

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2025
via Zoom Webinar

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Elaine Albrich
Laura Brennan Bissell
Valerie Fowler
Casey Gatz – USDA Forest Service
Nicolas Granum – USDA Forest Service
Robert Liberty
Jerry Meninick
Michael Mills
Nathan Reynolds
Dr. Ashley Thompson
Amy Weissfeld ~ 9:49 a.m.

COMMISSIONER MEMBERS ABSENT

Alex Johnson
Carina Miller
Pah-tu Pitt

STAFF PRESENT

Mackenzie Aamodt, Land Use Planner
Connie Acker, Finance & Administration Manager
Lisa Naas Cook, Climate Program Manager
Sage Ebel, Natural Resource Planner
Kelly Foster, Public Records & Administrative Analyst
Bryce Guske, Senior Planner
Colin Jarvis, Climate Corps Fellow Intern
Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Planner
Jeff Litwak, Legal Counsel
Mike Schrankel, GIS Manager
Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director

AUDIENCE PRESENT

Lynn Burditt – USDA Forest Service
Keith Cleveland – Hood River County
Sheila Dooley
Melissa Fahrni – Skamania County
Greg Faust
Martin Hecht – Martins Gorge Tours

Dr. Kelly Howsley-Glover – Wasco County
Madison Kenney – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Terra Lingley – Oregon Department of Transportation
Rodger Nichols
Mary Repar
Jeff Robertson – KPTV
Michael Sallis – Clark County
Stephen Strom
Renee Tkach – Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Eric Walker – Hood River County

Others were present during the meeting.

Call to Order and Roll (8:32 a.m.) Chair Michael Mills called the meeting to order, and Connie Acker called roll.

Approval of March 11, 2025, Commission Meeting Minutes (8:34 a.m.) Chair Mills moved to adopt the March 11, 2025, meeting minutes, and Commissioner Liberty seconded. The March 11, 2025, Commission Meeting Minutes were approved by a voice vote. Commissioner Laura Brennan Bissell abstained from the vote as she did not attend the March 11, 2025, meeting.

Land Acknowledgment (8:36 a.m.) Chair Mills read the Land Acknowledgment.

Treaty Tribe Word of the Day (8:37 a.m.) Commissioner Jerry Meninick shared wúuxam, meaning springtime. He stated that in his language, there are different seasons with identities they go through; summer is heat, winter is snow, and cold. When the time changes and leaves come out and the wind blows, it is springtime.

Opportunity for Treaty Tribe Nations to Address Commission (8:39 a.m.) As part of the Government-to-Government consultation process, the Commission welcomes input from Treaty Tribe Nations on any issue on the agenda and other matters. The Treaty Tribe Nations did not offer testimony.

Public comment on items related to the National Scenic Area (NSA) not on the agenda (8:40 a.m.)

- Written public comment received from Wasco County Board of County Commissioners dated April 7, 2025 (Attachment A)
- Written public comment received from the Skamania County Board of Commissioners dated April 8, 2025 (Attachment B)
- Lynn Burditt:

- Listened to last week's meeting and wanted to share her experiences working with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and to clarify some points.
- Stated that when the scenic area was designated, there was an exterior boundary, 13 urban areas, and four large Special Management Areas (SMAs). Within the SMAs, the Act authorized the USFS to acquire land when landowners made a bona fide offer to sell.
- Stated that there were a lot of acquisitions in Skamania County in the early days. She stated that since 2010, there have been four purchases total. She stated that there was one acquisition since 2018, a 13-acre parcel connected with Cape Horn. The majority of acquisitions occurred in the early days and have been constrained since that time to those areas that are specifically needed to provide a particular activity. *** It was later clarified by Nic Granum these numbers did not include donations. Since 2008 there have been 9 acquisitions totalling 406.34 acres*
- Regarding meetings with the Skamania County Commissioners, she noted that the county chose the word "update" and includes it in its agendas. She stated the goal is to share what is going on with the Commission and the USFS in the National Scenic Area, have a conversation, share feedback and ideas, and have dialogue back and forth.
- Stated the MOU (to which she was a signatory) mentioned during the last Commission meeting was very specific between the Gifford Pinchot Forest, the Columbia River National Scenic Area (USFS), and Skamania County Commissioners. The goal was to have open communication - about possible interests and concerns related to land acquisition.
- One occurrence that created angst, frustration, and confusion was when the USFS acquired a parcel not connected to the National Scenic Area but related to the Pacific Crest Trail access and opportunity. This is a different acquisition authority that that is not related to the CRGNSA Act.
- Stated that the group making the MOU focused on the Wind River Administrative Site - in 2000 the USFS conveyed acreage from the old Wind River Nursery site (187 acres), as that land had opportunities for business activities. In exchange, Skamania County conveyed land elsewhere. She stated that 23.4 more acres within the administrative site were transferred, as part of the omnibus appropriations act for fiscal year 2023. The Gifford Pinchot is responsible for the Wind River Nursery Administrative Site, and the land is not in the National Scenic Area.
- MOUs within the USFS are valid for five years and must be renewed.

