Andrus was born in Hood River and has deep connections to the Columbia River Gorge. He grew up visiting his grandparents in the Hood River Valley and has rich memories of traveling with his parents along the Historic Columbia River Highway as a child, stopping at Crown Point to take in the spectacular Gorge scenery. The threat of an off-reservation casino in the Columbia Gorge compelled Governor Andrus to register as a federal

lobbyist for the first time in his career, so he could take the message of protecting the Columbia Gorge to Washington DC. “For me,” he stated, “protecting the Gorge is a professional and personal passion.”

This spring, Friends worked with Governor Andrus and former Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber to host a luncheon including dozens of conservation leaders from the Pacific Northwest. During the June luncheon, the former governors reminded the assembly in clear terms that the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is every bit as precious and as environmentally sensitive as nationally protected treasures like Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, and the Grand

Canyon. It is also every bit as worthy of uncompromised protection.

In July, regional and national environmental groups joined Governor Andrus in sending a letter to Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar asking him to deny the proposal for a casino within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The letter suggested that Secretary Salazar instead support an on-reservation casino alternative that would provide jobs and increased revenue for the Tribes.

Following the letter, Governor Andrus met with Secretary Salazar, Assistant Secretary Larry Echo Hawk, and other high-ranking officials within the Interior Department to make it clear that approving the proposed casino resort and associated development—to be sited within a designated national scenic area and just one-half mile from a protected wilderness area boundary—would destroy one of America’s most treasured landscapes.

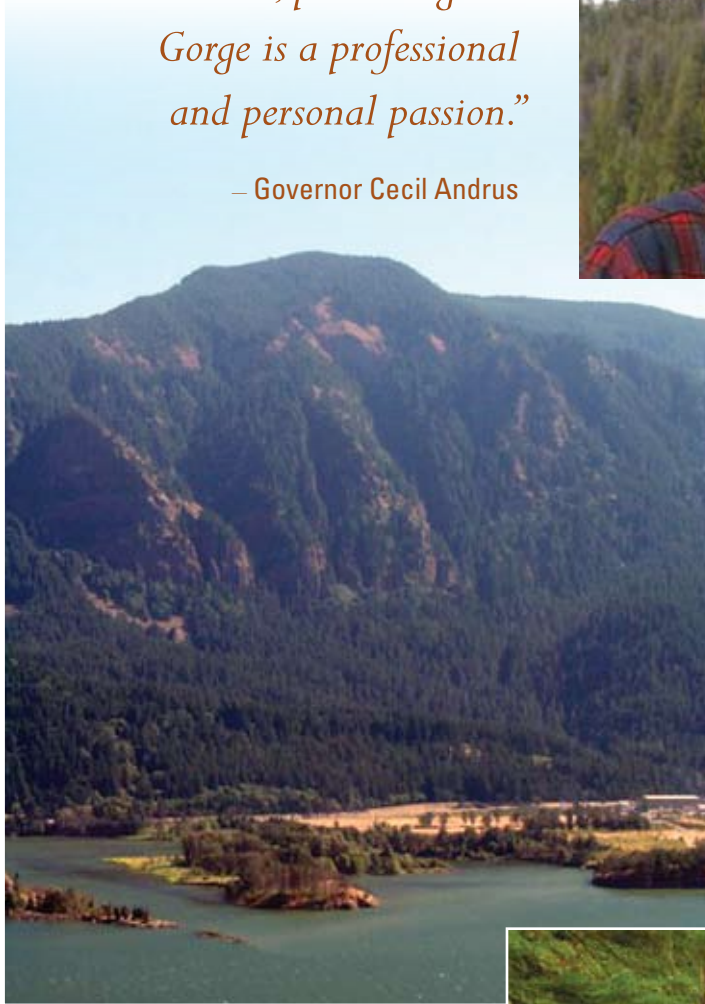
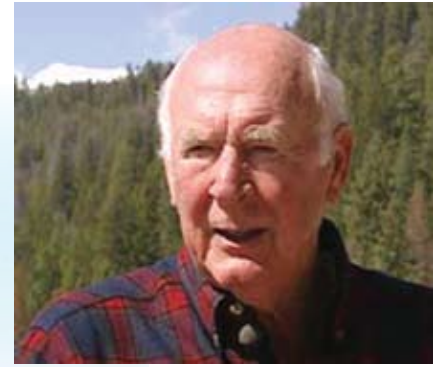
At his Senate confirmation hearing early this year, Ken Salazar vowed to “make sure America’s treasured landscapes are protected, preserved and enhanced.” In his introduction to the Senate Judiciary Committee, Salazar pledged to “move forward to protect lands and sites of national significance with a new vigor.” The Columbia River Gorge was designated as a National Scenic Area in 1986. As such, it is a site of national significance that continues to be one of the most popular national landscapes in the United States. Secretary Salazar has an excellent opportunity to make good on his promise by denying the casino proposal within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.



