

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Lisa Naas Cook, Climate Program Manager, Columbia River Gorge Commission
Sage Ebel, VSI & Natural Resources Planner, Columbia River Gorge Commission
Colin Jarvis, Climate Corps Fellow, Columbia River Gorge Commission

DATE: April 8, 2025

RE: **Information Item***: 2024 Climate Action Annual Report

Purpose

This memo provides an overview of the 2024 annual report on the Gorge Commission's Climate Change Action Plan. Based on feedback on our 2023 Climate Action Annual Report presented at the March 2024 Commission meeting, the attached report intends to provide an at-a-glance status update on the main 2025 climate action goals guiding our 2024-2025 work plan. Staff welcomes questions, feedback, and discussion during the April 8th Commission meeting.

Background on Climate Change Action Plan Implementation Funding

The Commission unanimously approved the Climate Change Action Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area on December 13, 2022. The final Climate Change Action Plan reflects input from Tribes, agencies, organizations, and community members throughout the process of developing the plan from March 2021 to December 2022. In 2023, we began implementing the Action Plan with existing staff resources, approximately 0.5 FTE borrowed from current positions.

Recognizing the need for increased staff capacity to fully implement the Action Plan, we requested an additional 1.0 FTE in the 2023-2025 biennium. The Washington legislature approved this appropriations request through Climate Commitment Act funds, and Oregon delayed providing the match funding until spring 2024. Around the same time that Oregon funds became available to us, uncertainty grew about the future of our Washington funding. Initiative 2117, created to repeal the 2021 Climate Commitment Act in Washington, was certified for the ballot in the November election. We focused on adding short-term staff capacity through summer and ten-month Climate Fellow positions, while we waited on the results of the Washington election. In December 2024, we learned that the Commission would continue to receive approved climate funding through the Climate Commitment Act account. We are pleased to share that Climate Change Action Plan implementation funding is now part of the Commission's budget in Oregon and Washington.

Climate Change Action Plan Priorities

The Climate Change Action Plan identifies ten priorities for climate adaptation and mitigation in the National Scenic Area:

- Carbon Sequestration in Natural and Working Lands
- Cold Water Refuge Streams and Riparian Habitat
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure
- Fire Risk
- High Climate Resilient Areas
- Inclusive Climate Action
- Oregon White Oak Woodlands
- Regional Transportation
- Tribal Treaty Rights
- Wetlands

Each priority has associated goals, strategies for approaching the priority topic, and detailed actions the Commission intends to take or support others to accomplish. The full list of goals is included in the accompanying 2024 Climate Action Annual Report Appendix on page 12.

2024 Overview of Efforts

In 2024, staff prioritized work on the 2025 goals in the Climate Change Action Plan, recognizing that other goals have 2030 and 2035 outcome dates. In some cases, 2025 goals serve as intermediate steps toward achieving longer-term goals in the Action Plan. Below are key highlights that are described in more detail in the accompanying report:

- Outreach and coordination with Tribes and partner organizations to increase public awareness of the importance of Tribal Treaty Rights and First Foods in the National Scenic Area
- Assessment of key planning and policy issues affecting Oregon white oak habitat
- Collaboration with Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team to develop climate equity goals, actions, and outreach initiatives to engage with community members most impacted by climate change in the Gorge
- Inventory and map of wildfire risk reduction efforts across the National Scenic Area
- Map of existing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and development of policy approaches for EV infrastructure as a review use in the Management Plan
- Installation of a flow monitoring gage on the Little White Salmon River, an important cold water refuge stream, as part of the Vital Sign Indicators monitoring program
- Second Climate Stewards training course in spring 2025 to engage Gorge residents in local community and ecosystem resilience efforts supporting Climate Change Action Plan goals

In addition to the 2024 annual report, staff provides regular climate action updates to the Commission during Executive Director's reports and quarterly reports using a dashboard detailing staff work on climate action priorities in the current work plan timeline. These reports provide an overview of accomplishments, risks or emerging issues, staffing and resources, and projected next steps. Past quarterly reports are available at www.gorgecommission.org/initiatives/climate-change.

Climate Actions Integrated in Annual Work Planning

The Climate Change Action Plan includes 83 priority actions that intend to advance work toward identified climate action goals. As we implement this plan, some of these actions have become an ongoing part of how we work. In our effort to complete actions underway and initiate work on those not yet started, staff documents annually when specific actions are integrated into our overall program of work. The accompanying annual report incorporates several of these actions as part of “Ongoing Work” descriptions on climate action priority summary pages 3-8.

