

# 2024 Climate Action Annual Report

April 8, 2025

Columbia River Gorge Commission

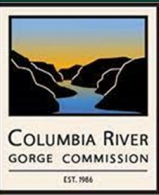




# Presentation Overview

- Background on Climate Change Action Plan
- Goal Status Updates for 2024-2025 Climate Action Work Plan Priorities
- Next Steps for 2025
- 2025 Climate Stewards Training
- Commission Questions and Discussion

# Climate Change Action Plan Background




## National Scenic Area Management Plan

## Management Plan Climate Change Chapter

## Climate Change Action Plan

**MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
for the  
**Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area**



OCTOBER 2020 REVISION



**CHAPTER 1**  
**CLIMATE CHANGE**

The National Scenic Area is made up of a diversity of intact landscapes, living cultures, and communities that, while vulnerable to climate change impacts, also provide a vital foundation for climate resilience. The Gorge Commission is committed to leading and working with others to reduce the greatest drivers of climate change and adapt to changing conditions with the goal of sustaining a thriving, resilient National Scenic Area for future generations.

Climate change poses the most wide-reaching and urgent challenge facing resource management agencies today.<sup>1</sup> Several states, including Oregon and Washington, have taken lead roles in addressing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate adaptation, emphasizing the importance of acting immediately.<sup>2</sup> As a bi-state agency, the Gorge Commission is positioned to

contribute to regional solutions for addressing climate change.

Climate change impacts the scenic, cultural, natural, and recreation resources and the economy and people of the National Scenic Area. Thus, the Management Plan must address it.

The National Scenic Area is particularly vulnerable to the extremes of climate change impacts including wildfire, given its topography and high winds. With a patchwork of land ownership and economies heavily reliant on natural resources, the National Scenic Area is likely to experience climate change impacts intensely.

**CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN THE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA**

The National Scenic Area faces numerous current and predicted effects of climate change including extreme heat, warmer average air temperatures,

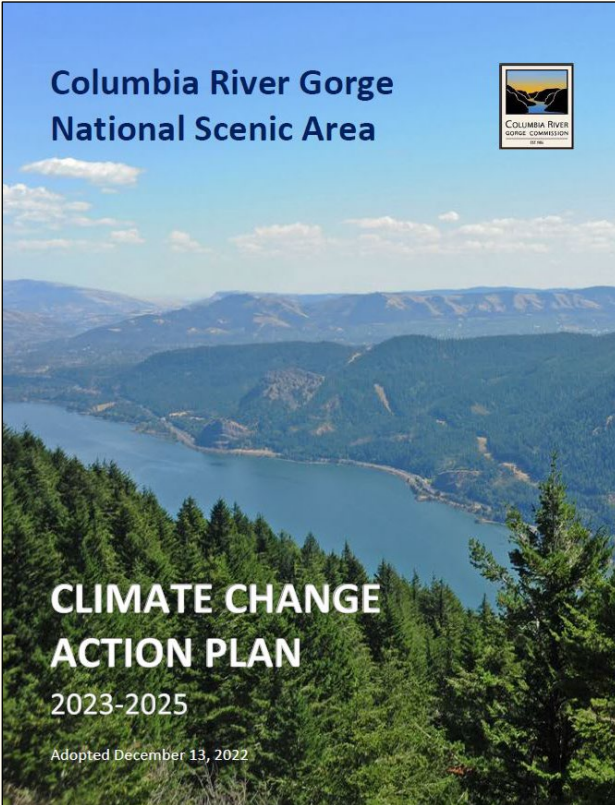
<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018: Global warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above preindustrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty (V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, H. O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J. B. R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M. I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, T. Waterfield (eds.)), In Press.

<sup>2</sup> Recognizing that Oregon has "an urgent, moral obligation to set and achieve more ambitious GHG reduction goals," Executive Order 20-04 calls for the state to reduce its GHG levels at least 80 percent below 1990 emission levels by 2050, building on goals established in previous legislation (ORS 408A.205). The Washington Clean Energy Transformation Act (SB 6116), requiring a transition to a 100 percent clean electricity supply by 2045, is among the strongest legislation in the country aimed at reducing GHG emissions.