The town of Cascade Locks hugs the river across from Table Mountain. Photo: CreativeCommons

“For me, protecting the Gorge is a professional and personal passion.”

– Governor Cecil Andrus



The Department of Interior is expected to issue a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) sometime this year. It has been more than one year since the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released for public review and comment. Thousands of individuals have spoken out for Gorge protection, telling the U.S. Department of Interior that the Columbia River Gorge is the wrong place for a massive, off-reservation casino development.

The proposed 600,000-square-foot casino resort, which will include parking for 3,700 cars and require associated freeway expansions, is projected to attract 3 to 4 million visitors annually. The proposed facility would generate unprecedented increases in traffic, congestion, air pollution, growth pressure, and urban sprawl within the Gorge. The casino resort and its new four-lane interchange on I-84 would harm fish and wildlife, including several species of salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, the site of the proposed casino is highly visible from the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail and the newly designated wilderness area.

With strong conservation leaders in Washington DC, now is the time for the

Department of Interior to take a strong stand for the Columbia Gorge and deny the casino proposal outright, once and for all.

Please see page 2 to take action today. Tell the new “pro-environment” Obama administration that the American public loves the Columbia Gorge, cares for its future, and opposes a massive Las Vegas-style casino that would irrevocably harm the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

The proposed casino site in Cascade Locks sits at the foot of newly protected wilderness.

Photo: Kelley Beamer



Herman Creek—one of the Gorge’s best salmon streams—flows out of the new wilderness area and past the proposed casino site on the Columbia River.

Photo: ©Greg Lief

Groups joining Friends of the Columbia Gorge in this effort to date:

Audubon Society of Portland
Environment Oregon
Friends of East Fork, Clark County
Friends of Mt. Hood
Garden Club of America
Gifford Pinchot Task Force
Hood River Valley Residents Committee

National Greenpeace
National Audubon Society
Native Plant Society of Oregon, Portland Chapter
Oregon Wild
Oregon Toxics Alliance
The Portland Garden Club
Trails Club of Oregon

See www.gorgefriends.org for more information.

Friends Founder Bequeaths Land Trust More Than 650 Acres



Bruce Russell with his German shepherd Stanzi at Lyle Cherry Orchard, circa 1993.

Photo: Nancy Russell

Kate McBride, Land Trust Manager, kate@gorgefriends.org

For almost three decades, Friends founder Nancy Russell held an inspiring vision of vast landscapes that are open for the enjoyment of generations to come—a vision that is gradually, steadily, becoming reality.

With her passing last September, Nancy left five properties to the Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust, totaling 612

acres. That gift was in addition to her 2007 donation to the land trust of her Mosier Plateau property. Because of Nancy’s vision and generosity, the land trust now holds more than 650 acres that she had purchased for conservation purposes.

The Russell properties gifted to our land trust span four counties that include three distinct climate zones. The Dodson, OR and Washougal, WA properties to the west are thick with vegetation, thanks to the legendary rainfall in the western Gorge. The Dell Road and Lyle Cherry Orchard properties are further east in Washington, where they receive half the rain and feature rolling oak woodlands that are carpeted with wildflowers in spring. The Celilo parcel in Oregon is perched high on the eastern rim of a plateau above Celilo Village.

Some of the properties we received from Nancy will eventually be transferred into public ownership, while the balance will be preserved by our land trust in

perpetuity. Stewardship activities are already underway at the Lyle Cherry Orchard, and more information related to the specific properties will be offered in coming newsletters.