- Noted that within the Act, there are references to economic activity. She described the 1% (one percentum of fair market value) annual payment for acquired lands for five years. Further legislation extended the payments to eight years. Skamania County received approximately \$747,000 total between 1997 & 2025.
- Mentioned several other events that impacted Skamania County, including the eruption of Mount St Helens in 1980. The National Scenic Area Act occurred in 1986. In 1989, activities were restricted on national forests and other lands related to the Spotted Owl. The injunction impacted the Wind River Nursery, a key economic opportunity in Skamania County.
- Chair Mills: Asked for clarification from Burditt that the land acquisitions were made by the USFS, not the Columbia River Gorge Commission.
 - Burditt: Responded that the USFS would be the entity acquiring lands under the Act. The USFS is a land management agency. The focus of the acquisitions was to allow owners of Special Management Area (SMA) land an opportunity, should they desire, to offer their property so that SMA areas could be managed as one, with the recognition that there would be more restrictive guidelines in SMA than in General Management Areas (GMA). It provided people who did not want the SMA restrictions the opportunity to make a bona fide offer, and if the FS accepted the offer, a purchase, trade, or conservation easement was made. If the land was not purchased after a bona fide offer, the land is still within the SMA landscape but managed as GMA. The USFS was the purchasing entity, and the Gorge Commission does not have a role. She read the March 11, 2025, letter from the Skamania County Board of County Commissioners to the USDA Secretary of Agriculture and regrets the confusion in the letter.
- Mary Repar:
 - Stated that she wanted to discuss the proposed defunding of the Gorge Commission.
 - Stated that the NSA has economically benefited the area. Tourism is the primary economy now, not timber.
 - Stated she planned to call her representatives, the governor, and Travis Couture, the representative who suggested the amendment.
 - Stated the NSA should stay the NSA, and resources should be protected. She thanked the Commission for its work and said she would do everything possible to help.

Executive Director's Report (8:58 a.m.) Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director, and staff provided brief updates:

- **Legislative Outreach** – Wolniakowski reported:
 - Staff received a copy of the March 11, 2025, letter from the Skamania County Board of County Commissioners to the USDA Secretary of Agriculture and sent a response to Skamania County correcting the record regarding land acquisitions.
 - As mentioned during the April 2, 2025, Commission meeting, there have been many conversations with and letters written to Washington legislators.
 - Stated that she has received positive replies to clarifications on the budget and other requested information from representatives.
 - Stated that the Senate and House will go through reconciliation of the two budgets in the next several weeks.
 - Stated that the Commission received a letter from the Office of Financial Management director mentioning the Gorge Commission funding as a concern and expressing support for continued funding.
 - Welcomed Sherryl Schown and Brad Gilliam from Environment Science Associates (ESA), who will present on the independent Quality Assurance report from the Access Database Replacement (ADR) project.
 - Stated that the topic of economic vitality needing to be more prevalent had come up in several meetings. Suggested it be elevated to a committee of the Commission, so there is a structured process with public meetings. She noted that there were economic work groups during the Gorge 2020 Management Plan update. She said that there has been work on economic vitality indicators with the Oregon Investment Board (OIB) and the Washington Investment Board (WIB), and staff are interested in hearing more ideas about what the Gorge Commission can do within its scope.
 - Chair Mills asked that interested Commissioners email the Executive Director and Chair.
 - Introduced Joanna Kaiserman to present update on Commission work related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Planner, provided a staff report and presentation. Kaiserman reminded the Commission of its commitments to DEI, the state directives from Oregon and Washington, and the state funding allocated specifically for DEI work. (Attachments C and D).