The table below lists priority actions in the Climate Change Action Plan that are now ongoing elements of the Gorge Commission’s operations and programs.

Priority	Action	Description of Ongoing Status
Carbon Sequestration in Habitats and Working Lands	Support the Forest Service and other partners in reducing unauthorized trails and soil disturbances that cause soil erosion.	Coordination with Forest Service to integrate VSI unofficial trails mapping in sustainable trails planning work
Cold Water Refuge Streams	Support projects that implement the EPA Cold Water Refuges Plan with letters of support or technical assistance.	Coordination with CRITFC and Yakama Nation to host annual Climate Stewards cold water refuges field trip
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	Continue coordination with state agencies implementing EV plans and policies.	Coordination with WA Department of Commerce and OR Department of Transportation
Fire Risk	Share resources and incentives with landowners and Gorge County planners. Encourage landowners to access grant funds and programs for small forest projects and Firewise activities.	Coordination with County planners and OR and WA partners providing defensible space assessments
Inclusive Climate Action	Continue working with The Next Door, Inc. to understand and be responsive to the interests and needs of Latino/Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities in the Gorge. Provide meaningful, convenient opportunities to contribute ideas.	Coordination with The Next Door, Inc. and Comunidades through PEAR Team
Inclusive Climate Action	Incorporate recommendations from the Oregon Climate Equity Blueprint. Through DEI work, better understand who is most impacted by climate change in the Gorge to inform future actions.	Integrated in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan

Priority	Action	Description of Ongoing Status
Regional Transportation	Encourage and actively participate in transportation convenings across the Gorge, including the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy.	Participation in Gorge Annual Transit Summit
Regional Transportation	Celebrate and share information about partner projects where transit or electric vehicle infrastructure benefits sustainable recreation and economic development.	Coordination with Mid-Columbia Economic Development District and Gorge Transit on annual VSI and climate action reporting
Tribal Treaty Rights	Complete staff trainings and educational opportunities to empower staff to work on behalf of Treaty Tribe interests on high-profile planning projects such as the Hood River Bridge replacement. Share resources with the National Scenic Area Planners network.	Provide annual educational opportunities for county planners and partners, such as Treaty Tribe presentations and Confluence Field School

Overview of the 2024 Annual Report

The attached annual report is intended to be a visually engaging summary of our work toward 2025 climate action goals that can be shared with different audiences. The report includes an overview of climate priorities in the Climate Change Action Plan, 2024 action updates, status of 2025 climate goals, and next steps for 2025.

When reviewing the annual report, please note that goal status updates are included for all 2025 goals with available data. One 2025 regional transportation goal does not have data available as currently written: “By 2025, the number of gas-powered single occupancy vehicle trips across the Gorge decreases from 2022 levels.” (See page 12 in attached report for full goal list.) Based on input from transportation partners, staff suggests updating this goal to better align with data collected for the region. During the April 8th Commission meeting, staff will present a proxy estimation for 2024 reporting on this regional transportation goal and welcomes feedback on this and other climate action goals.

Topics 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?

Columbia River Gorge Commission

2024
CLIMATE
ACTION
ANNUAL
REPORT

April 8, 2025

www.gorgecommission.org

Letter from the Columbia River Gorge Commission

The Columbia River Gorge Commission begins each meeting with a Treaty Tribe word of the day to ground our discussions in our recognition and appreciation of the living cultures of Indigenous peoples who have protected and stewarded the lands and waters of the Columbia River region since time immemorial. As we reflect on our climate action work in 2024, we share this Yakama word that expresses a theme of the past year: *pawyak'uk* which means to gather, congregate, and sit together. The outcomes described in this annual report reflect the coming together of many partners to listen, learn, and act collectively to achieve shared climate action goals in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

One of our overall goals for 2024 was sustainable funding to implement our Climate Change Action Plan. After meeting with the Oregon and Washington legislatures for two years, we finally secured appropriations in late spring 2024 to fund and implement this Action Plan. Special thanks to all who supported our efforts to make climate action an additional and integral part of our 2024–2025 biennial budget.