Complementing Nancy’s generosity, her children Aubrey Russell, Sally Russell, and Wendy Gerlach worked diligently to transfer the Russell properties to our land trust without delay. Our gratitude to Nancy and the entire Russell family matches the breadth and scope of their gift.

Nancy Russell Properties Donated to Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust

Location-Parcels	County/State	Acres
Lyle Cherry Orchard	Klickitat, WA	515
Washougal	Clark, WA	10
Dodson	Multnomah, OR	2
Celilo	Wasco, OR	13
Dell Road	Wasco, OR	72
Mosier Plateau	Wasco, OR	44
TOTAL		656

Looking east from the Mosier Plateau property, gifted to the Land Trust by Nancy Russell in 2007.

Photo: Darryl Lloyd www.LongshadowPhotos.com



Jacob Williams Winery

Peter Cornelison, Field Representative
 peter@gorgefriends.org

The Jacob Williams Winery, named after owner Brad Gearhart's two young sons, Jacob and William, is a family owned and operated winery in the Columbia Gorge with a tasting room in Lyle. The winery produces 2000 cases of ultra premium wine annually from some of the best vineyards in the Columbia Gorge. Brad recently donated and poured his own wine for Friends members at a membership party in Camas.

Brad is building a new production facility in the Gorge and finds the National Scenic Area rules challenging but worthwhile. Much of their new building will be underground, and the exposed section will look like an old barn. Brad



Brad and Jacob Gearhart at Jacob Williams Winery. Photo: Peter Cornelison

noted recently, "We are conforming to the regulations that protect the natural beauty, and we hope others will too."

Brad's experience with the Jacob Williams Winery proves that businesses can

thrive in the National Scenic Area. What's important, he says, is that people appreciate the Gorge and utilize development methods that protect and preserve its scenic beauty for everyone.

Bluebirds at Mosier Plateau



Birdhouses for western bluebirds on the Mosier Plateau. Photo: Tom Wood

Renee Tkach, Outdoor Programs Coordinator
 renee@gorgefriends.org

The western bluebird is declining in the eastern Gorge due to habitat loss. The plight of these native birds inspired Friends member Tom Wood to take action, when he spotted bluebirds on a visit to Friends'

land trust property on the Mosier Plateau. Tom built three bluebird houses and installed them on our property. Tom's handiwork is already providing nesting locations where bluebird chicks hatched this spring.

Stewardship volunteers remove invasive plants at the land trust's Lyle Cherry Orchard property.

Photo: Merrit Hoeh



Stewardship Success

By Merrit Hoeh, Stewardship Coordinator, merrit@gorgefriends.org

Thank you to all the wonderful stewardship volunteers who lent their hands to the Gorge this spring! Their dedication and hard work helped restore Gorge landscapes to a healthy natural state. We held sixteen stewardship events from April to June, cleaning up trash, pulling weeds, routing invasives, and installing native vegetation. A tremendous amount of work was accomplished and we appreciate all the volunteers who made it happen!

Michael Lang, Conservation Director, michael@gorgefriends.org

High Court Rules Gorge Plan Illegal

Natural and cultural resources must be protected

Pastoral farmland at Mount Pleasant, seen from the Vista House in Oregon. Photo: Ken Denis

This summer the Oregon Supreme Court issued opinions on three cases brought by Friends of the Columbia Gorge and other petitioners, challenging actions taken by the Columbia River Gorge Commission that failed to protect the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

In the main case stemming from the 2004 revision of the Gorge Management Plan, the Court reversed an Oregon Appeals Court decision and as a result, the Gorge Commission will be required to adopt stronger rules to better protect natural and cultural resources within the Gorge. Friends was joined in the lawsuit by several landowners and businesses in the Columbia Gorge and also other conservation groups.