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Commissioner Reynolds:
 - Noted that when he joined the organization where he is now an Executive Director, the Avarna Group did trainings for the board,

and he felt they did an excellent job defining what DEI meant within the organization and discussing a comprehensive land use history in the region.

- Commissioner Albrich:
 - Suggested this could be a good opportunity to weave into discussions about economic inequities and how DEI interplays with economic inequities that may be created by how the Commission works and implements the Management Plan.
 - Noted the training cost of \$18,000. Expressed concern about that spending given the economic climate and budget scrutiny and suggested using the opportunity to dive deeper into the work the Gorge Commission needs to do, not just focus on educational training.

- Commissioner Brennan Bissell:
 - Thanked Commissioner Albrich for stating the workshop cost.
 - Stated her concern that this amount would be spent educating very educated white people. Suggested using some DEI funding to offer educational opportunities to people of color in the Gorge.
 - Stated that there seems to be a lot of meetings and brainstorming going on in the office and expressed that the money could be better spent in the community.

- Commissioner Fowler:
 - Expressed concern about the budget and current political climate, and seconded the concept of using some of these funds for an economic development strategy involving staff.
 - Stated she is not aware of any staff devoted to economic development. She suggested the funds could be used for economic development, especially on the eastern edge of the Gorge.

- Wolniakowski:
 - Thanked Commissioners for their comments and stated she understands concerns about DEI funding in the current climate.
 - Noted that both Oregon and Washington are committed to equity and specifically provided funding to advance goals in the adopted DEI plan, which included workshops.
 - Stated the funding is earmarked and that the PEAR Team recommended these types of workshops.
 - Noted staff have done outreach to help direct funding to partners and added that Lisa Naas Cook will provide an update on how climate funding is being used for equity.
 - Noted that if the money is not used by June 30, 2025, it will be returned to the states, but the staff are not able to use the funding towards other work.

- Noted the state has not granted authority to hire an economic specialist and requested Commissioner suggestions for using the money.
 - Expressed hope that an economic committee can provide ideas on how to get the results the Commission wants.
 - Added that the Management Plan guidelines and policies will be reviewed through an equity lens in the next few months using ECONorthwest.
- Chair Mills:
 - Reiterated that the Commission approved the DEI work and believes it is essential to continue the work.
 - Added that the funding was received from Oregon and Washington, not the federal government, and the states asked agencies to do this work.
 - Noted that Commissioners may benefit from broader perspectives and that DEI education is important, given the history of local land ownership.
 - Supports continuing to work with diverse partners to assist in the Commission's DEI work.
- Commissioner Brennan Bissell:
 - Expressed that she is struggling with discussion about workshops and experts when there are community members [audio cut out].
 - Noted the Commission signs off on loans but does not fund those loans.
 - Asked if the Commission received \$100,000 over two years, why the Commission cannot offer loans and grants, farm relief, or education to non-white people about this land and its history.
 - Stated that there is a saturation point of education and suggested the Commission needs to "do the work" rather than being educated further.
 - Concerned that economic indicators are not included in VSI.
 - Urged the Commission to hire a more diverse, non-white staff.
- Commissioner Albrich:
 - Asked for an update on having the Management Plan reviewed with an equity lens and whether that work could be woven into the upcoming training.
 - Wolniakowski: ECONorthwest is being hired to do that work.
 - Asked if the ECONorthwest work can feed into the discussion and workshops with Avarna.
 - Wolniakowski: Stated they will happen at the same time.
 - Stated she is not clear how staff/Commissioners will engage with ECONorthwest. Suggested adjusting the timing.

- Wolniakowski: Stated ECONorthwest contract is about to be signed, and they will begin working. Suggested putting it on the May meeting agenda to share suggestions for focus areas from ECONorthwest.
 - Asked if the workshops for May and June can be deferred.
 - Wolniakowski: Stated that if they are deferred, the funds will be lost for the biennium, and future funding is unclear.
 - Stated that the work plan and scheduling are unfortunate, as it would be ideal to have the consultant's work product feed into workshops.
 - Wolniakowski: Noted that there are requests to continue DEI work in the next biennium, but funding is unknown at this point.
- Chair Mills: Thanked Commissioners for their comments and noted that more about the Washington budget will be known in the next few weeks.