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**Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area**



**CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN**  
2023-2025

Adopted December 13, 2022

# Climate Change Action Plan Priorities

## OVERALL PRIORITIES



### Inclusive Climate Action

Engaging with diverse communities and partners across the Gorge



### High Climate Resilience Areas

Identifying and conserving areas expected to support species in a changing climate

## ADAPTATION



### Cold Water Refuge Streams

Protecting water temperature and flow for fish



### Wetlands

Improving wetland habitat for associated plants and wildlife



### Tribal Treaty Rights

Supporting Tribes to ensure ecosystems and land use promote accessible, thriving First Foods



### Oak Woodlands

Improving oak woodland habitat and corridors

## MITIGATION



### Regional Transportation

Reducing single-passenger vehicle travel and promoting regional transit



### Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

Increasing charging stations and collaborative electrification planning



### Carbon Sequestration

Enhancing land-based carbon sequestration in habitats and working lands

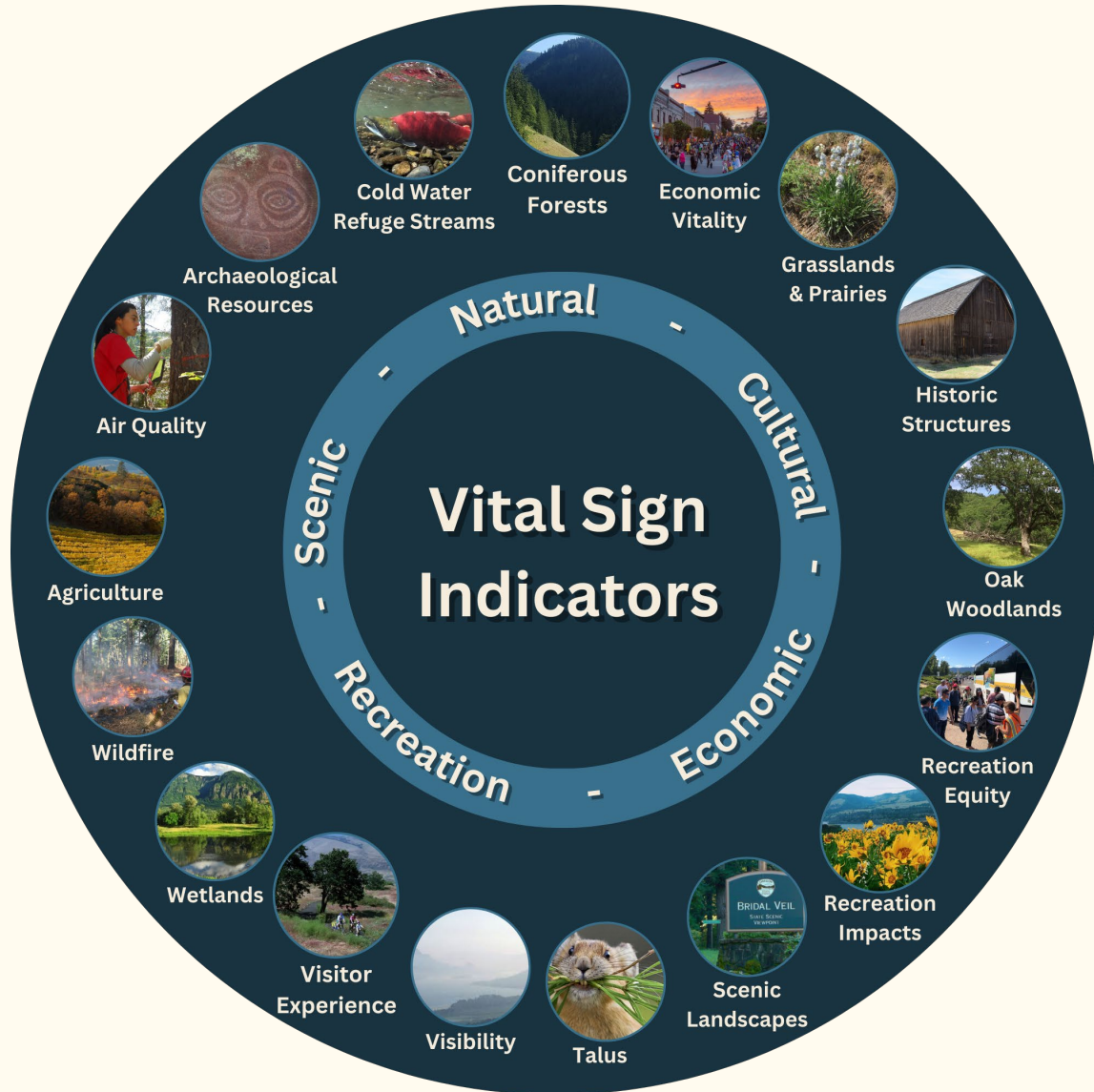
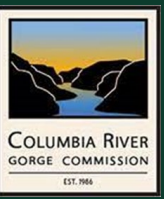