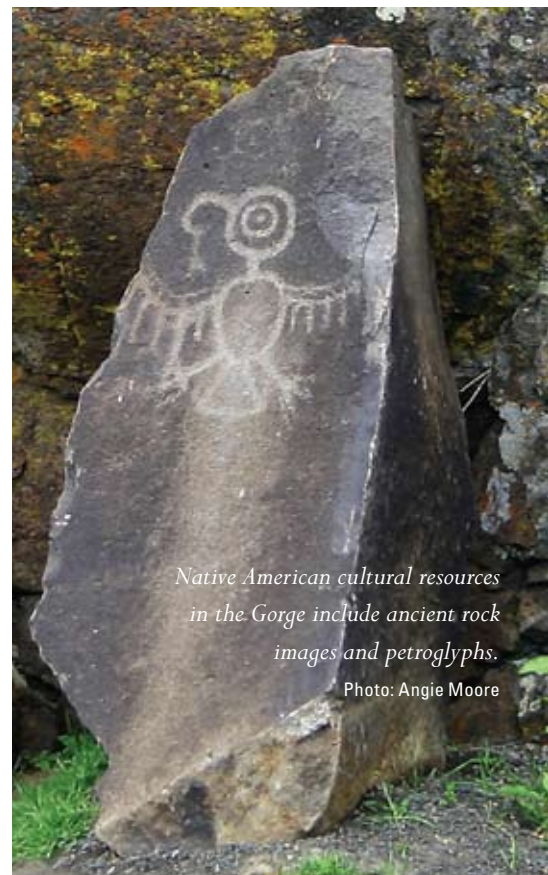
The Supreme Court found that the Gorge Commission erred when it adopted revisions to the Management Plan for the National Scenic Area that did not require the evaluation and avoidance of “cumulative adverse effects”

when reviewing new development proposals.

The National Scenic Area Act, a federal law that protects the Columbia Gorge, requires protection and enhancement of scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources. New development must avoid causing harm to these resources, including consideration of the aggregate impacts of past, present, and likely future developments and land uses. This is what is meant by “cumulative effect.” For example, while building a single house may not harm habitat for an endangered species, allowing ten houses in the same general area over time could result in harm to protected wildlife. Cumulative effects analysis allows planning agencies to identify problems well ahead of time and then avoid harm to fish, wildlife, water quality, scenic landscapes, and Native American cultural resources.

For ten years the Gorge Commission resisted Friends’ requests to improve the evaluation of cumulative effects and continued to allow development to be

approved in a piecemeal fashion, with little or no consideration of the cumulative effects. The Oregon Supreme Court has



Native American cultural resources in the Gorge include ancient rock images and petroglyphs.

Photo: Angie Moore

The Court also ruled that the Scenic Area Act requires consideration and avoidance of cumulative effects on scenic resources before development may be permitted.

effectively ended the debate and has directed the Commission to adopt cumulative effect standards to better protect resources in the Columbia Gorge.

The Court also ruled that the Scenic Area Act requires consideration and avoidance of cumulative effects on scenic resources before development may be permitted.

The Supreme Court recognized and strengthened the rights of citizens groups like Friends to challenge future Gorge Commission actions that weaken Gorge protections. For example, the Supreme Court held that courts must not rely on post hoc rationalizations by the Commission's lawyers. In the future, this will prevent the Commission from making decisions that violate the law, and then having the agency's attorneys manufacture justifications for those decisions after the fact.

Although the Supreme Court ruled that the Gorge Commission must strengthen

protection in some areas, it upheld Gorge Commission rules that allow the expansion of some commercial uses in the Gorge, particularly within buildings eligible for listing on the National Historic Register.



American pika populations in the Gorge will be better protected by the Supreme Court ruling. Pikas are being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Photo: Larry Master www.masterimages.org



Bald eagles nest year-round in the eastern Gorge.

Photo: Dennis Paulson

The court also awarded some deference to the Gorge Commission in interpreting the National Scenic Area Act where there is ambiguity in the law. For everyone who treasures the Gorge, this means two things:

First, Congress should clarify the Scenic Area Act to remove ambiguities that allow the Gorge Commission too much latitude in interpretation. Second, the public must demand that prospective Gorge Commissioners be well-qualified and committed to protecting the Gorge for the benefit and enjoyment of our children and future generations.