We created this Action Plan with the input and interests of various organizations and communities across the Gorge. We have continued this collaborative spirit into implementation. Here are just a few of the powerful partnerships in 2024 that help extend the reach of our work beyond what we can do alone:

- We hired three Climate Fellows to complete projects supporting our goals for climate equity, fire risk, and electric vehicle infrastructure priorities in the Action Plan. Special thanks to fellows, Sophia Caesar, Sydney Tamplin, and Colin Jarvis, for their teamwork and contributions highlighted in this report.
- The USDA Forest Service, our co-managers of the National Scenic Area, completed 285 acres of forest thinning and prescribed burning in 2024 to improve habitat conditions for wildlife and reduce wildfire risk, a climate action priority.
- Our Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) team is collaborating with staff to develop climate equity goals, actions, and outreach initiatives to engage with communities most impacted by climate change in the Gorge.
- The Tribal Treaty Rights priority in the Action Plan elevates the Commission's commitment to working with the Columbia River Treaty Tribes on climate change solutions that protect and enhance the lands, waters, and cultural practices of this region. In 2024, we heard from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Nez Perce Tribe about their climate change work, participated in First Foods workshops hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Gorge Stewardship Network, and partnered with Confluence Project to host Field School, an online learning series focused on Indigenous speakers from the Columbia River region.
- Climate Corps Fellow, Colin Jarvis, is leading our coordination efforts for a second Climate Stewards training course in spring 2025. Climate Stewards are helping to carry out climate action priorities in communities across the Gorge.

As you will see in this annual report, the Climate Change Action Plan identifies regional goals that connect the Gorge Commission's role and opportunities for action with those of strategic partners. It includes goal status updates for each of the key climate action priorities in our 2024–2025 work plan. We also celebrate the much anticipated launch of the Vital Sign Indicators online reporting platform in mid-2025. We will soon be able to track changes in key indicators and tell the story of change in the National Scenic Area, including the impact of our collective climate action efforts.

We are deeply grateful to all those we have collaborated with in 2024 and are ready for the challenging work in front of us. We hope you will join us to make this next year of climate action even more inclusive and impactful.

Sincerely,

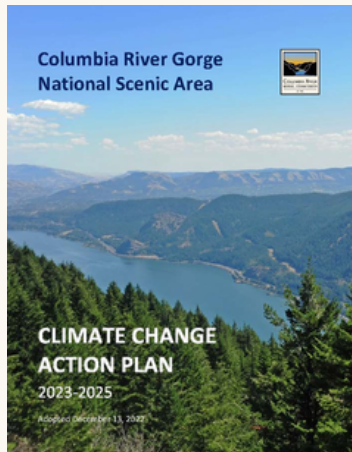
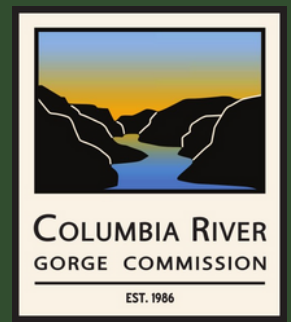


Michael Mills, Chair
2024–2028 Hood River County Appointed Commissioner



Jerry Meninick, Vice Chair
2023–2027 WA Governor Appointed Commissioner

Climate Action in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area



The **Climate Change Action Plan** is a regional guide to climate action in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The Action Plan includes priorities for adaptation (adjusting to climate change impacts) and mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing storage of carbon in habitats and working lands).

This report highlights key accomplishments, ongoing work, and goal status updates for the 2024–2025 climate action work plan priorities, described on page 2. Below is a summary of all 10 climate priorities in the Action Plan. A full list of the goals for these priorities is included in the appendix on page 12 of this report.

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



2024-2025 Climate Action Work Plan Priorities

In 2024, we focused on building capacity to fully implement the Climate Change Action Plan by seeking dedicated climate funding. After meeting with the Oregon and Washington legislatures for two years, we finally secured appropriations in late spring 2024 to fund and implement the Action Plan. Thank you to all who supported this effort!

For 2024–2025, we identified 5 key work items to focus on to accomplish our climate goals for 2025, summarized below. We were able to make incredible progress towards these goals through the hard work of three Climate Fellows—Sophia Caesar, Sydney Tamplin, and Colin Jarvis—who were hired to support specific projects focused on climate equity, fire risk, and electric vehicle infrastructure priorities. Learn more about Commission Climate Fellows on page 11.