### Fire Risk

Supporting resilient forests and fire-adapted communities



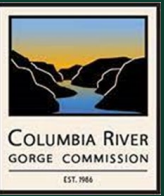
# Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) Monitoring Program



## 2024 Action Highlights

- Supported installation of flow monitoring gage on Little White Salmon River
- Developed detailed habitat maps with USDA Forest Service Ecologist, Doug Glavich
- Designed online, public-facing reporting platform to share VSI data

# Climate Change Action Plan: Action Examples

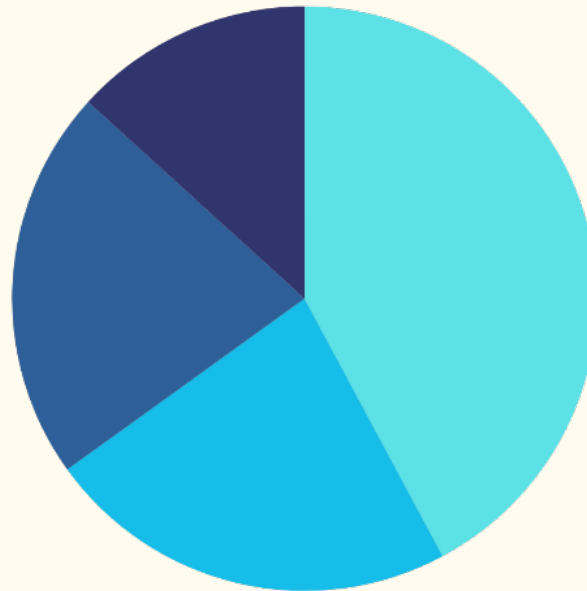


**Data and Mapping**  
(11 of 83)

Monitor cold water refuge stream temperature and flow through VSI program

**Policy Development**  
(18 of 83)

Develop policy options to reduce permitting barriers for oak enhancement projects



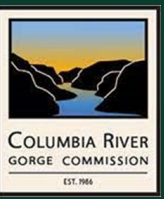
**Partnerships and Support**  
(35 of 83)

Support First Foods protection and education through grant partnership with Yakama Nation

**Policy Implementation**  
(19 of 83)

Coordinate with wildfire resilience partners to provide defensible space resources to landowners

# 2024-2025 Climate Action Work Plan Priorities



## 2024-2025 Climate Action Work Plan Priorities

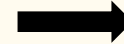
## 2025 Goals

Continue Coordination with Treaty Tribe Staff for First Foods Protection and Associated Habitat Priorities



Goals, Strategies, and Policy Approaches for First Foods

Develop Oak Policy Options and Supporting Maps



Oak Habitat Maps and Policy Options

Develop Climate Equity Goals and Actions with Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team



DEI Plan in Place with Climate Equity Goals and Actions

Develop Fire Adapted Communities Regional Inventory and Map



2,200 Acres of Fuels Reductions Complete

Develop EV Charging Station Map to Inform Strategy for EV Charging Station Locations in the Gorge



DC Fast Charging Stations Available



Locations & Types of EV Charging Stations Identified



Increasing Transit Ridership from 2022-2025



Decreasing Single Passenger Vehicle Trips



Wetlands Extent and Distribution Mapping (VSI Work Plan Priority)

# Climate Action Priority: Tribal Treaty Rights



**Goal:** Goals, strategies, and policy approaches for First Foods protection and access are developed with Columbia River Treaty Tribes

**Status:** Staff-to-staff meetings underway



Festival of Nations

Photo Credit: Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance



First Foods Workshop

Photo Credit: CTUIR



CRITFC Presentation

## 2024 Action Summary:

- Partnership with Yakama Nation to support First Foods outreach and cold water refuge monitoring
- Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs presentations to Commission on climate change priorities
- Commission outreach activities at Columbia River Festival of Nations
- Participation in Gorge Stewardship Network First Foods workshop led by Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) staff
- Presentation to Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) on Climate Change Action Plan and VSI monitoring program

# Climate Action Priority: Oregon White Oak Woodlands



**Goal:** By 2025, comprehensive oak maps including critical habitat corridors are available and oak policy options are provided to the Commission.