USDA Forest Service Report (9:38 a.m.) Nicolas Granum, Deputy Forest Supervisor for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, provided updates on Forest Service activities in the National Scenic Area:

- Thanked Lynn Burditt for her comments.
- Shared a slide deck explaining the USFS Acquisitions in the National Scenic Area (Attachment E)
- Noted that since 2008, the USFS has acquired about 400 acres in Skamania County; noted that his numbers differ from Burditt's as some of those acquisitions were donations, not purchases.
- Described implementation of Secretarial Memo 1078-006
- Reiterated continued commitment to public access to public lands.
- Provided updates on the Multnomah Lodge celebrations and permitted parking for popular sites.
- Thanked Skamania County for its partnership with the shuttle system to Dog Mountain from the Skamania County Fairgrounds parking lot.
- Assessment and development of a remediation plan continues related to the hazardous waste pit along the Twin Tunnels trail that burned during the Microwave Fire.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Commissioner Fowler:
 - Following the prescribed fire at Catherine Creek, with Donna Mickley's concurrence, Erin Black said the lessons learned would be shared in a public meeting with advance advertising. Stated the estimate was for April and asked for an update on the timing to share with interested folks in the community.

- Stated that Black said it was important to include the community in planning early on, that the process begins in January, and that April would be a good time for inviting public participation. Asked for an update on the timing for public involvement and input into prescribed burns planning.
 - Granum:
 - Stated lessons learned will be available soon, and the USFS is still planning how to share information with the public once available.
 - Stated the USFS does want to re-engage growers around wildfire broadly.
 - Stated that the public can participate in planning through the NEPA process and that he will engage with staff further.
- Stated that Black/Mickley promised to engage in public meetings rather than having people read plans about the entire Pacific Northwest Forest Plan.
- Stated that 80% of prescribed burns will be in the eastern Gorge since the western Gorge is too wet to burn and attributed that comment to Roland Rose.
- Asked when the first public will be involved in planning and public meetings to plan, as recommended in the lessons learned.
 - Granum:
 - Asked Commissioner Fowler to be careful not to misquote people.
 - Added that there are different threats from wildfire in different parts of the Gorge.
 - Reiterated that public engagement around prescribed fire continues to be a USPS priority.
- Commissioner Liberty: Asked if there have been layoffs and if there are RIF plans with a percentage reduction target.
 - Granum: Stated that the information has to come directly from the USDA and that there have not been impacts in the Scenic Area. Noted there are RIF and transformation plans for the federal workforce generally. Stated that there is no public RIF plan for the USDA and USFS at this time.
 - Granum: Stated that the OPM and OMB memo asked agencies to provide a plan for reductions and did not give a percentage.
- Commissioner Fowler: Asked Granum to send the prescribed burning plan for the National Scenic Area to all Gorge Commissioners and apologized if she misremembered the 80% number in the eastern Gorge.

Information Item:* 2024 Annual Report for the Climate Change

Action Plan (9:53 a.m.) Lisa Naas Cook, Climate Program Manager, and Colin Jarvis, Climate Corps Fellow, provided an overview of climate action efforts in 2024, including goal status updates for the main priorities in the Commission’s 2024-2025 climate action work plan. In addition, they discussed the launch of the second Climate Stewards community training course for 2025. (Attachments F and G)

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Commissioner Albrich:
 - Asked about connections between 2025 goal to develop climate equity goals and actions, the PEAR team, and the DEI strategic plan.
 - Asked about WA Gorge Action Program (WAGAP) as a PEAR partner and opportunities to expand that partnership, given their people focus.
 - Naas Cook:
 - Goal as stated is that the DEI Plan is in place with climate equity goals and actions; reflects where staff were in 2022. At that time, the DEI Strategic Plan was in progress for finalization. Climate goal language reflects that point in time, but the intended outcome is the same today—to have specific climate equity goals and actions that are incorporated into the DEI Strategic Plan. PEAR work is the “how” to get to that goal. There may also be connections between the Management Plan equity audit that will inform these climate equity goals. We have developed draft goals based on the interests of the PEAR team and existing climate priorities, but staff plan to incorporate relevant findings from the equity audit. PEAR team goal recommendations will be shared closer to the end of this year.
 - Regarding WAGAP, staff have engaged with WAGAP depending on their availability to participate in PEAR meetings. Going forward, the PEAR Team can discuss the social, economic, and human aspects of climate change. PEAR Team members have suggested internal Commission training to prevent inadvertently causing harm when going outside the organization to work with communities. Staff welcomes thoughts on specific plans for working with WAGAP further on projects.
 - Expressed appreciation for work on natural resources, but not missing the human element in the Commission’s work on climate equity.