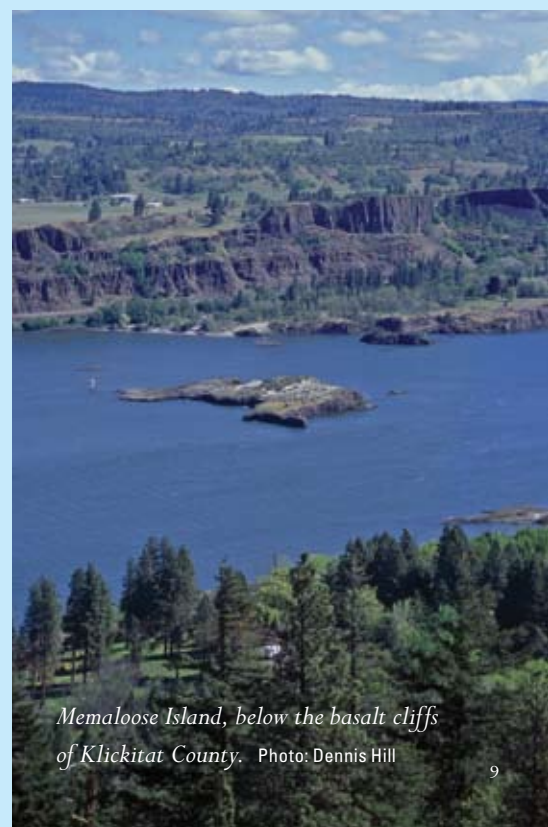
See www.gorgefriends.org for more information.

Strong Appointments to the Commission

Washington Governor Christine Gregoire has appointed former Congressman Don Bonker to serve on the Columbia River Gorge Commission. As a representative of the 3rd Congressional District in southwest Washington, Mr. Bonker was a strong advocate for federal protection for the Columbia River Gorge in the 1980s and was a co-sponsor of legislation to create a national scenic area. Many of the concepts in his bill made it into the final National Scenic Area Act that was passed in 1986. Mr. Bonker resides on Bainbridge Island in Washington and also near Washington, DC.

Earlier this year, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski appointed former Governor Barbara Roberts to serve on the Gorge Commission. Governor Roberts is a strong supporter of Gorge protection and brings a wealth of experience in resource planning and protection to the Commission, accompanied by great enthusiasm and a strong commitment to protecting Oregon's "crown jewels" so that future Oregonians can experience their splendor.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge extends a warm welcome to Congressman Bonker and Governor Roberts and looks forward to working with them over the next four years. In addition, we wish to express our sincere appreciation of all the Gorge Commissioners, who volunteer their time to carry out extremely important—and sometime thankless—work to protect our shared national treasure, the Columbia River Gorge.



Memaloose Island, below the basalt cliffs of Klickitat County. Photo: Dennis Hill

Jane Harris, Development Director, jane@gorgefriends.org

Major Bequest Strengthens Endowment

Long-time Friends supporter Margaret Denison passed away last September leaving a nearly \$800,000 bequest to our organization. The Denison family has a long history of

philanthropy in the Northwest, supporting many grassroots groups who promote equity, justice, and sustainability in our region.

Friends' board of directors has placed the Denison gift in our Nancy Russell

Endowment, bringing the value of the fund to approximately \$2 million. Interest from the Endowment supports day-to-day operations and is especially important during the current economic downturn.

To make a gift to the Russell Endowment or to establish a named fund within our endowment program, contact Jane Harris at 503-241-3762 x102.

Salmon polemonium. Photo: Don Jacobson



The Josselyn home will welcome major donors at our Conservator Party.
Photo: Jane Harris

Conservator Party for Major Donors

Our annual gala Conservator Party will be held October 16 at the beautiful Portland home of Jill Josselyn. The Tudor-style home—thought to have been designed by Portland architect A.E. Doyle in 1922 amid three acres of wooded gardens—is listed on the National Historic Register. Invitations will be mailed to our major donors in September.

Friends in Camas

In May, the charming Camas restaurant “Around the Table” hosted a party for more than 80 of our SW Washington members and friends. Guests enjoyed a presentation by Friends Executive Director Kevin Gorman and a wine tasting from Jacob Williams winery in Lyle. Conservation Director Michael Lang noted, “Events in local communities help us stay connected to our members and build support for our work in their region of the Gorge.”