**Status:** On track to have oak maps and policy options by end of 2025



Condition Assessment Tool Field Test

Photo Credit: ECOP



## 2024 Action Summary:

- Developed draft staff assessment of oak policy issues with input from Forest Service, Commission, and NSA county planners
- Developed preliminary content for VSI online reporting platform
- Supported field testing for East Cascades Oak Partnership's Condition Assessment Tool available to landowners in the Gorge



# Climate Action Priority: Inclusive Climate Action

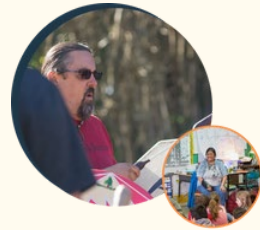


**Goal:** By 2025, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan is complete with goals and actions to advance climate equity.

**Status:** On track to have climate equity goals and actions by end of 2025



PEAR Team Participating Members



Confluence Field School

## 2024 Action Summary:

- Convened quarterly Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team meetings to develop draft climate equity goals, learn about community interests, and incorporate input on Commission work
- Partnered with Confluence Project to host Field School, an online learning series focused on Indigenous speakers from the Columbia River region
- Planning Climate Stewards community training course for April-June of 2025

# Climate Action Priority: Fire Risk



**Goal:** By 2025, combined efforts on public and private lands result in at least 2,200 acres of fuels reduction treatments in the National Scenic Area.

**Status:** 2,185 acres of fuels reduction (thinning and prescribed burning) completed in 2023-2024



Only 15 acres of fuels treatment remain to meet 2025 goal



Prescribed Burning Training  
Photo credit: USDA Forest Service

## 2024 Action Summary:

- 285 acres of fuels reduction completed in 2024 on National Forest System lands
- Developed map and inventory of wildfire mitigation and adaptation efforts in the Gorge
- Completed draft defensible space informational handout for NSA residents

# Climate Action Priority: Fire Risk



**Goal:** By 2030, at least six community-based groups in the National Scenic Area are leading community fire adaptation efforts to prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire.

**Status:** 7 Firewise USA Sites are active in National Scenic Area in 2024 (shown in red)

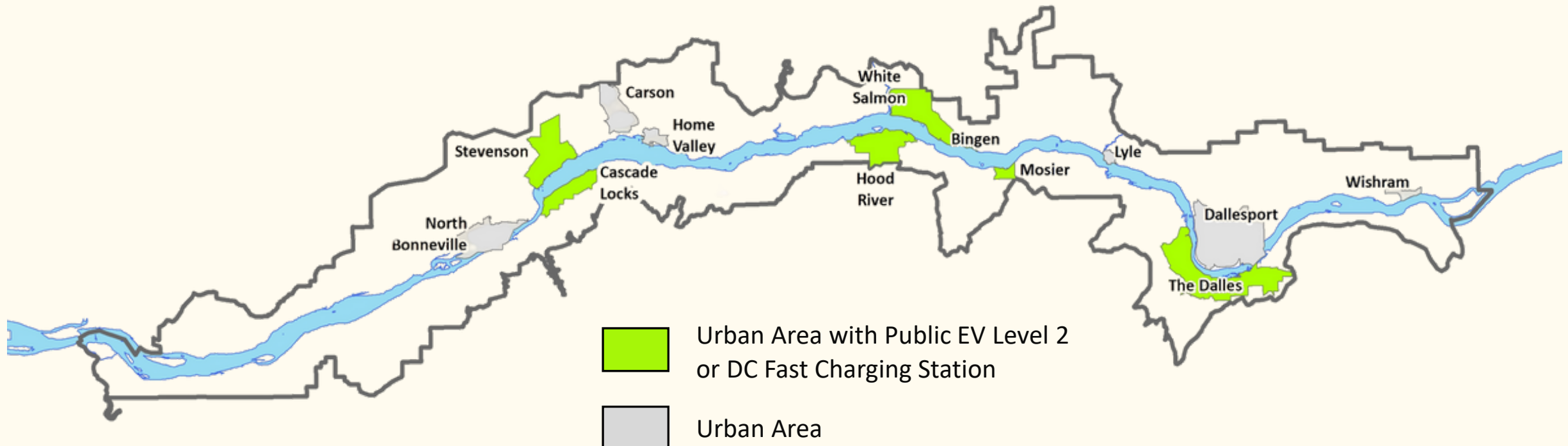


# Climate Action Priority: Electric Vehicle Infrastructure



**Goal:** 50% of Urban Areas have public electric vehicle (EV) Level 2 or direct current (DC) fast charging stations

**Status:** 6 of 13 Urban Areas have Public EV Level 2 or DC Fast Charging Stations (shown in green)



# Climate Action Priority: Electric Vehicle Infrastructure



**Goal:** Public EV direct current (DC) fast charging stations are available every 25 miles on I-84 in Oregon and SR-14 in Washington (shown with blue icon)