Each of the 2024–2025 work plan priorities supports one or more of our 2025 climate action goals as shown below. Some goals focus on concrete actions, while others involve regional coordination and collaborative efforts that have become an ongoing part of our work. On the pages that follow, you will find a summary for each of the climate action priorities we focused on in 2024 to meet 2025 goals and to lay the groundwork for meeting future goals. For the Fire Risk summary on page 6, we also provide an update on our 2030 goal for community fire adaptation efforts in addition to the 2025 goal listed below.

2024-2025 Climate Action Work Plan Priorities

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

Develop Oak Policy Options and Supporting Maps

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

Develop Fire Adapted Communities Regional Inventory and Map

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

2025 Goals

Goals, Strategies, and Policy Approaches for First Foods

Oak Habitat Maps and Policy Options

DEI Plan in Place with Climate Equity Goals and Actions

2,200 Acres of Fuels Reductions Complete

DC Fast Charging Stations Available

Locations and 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



Tribal Treaty Rights: First Foods Protection

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

Status: Our efforts in 2024 have focused on continued coordination with Treaty Tribes to improve public awareness of Treaty Rights and the importance of First Foods and associated habitats in a changing climate. Building on input from Treaty Tribe staff and Tribal members engaged with our PEAR Team, we are planning staff-to-staff meetings with Tribes and regional land manager discussions in 2025 to develop strategies to strengthen First Foods protection and Tribal access in the National Scenic Area.

2024 Action Summary

- Partnership with Yakama Nation to support First Foods outreach and cold water refuge monitoring as part of EPA Government-to-Government Environmental Justice grant. (Note: As of January 2025, funds are paused and team is exploring alternative funding sources for specific projects.)
- Coordinated with the Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to provide climate change and Treaty Rights presentations to the Commission.
- Participated in Columbia River Festival of Nations gathering in June and Gorge Stewardship Network First Foods workshop led by Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) staff in November.
- Presented on Climate Change Action Plan and Vital Sign Indicators Monitoring Program to Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) in December.

Ongoing Work

- Coordination with Treaty Tribes to develop First Foods protection strategies and provide ongoing educational opportunities for planners and partners.
- Collaboration with Gorge Stewardship Network to develop First Foods educational opportunities for land and recreation managers.



First Foods Workshop (Photo credit: CTUIR)



Festival of Nations (Photo credit: Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance)



Gorge Commission Presentation to CRITFC



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: We are coordinating with USDA Forest Service Ecologist, Doug Glavich, to complete a detailed oak map to track habitat changes over time. This map will be part of the Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) online reporting platform available in summer 2025. We are working with state wildlife agencies to identify important oak habitat corridors as part of this mapping effort. In 2024, we also initiated a staff assessment of oak policy issues to better understand the main needs and challenges that County, Forest Service, and Commission planning staff encounter when reviewing development proposals in oak habitat. As background for future Commission discussion of this assessment, East Cascades Oak Partnership (ECOP) provided a presentation to the Commission in March 2025 highlighting the importance of oak habitat and partner efforts to conserve and monitor oaks in this region. We plan to share assessment findings with the Commission this summer, gather feedback, and provide recommendations on potential policy priorities in fall 2025.

2024 Action Summary

- Developed preliminary Oregon White Oak Woodlands content for VSI online reporting platform. (See page 9 for more on VSI.)
- Conducted workshops with county, Forest Service, and Commission planning staff to develop draft staff assessment of oak policy issues that will inform Commission discussion of potential policy priorities.
- Supported field testing for East Cascades Oak Partnership's Condition Assessment Tool available to managers and landowners in the Gorge.



Condition Assessment Tool field test day with East Cascades Oak Partnership (Photo Credit: ECOP)

Ongoing Work

As a core member of East Cascades Oak Partnership (ECOP), we share best management practices, educational resources, and mapping and monitoring tools with interested landowners and county planning departments in the National Scenic Area.



Inclusive Climate Action

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

Status: Building on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Framework approved by the Commission in December 2022, we have been working with our Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team of community leaders to develop climate equity goals, actions, and outreach strategies with a focus on protecting First Foods and reducing fire risk for communities most impacted by climate change in the Gorge. An equity audit of the Management Plan completed this summer will help inform our work. We are on track to share climate equity recommendations with the Commission by the end of 2025.

2024 Action Summary

- Convened quarterly PEAR Team meetings to learn about community interests, incorporate feedback on Commission efforts, and identify collaboration opportunities and resources for shared priorities.
- Partnered with Confluence Project to host Field School, an online learning series focused on Indigenous speakers from the Columbia River region. Forty people participated from various agencies, county planning departments, and community organizations across the Gorge.
- Planning second Columbia Gorge Climate Stewards community training course for April-June 2025.