- Commissioner Brennan Bissel:
 - Expressed appreciation for the work on the presentation.
 - Trees and bodies of water for sequestering carbon; stated that the biggest resource for carbon sequestration in the Scenic Area is the soil, and suggested looking into that by having conversations with people who work in agricultural industries and have an economic interest.
 - Suggested incentivizing learning about no-till practices and other farming activities related to carbon sequestration. Asked what partners staff have been working with that are directly related to agriculture.
 - Regarding transportation, expressed concern about how centered public transportation is around tourism and not supporting populations in need, and suggested bringing a DEI conversation and pressuring LINK Public Transit to serve Tribal in-lieu fishing communities as an opportunity for engagement.
 - Naas Cook:
 - Will follow up to learn more about transit options at Tribal fishing sites. Staff plan to attend the upcoming Gorge Transit Summit on April 10.
 - Appreciates mention of soils; noted there are actions in the Climate Change Action Plan around working with interested landowners to connect them with resources and practices like no-till that have co-benefits of storing water and carbon, while improving soils. Mentioned agriculture partners Natural Resources Conservation Service and Oregon State University Extension. In 2021, Commission staff hosted an online workshop with agriculture producers to discuss climate and agriculture and what the Commission could do within its land use role. Noted that the actions taken most recently focused on achieving nearer-term climate goals for 2025, but climate-smart agriculture is in the plan as well. Invited comments from Commissioners interested in agriculture-focused climate actions included in the plan.
- Commissioner Weissfeld:
 - Noted that many questions are about how to fine-tune the data and get additional populations involved; noted that early discussions were about what data to collect and what actions to take, and that significant progress has been made.
 - Stated that this project is a great example of regional bi-state planning and its impact. Looking forward to how the information and data being collected will impact the next Management Plan revision.

- Expressed appreciation for the questions about ridership metrics. Noted that personally and anecdotally, she believes more locals are taking public transit to the airport, which was not happening before.
- Commissioner Brennan Bissel:
 - Seconded Commissioner Weissfeld on the airport transportation comment, but noted there is no Underwood stop.
 - Stated that much like trickle-down economics, trickle-down education does not work.
 - Suggested offering workshops or seminars in English and Spanish on soil health and climate change. Suggested engaging local farm workers. Noted in her experience that when local agriculture workers have educational opportunities, they are interested and engaged. Stated only reaching out to government and high education entities misses hitting the biggest part of the pyramid for community engagement.
- Commissioner Thompson:
 - Noted that the Commission was part of a past grant proposal from Oregon State University, the University of California, and Washington State University to get a Climate Stewards program for Spanish speakers in place, but the grant was not funded. Given current conditions, it is unclear if a grant program will be available in the coming months. Noted that a lot of the education is coming from higher education entities, from OSU, from soil and water conservation districts, and from NRCS. Many events are hosted in English and Spanish to provide opportunities for climate change, integrated pest management, etc. Noted the Commission staff do not have technical experts in those fields, but universities and community colleges do have those experts.
- Commissioner Brennan Bissel:
 - Thanked Commissioner Thompson for the clarification and noted she is not suggesting the Commission staff do the education themselves.
 - Noted that many of the named organizations are in Oregon, and she is in Washington, so may not be familiar with those organizations.
- Naas Cook: Added that Underwood Conservation District focuses on working lands and many of their projects have climate benefits for soil and water retention.
 - Commissioner Brennan Bissel:
 - Stated she is familiar with the Underwood Conservation District and stated she believes they advise people to spray

Crossbow for the eradication of highly flammable material, which she states is a big problem to be discussed another time.

- Stated that one organization in Washington does not alleviate her point.