Picnic Rained Out? No Way!

Despite cool temperatures and constant drizzle, more than 150 Friends members and guests turned out for our 30th Annual Summer Picnic. The event was held at Cape Horn on private property that Friends is purchasing from the Collins family. The beautiful 32-acre property is part of our Cape Horn project and offers breathtaking views of the Gorge. Scrumptious potluck dishes and great local beer, a bluegrass trio, hay rides for kids, and a close-up look at raptors from the Rowena Wildlife Clinic all made for another highly successful summer event.



Carol Rodrick from the Rowena Wildlife Clinic with a peregrine falcon.
Photo: Angie Moore

Friends members improvised to make the best of a rainy day.
Photo: Angie Moore





Featured Hike: Mitchell Point Trail

Very challenging: 2.6 miles, 900-ft elev. gain

Dennis Stillwell, www.nwhiker.com

The Mitchell Point Trail is a gem of a hike high above the busy interstate freeway, with panoramic Gorge views up and down the river.

The hike begins on a trail through a densely forested area, but soon breaks into a climb up talus slopes with outstanding views of the river and surrounding mountains. About ¾ mile up, the switchback trail passes under a power line right-as-way as you head north to the summit of Mitchell Point.

Note: This is not a pet or family friendly hike. The loose talus rock may require scrambling, and the summit drops off to steep cliffs on both sides. The views are fantastic, but hiking experience is definitely required.

The view looking east from Mitchell Point.

Photo: Dennis Stillwell

Directions: From Portland, take I-84 east to Exit 58 Lausmann State Park. (From the east, take I-84 west to Exit 56 and return east to Exit 58.) There is a large parking area and at the south end a paved trail heads into the woods. The trail becomes a dirt path leading into a steep climb to the summit of Mitchell Point. Exit from the park is eastbound only, toward Hood River.

Dennis Stillwell has hiked hundreds of miles throughout the Columbia Gorge and is the creator of the DVD *70 Virtual Hikes of the Columbia Gorge* and of www.nwhiker.com. His DVD is available online at his site and at www.gorgefriends.org. Dennis will be the featured speaker at our 2010 Annual Meeting.

Acorn woodpecker. Photo: Dennis Paulson

Special Gifts

April 24, 2009 – July 21, 2009

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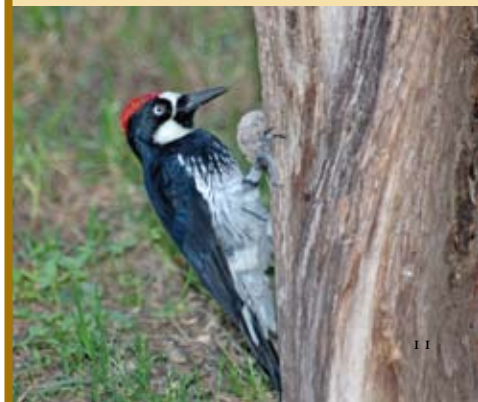
IN HONOR OF ROBERT C. BROWN
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Know Your Gorge *A “Head Start” program for turtles*

The Columbia Gorge is home to nearly 30 threatened and endangered wildlife species, including the western pond turtle. The turtle population’s decline began with habitat destruction and was compounded by non-native predator species such as bullfrogs and large-mouth bass, whose appetite for baby turtles led to a high mortality rate for hatchlings and nearly drove the species to extinction.

Fortunately, the Oregon Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bonneville Power Administration teamed up to improve the success rate of the hatchlings. By placing transmitters on females’ backs in the wild, biologists can monitor

eggs as they hatch and then take the hatchlings back to the Zoo, where the tiny turtles spend their first year beefing up and hardening their shells. Once the turtles are big enough, they are returned to secluded ponds near Dog Mountain and Lyle, and their survival rate jumps to ninety-five percent. With the release of 65 turtles in July, the program has put more than 1,400 turtles back into the wild.

For more details: Oregon Zoo

www.oregonzoo.org/Conservation/westernpondturtle.htm

An Oregon Zoo biologist holds a young western pond turtle that will be released into a pond in the Gorge. Photo: Courtesy of Oregon Zoo