**Status:** I-84: Available from Cascade Locks to The Dalles

SR-14: Available in Washougal and unavailable through rest of NSA



# Climate Action Priority: Electric Vehicle Infrastructure



**Goal:** By 2025, the Gorge has a strategy for the desired locations and types of charging stations.

**Status:** No regional strategy spanning different communities across the Gorge. Draft conceptual study of potential EV charging locations in Hood River County, developed by Hood River County Energy Council.



## 2024 Action Summary

- Developed EV charging station map to support regional planning
- Identified potential policy approaches for EV charging stations as a review use

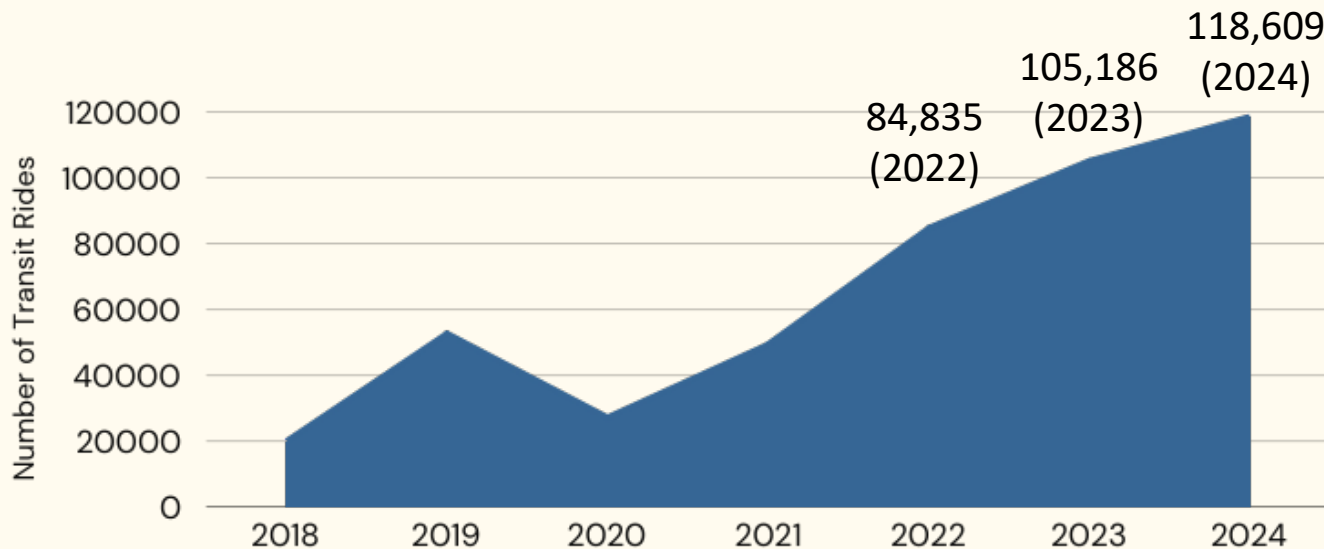
# Climate Action Priority: Regional Transportation



**Goal:** Transit ridership increases annually from 2022-2025

**Status:** Annual transit ridership has increased each year since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Annual Number of Fixed-Route Transit Rides



Data Source: Gorge TransLink Alliance

## Transit Rides are Trending Up: Here's Why

- Service improvements
- Shift from dial-a-ride to fixed-routes
- Increased awareness of transit options
- Post-pandemic resilience

# Climate Action Priority: Regional Transportation



**Goal:** By 2025, the number of gas-powered single occupancy vehicle trips across the Gorge decreases from 2022 levels.

**Status:** Data unavailable for goal as written. For 2024, suggest using a proxy estimate of vehicle trips replaced by transit rides.