Public Comment

- Mary Repar:
 - Thanked Naas Cook and staff for their work and expressed appreciation for the ongoing work.
 - Noted that on June 5, 2025, the Stevenson Grange is offering a Firewise program.
 - Noted there is a ribbon cutting for EV chargers at the Stevenson Library on June 2, 2025.
 - Regarding carbon sequestration, noted that she has proposed using it to earn money for the community.
 - Noted that most fires are human caused. Expressed concern about prescribed fires and particulate matter causing negative environmental and health impacts.
 - Requested a regional workshop or plan for EV stations.
 - Naas Cook: Noted the Gorge Transit Summit is scheduled for Thursday, April 10, 2025, and requested Connie Acker share the information with Commissioners and staff and post on the website.
 - Acker: Stated that she emailed the Gorge Transit Summit information to Commissioners and would post the information to the meeting page on the Commission's website after the meeting. (Attachment H)

BREAK – 10:58-11:15 a.m.

Information Item: * Access Database Replacement Project, Enterprise Permitting & Licensing (EP&L) and Civic Access (11:15 a.m.) Mike Schrankel, GIS Manager and Access Database Replacement Project Coordinator, demonstrated EP&L and Civic Access.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

- Commissioner Fowler: Asked when Civic Access would be live for public use, and what the communications strategy would be to alert the public.
 - Schrankel: Noted functionality exists, and the link can be shared. Staff are planning a soft rollout for Klickitat County applicants; planners can identify applicants who are good candidates. The

- planned rollout is alongside the new website in June. Staff are cost-conscious about any communication plan.
- Suggested outreach to local news organizations and partners would be free.
 - Sherryl Schown (ESA): Explained that there is a communication plan, and it will be right-sized for the Commission.
 - Wolniakowski: Will be in the next few months through engagement with the Communications Committee.
 - Commissioner Brennan Bissel: Asked about the total cost of this project and if there is a breakdown he can share that can be shared with her county.
 - Schrankel:
 - Explained the two-phase approach; Phase 1 was under budget and was a planning phase. Phase 2 has been the implementation phase with ESA for project management and Tyler Technologies for software configuration. The state instructed Commission staff to procure Quality Assurance vendors. Staff relied on state IT infrastructure guidance. Phase 2 in the 2023-2025 biennium was budgeted at \$1.8 million; spending was \$1.4 million.
 - Explained that the ADR project budget included funds to digitize 35 years of records, a document management system to manage agency records, development of a new Commission website, and a new VSI reporting platform.
 - WATech has an IT Project Dashboard with details available to the public.
 - Asked about increases in salary and stated there were significant increases when the project started.
 - Wolniakowski: Noted that one limited-duration Public Records and Administrative Analyst position is funded through this project.
 - Acker: Noted that 10% of Schrankel's salary was paid through the ADR funding in the 2023-25 biennium, but that his salary had not increased due to this project.
 - Wolniakowski: Oregon Enterprise Information Systems (EIS) and Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech) helped the agency determine the budget requested. Both states provided oversight on every aspect of the project, and as reported, this project came in under budget and on time.

NOTE: This follow-up information was provided to Commissioners via email on April 10, 2025:

There was mention of Mike receiving a substantial salary increase when ADRP started in FY22 (July 1, 2021). It is assumed that this is the basis for the information:

Name	Agency	Position	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
SCHRANKEL, MICHAEL	Columbia River Gorge Co...	GIS MANAGER & IT PROJECT COORDIN...	\$0	\$0	\$33,700	\$84,700	\$93,100

Mike worked for Hood River County as their GIS Coordinator for 20 years. In May 2018, an Intergovernmental Agreement was entered into between Hood River and CRGC to share Mike’s expertise. Mike worked half-time for Hood River County and half-time for CRGC. During this period, CRGC reimbursed Hood River County 50% of the costs associated with Mike’s employment. The Intergovernmental Agreement continued until CRGC needed a full-time GIS Manager who could also work as its IT Project Coordinator. Mike agreed to join CRGC full-time on July 12, 2021.

As stated above, Mike started working for CRGC on July 12, 2021. The \$33,700 figure listed in calendar year 2021 above reflects 5 ½ months of salary when Mike joined CRGC full-time. The figures for calendar years 2022 and 2023 reflect Mike’s full-time work with CRGC. The ADRP funding paid half of Mike’s salary until CRGC asked for and received legislative authority and funding for Mike as a full-time employee. Mike’s salary is consistent with state salary standards for GIS Managers with 25 years of experience. Kelly Foster’s limited-duration position was authorized by the legislatures and is funded through ADRP.

- Commissioner Liberty:
 - Asked how applicants who are not adept at using online application software will submit applications.
 - Schrankel: Staff are looking into developing a training video that will walk applicants through the process. Applicants will continue to be welcome to submit paper applications, and the planners will assist them.
 - Asked about additional training videos for the public to learn how to access and understand certain data. Added that this will be important regarding what information is needed for Management Plan update.
 - Schrankel: Responded that Civic Access has a menu item allowing the public to search past development reviews. However, given that only Klickitat County applications come through Civic Access, not sure how comprehensive that side of it will be. It will be much easier for Commission planners to query information and provide it to Commissioners and the public.

- Commissioner Weissfeld:

- Asked how applications work for counties outside Klickitat.
- Asked about access to the backend system for county employees.
 - Schrankel:
 - Noted applicants from other counties are directed to those counties to apply directly.
 - Noted that EP&L allows different access types, and future access could include other county staff.
 - Added that staff hoped that EP&L could be integrated with other counties, but after researching the issue and speaking with Tyler Technologies, it was decided that it would be a huge project, and it may not work.

Brad Gilliam, Environmental Technologist, Environmental Science Associates, provided a summary of the Lessons Learned Report from the Access Database Replacement Project produced by quality assurance vendor Bluecrane, Inc. (Attachment I)

Public comment

- Terra Lingley: Noted that Multnomah County uses EP&L, and users have difficulties submitting applications for locations that do not have parcel numbers, tax lot numbers, e.g., right of way (ROW) projects. Lingley’s workaround has been to choose adjacent parcels, which could be problematic for easements and ROW projects in the future.
- Wolniakowski: Thanked ESA and staff for their efforts and congratulated Schrankel on his award from the Oregon Governor as an Ambassador of Innovation.

The discussion item regarding the 40th anniversary celebration was postponed to a later Commission meeting in light of meeting time constraints.

Other Business (12:20 p.m.)

- Chair Mills: Shared the following statement:

“Executive Director Wolniakowski and I have made a commitment to the County Commissioners to always make ourselves available to them to discuss any matters to help ensure transparency and accuracy of information. I restate my commitment and assure the County Commissioners from all six counties that I and Executive Director Wolniakowski will always be available to answer questions from the commissioners of any of the six counties within the National Scenic Area. I believe that the counties will respond accordingly and confer with us to avoid any dissemination of inaccurate information. We all share a vested interest in the Gorge, and we all share a commitment to the viability of the Gorge in all of its facets.

I wholeheartedly support opposing opinions and debate, and I request that we all reaffirm our commitment to be civil to our colleagues on the Gorge Commission and the Gorge Commission staff, and any partners at all times.”

Moved by Chair Mills:

Motion: I move to remove the "live, work, play" statement on the Commission's website landing page and replace it with:

Two purposes of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act (Sec. 3)

(1) To establish a national scenic area to protect and provide for the enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge; and

(2) To protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development in a manner that is consistent with paragraph (1).

Commissioner Discussion and Comments

- Commissioner Albrich: Thanked Chair Mills for the motion and stated her support for this path forward.
- Commissioner Reynolds: Asked if this had the support of the Communications Committee.
- Commissioner Fowler: Stated her belief that Communications Committee Chair Weissfeld will confirm that this was suggested in November during the Communications Meeting. Added that she is delighted to have Chair Mills make this motion.
- Commissioner Weissfeld:
 - Stated that the Communications Committee discussed this change, and all are in favor.
 - Added that this is an example of the Commission working together in an intentional way to make change and expressed appreciation for how the Commission has worked together on this issue.

Commissioner Nathan Reynolds seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote

	Yes	No	Abstain
Albrich	×		
Brennan Bissell	×		
Fowler	×		
Johnson			
Liberty	×		
Meninick	×		
Miller			
Pitt			
Reynolds	×		
Thompson	×		
Weissfeld	×		
Mills - Chair	×		
Total	9	0	0

Committee Reports (12:29 p.m.) The Communications and Rules Committees provided updates to the Commission:

- **Communications Committee** – Committee Chair Weissfeld reported:
 - The Committee has had several discussions via email about communications related to the Washington budget.
 - The Committee meets April 9, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. Topics of discussion will be:
 - Language for the new website
 - How to handle states of emergency
 - How to notify the public about various topics
 - How the Commission speaks with its partners
- Commissioner Fowler: Asked when the change will be made to the website landing page after the motion passed.
 - Wolniakowski: Informed the Commission that the change will be made after the meeting pursuant to the passed motion.