Year	2022	2023	2024
Number of Fixed-Route Transit Rides	84,835	105,186	118,609
Number of Vehicle Trips Replaced*	56,557	70,124	79,073

\*Estimation based on 2022 National Household Travel Survey conducted by Federal Highway Administration showing national average of 1.5 occupants per vehicle trip



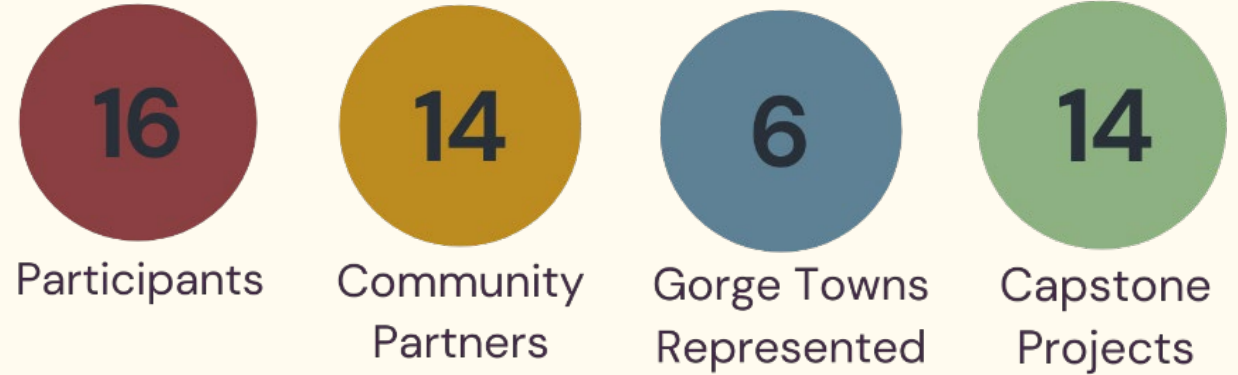
Photo credit: Gorge TransLink

# 2025 Columbia Gorge Climate Stewards Course

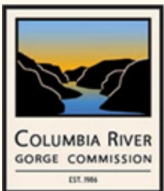
## Recap of 2023 Pilot

In Fall of 2023, community members came together to learn about climate change impacts, communication methods, and local efforts to advance **community** and **ecosystem resilience**.

After our success in 2023, the Commission is partnering with OSU Extension to offer a second Climate Stewards course in the Gorge in April-May 2025.



2023 Capstone Celebration



# 2025 Columbia Gorge Climate Stewards Course

This spring, participants will learn from a host of amazing, local speakers, covering topics including:

- Climate impacts in the Gorge
- Local climate resilience efforts including field trips focused on cold water refuges, First Foods, agriculture, and fire adapted communities
- Building a community of local climate stewards!



Cold Water Refuges and  
Tribal Treaty Rights



Climate Resilient  
Agriculture



Fire Adapted Communities

# 2025 Next Steps



Complete staff assessment of oak policy needs and recommendations, refine oak maps, and seek Commission guidance on policy priorities to guide staff work in 2026.



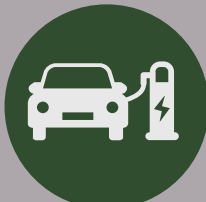
Continue coordination with Treaty Tribe staff to develop strategies for First Foods protection and access.  
Work with Gorge Stewardship Network to provide First Foods educational opportunities for land managers.



Collaborate with county planning departments and local partners to host a wildfire resilience workshop and share updated defensible space informational handout with residents.



Finalize climate equity goals and actions with Pro-Equity Anti-Racism Team. Launch second Columbia Gorge Climate Stewards community training this spring.



Coordinate with partners to identify EV infrastructure needs based on map of existing charging stations in the Gorge.

# Thank you to all those we have worked with this year

- Columbia Land Trust/East Cascades Oak Partnership
- Columbia Gorge Community College
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Columbia Riverkeeper
- Comunidades
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of Yakama Nation
- Hood River County Energy Council, County-Level Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Committee
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Friends of the White Salmon River
- National Scenic Area Planners Network
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Oregon Climate Change Research Institute
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Department of the State Fire Marshal
- Oregon State University Extension Service
- The Next Door, Inc.
- Underwood Conservation District
- University of California, Climate Stewards Program
- USDA Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Geological Survey
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network
- Washington Gorge Action Programs

# Questions for Commission Consideration



- Based on your review of the Climate Change Action Plan and 2024 Climate Action Annual Report, how well do our goals focus on the most pressing climate action needs in the National Scenic Area?
- Recognizing that this Action Plan is meant to be adaptive, which climate action priorities would you like additional updates or discussion on in 2025? Which priorities feel most important to revisit, given evolving funding and administrative considerations in the year ahead?