- **Rules Committee** – Jeff Litwak reported:

- Noted that not enough Committee members were at the last meeting, so it was not held.
- Asked Rules Committee members if May 2, 2025, worked for the next meeting. That date did not work for committee members. Litwak will send out an email for another day
- Sage Ebel, Natural Resources Planner:
 - Shared that she had an opportunity to go to Heritage University in Toppenish, Washington, to support through judging the undergraduate and graduate research symposium. Heritage is a private university located on the homeland of the Yakama Nation, supporting a diverse student body, mostly Hispanic and Native American students, 85% of whom are the first in their family to attend college.
 - Added that Commission staff are exploring opportunities for Heritage students to help with Commission Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) work.

Proposed “Economic Development” Committee

- Commissioner Liberty: Proposed calling it the “Second Purpose of the Act Committee” to focus on the statutory approach.
- Commissioner Albrich: Suggested taking the naming discussion offline and having a first committee meeting to discuss naming.
- Commissioner Liberty: Stated he is not as concerned with the name as he is with the purpose of the committee.
- Commissioner Albrich: Noted she found it helpful to create a focus and scope in the first Rules Committee meeting. Expressed agreement that the purpose will be to focus on the second purpose of the Act.
- Commissioner Brennan Bissell: Asked why Commissioner Liberty does not want to call it the “Economic bla bla bla – fill in the blank” out of curiosity.
 - Chair Mills: Noted Commissioner Liberty was free to respond, or the Committee can discuss it.
 - No response was offered by Commissioner Liberty
- Commissioner Fowler: Reiterated that a scope discussion would be helpful. Volunteered to be on the committee.
- Chair Mills assessed interest in the Committee.
 - Commissioners Fowler, Liberty, Brennan Bissel, and Albrich expressed interest. Commissioner Johnson was absent, but Chair

Mills stated that he had previously expressed interest in being on the committee.

- Chair Mills suggested postponing the action item regarding whether to release comments from the attorneys general on draft rule changes, since the meeting was running long, and three commissioners were missing. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the action item and executive session would be postponed to the May 13, 2025, meeting.
- Wolniakowski: Informed those Commissioners interested in the Second Purpose of the Act Committee that she would send out a Doodle Poll to schedule the first meeting.
- Litwak: Recommended at the first full Commission meeting after the first Second Purpose of the Act Committee has been held, that the committee membership be ratified by the Commission pursuant to Commission Bylaws.
- Wolniakowski:
 - Informed the Commission that Commissioner Ashley Thompson was rotating off the Commission and a new Oregon Governor-appointed commissioner, Lach Litwer, is set to be confirmed on April 15, 2025, and will be at the May 14, 2025, Commission Meeting.
 - Litwer has expressed an interest in any economic vitality committee work.
- Commissioner Brennan Bissell: Asked for the spelling of Lach Litwer's name.
 - Wolniakowski provided that spelling.
- Acker: Thanked Commissioner Ashley Thompson for her work and dedication to the Gorge Commission and the Columbia River Gorge.
 - Commissioner Thompson: Noted that she has offered continued assistance to Commission staff and will be helping Naas Cook with Climate Stewards and other work.

Commissioners expressed appreciation for Commissioner Thompson's work.

Adjourn – 12:53 p.m.

Meeting Attachments:

- Attachment A – Written public comment from Wasco County Board of County Commissioners dated April 7, 2025

- Attachment B – Written public comment from Skamania County Board of Commissioners dated April 8, 2025
- Attachment C – Staff Report – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update
- Attachment D – Staff Presentation – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update
- Attachment E – USFS Presentation
- Attachment F – Staff Report – 2024 Climate Action Annual Report
- Attachment G – Staff presentation – 2024 Climate Acton Annual Report
- Attachment H – Gorge Transit Summit Information
- Attachment I – Presentation – Environmental Science Associates on Quality Assurance Lessons Learned Report

Approved – May 13, 2025