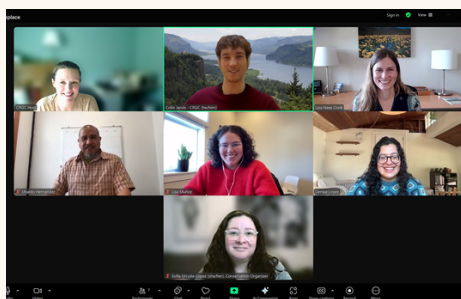
Ongoing Work

- Collaborating with PEAR Team community partners to engage Latino/Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities in the Gorge through outreach events such as Latino Conservation Week anticipated in Fall 2025.
- Developing Climate Stewards informational newsletter and coordinating gatherings to foster an active community of practice in the Gorge.

Special thanks to PEAR Team community members and Confluence Project for their partnership this year!



PEAR Team Participating Members



PEAR Team Virtual Meeting



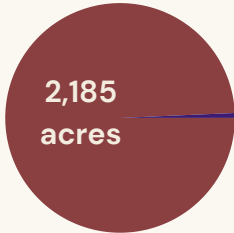
Confluence Field School



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 treatments completed on National Forest System lands in 2023 and 2024 toward 2025 goal. Includes thinning and prescribed burning. Reporting focuses on Forest Service treatments, since comprehensive data across land ownership is not yet available.



Only 15 acres of fuels treatment remain to meet 2025 goal

Right: USDA Forest Service prescribed burning training



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 the National Scenic Area in 2024. Firewise USA is a national program that helps communities prepare for wildfire and reduce risk of damage to homes. To become a Firewise USA Site approved by the National Fire Protection Association, a community (minimum of 8 and maximum of 2,500 dwelling units) completes a wildfire risk assessment, community outreach, and other action steps.

- Firewise USA Sites** (within NSA in red)
- 1 Nelson Creek Watershed Cooperative
 - 2 Stonegate HOA
 - 3 Rocky Ridge Court
 - 4 Prospect Montello Hood River
 - 5 Brislaw
 - 6 White Salmon Sterling Estates HOA
 - 7 Columbia Rim Owners Association
 - 8 Further Valley Vensel Roads
 - 9 Paradise Ridge
 - 10 Silva Ridge Water Group



2024 Action Summary

- 285 acres of fuels reduction completed on National Forest System lands in 2024.
- Developed inventory and map of wildfire mitigation and adaptation efforts in the Gorge.
- Completed draft defensible space informational handout for National Scenic Area residents to be finalized with partner input by summer 2025.

Ongoing Work

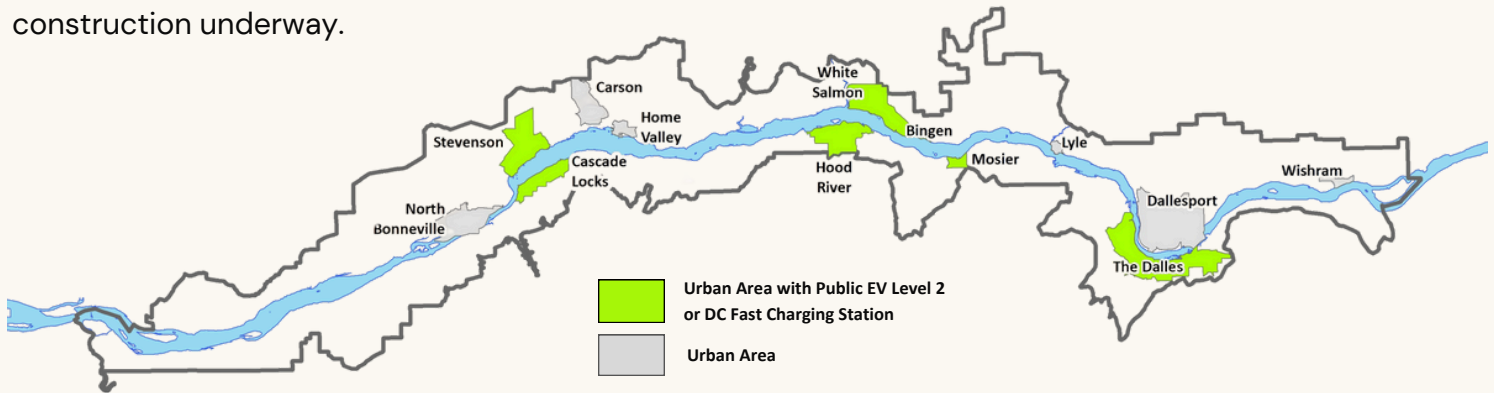
- Participate in interagency wildfire resilience coordination and education efforts including Hood River All Lands Partnership, Skamania County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Stakeholder Group, and WA Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network.



Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

Goal: By 2025, 50% of Urban Areas have public EV Level 2 or DC fast charging stations.

Status: Public Level 2 or direct current (DC) fast charging stations are available in 6 out of 13 Urban Areas in the National Scenic Area. Current total includes City of Mosier with charging station construction underway.



Goal: By 2025, Public EV direct current (DC) fast charging stations are available every 25 miles on Interstate 84 in Oregon and State Route 14 in Washington.

Status: On I-84, DC fast charging is available at least every 25 miles from Cascade Locks to The Dalles. On SR-14, DC fast charging is available in Washougal and unavailable throughout the remainder of the travel route in the National Scenic Area.



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

Status: We are continuing to track regional planning efforts that could shape a Gorge-wide strategy for EV infrastructure. Currently, there is not one strategy spanning different communities across the Gorge. The Hood River County Energy Council has developed a draft conceptual study of potential EV charging locations in Hood River County.

2024 Action Summary

Developed map of existing EV charging stations to support regional EV infrastructure planning and climate action goal reporting. Identified potential policy approaches for addressing EV charging stations as a review use to consider in next Management Plan update.

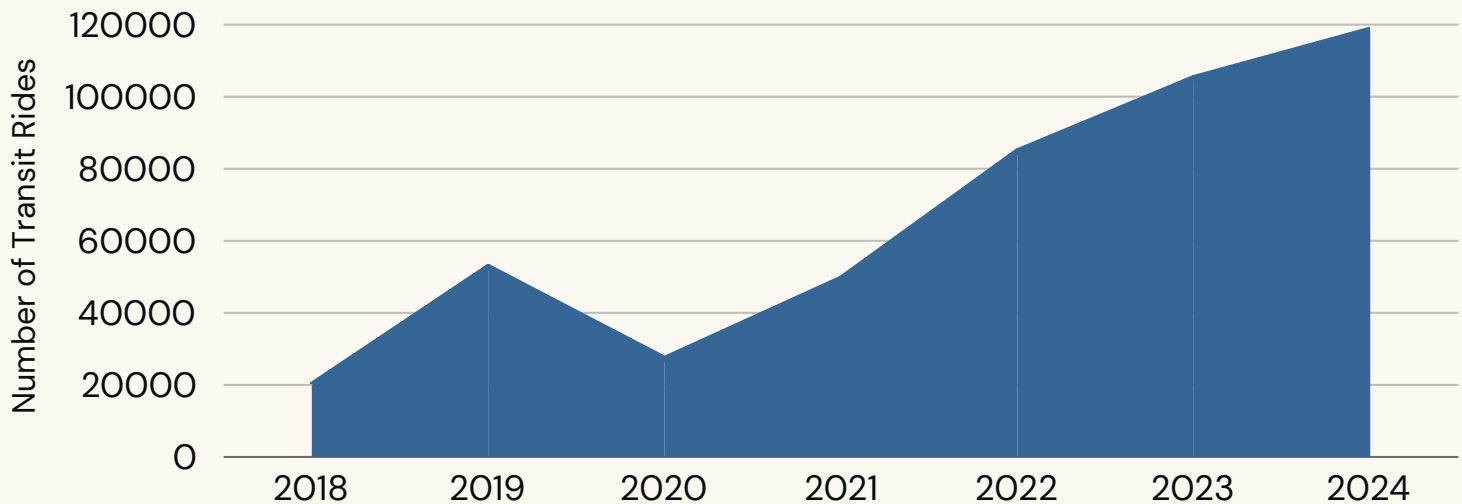


Regional Transportation

Our work to support regional transportation in the Gorge involves ongoing coordination with Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) and Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance (CGTA). We are pleased to share our first update on our 2025 transit ridership goal and extend special thanks to Kathy Fitzpatrick with MCEDD and Emily Reed with CGTA for their collaboration on this report.

Goal: Transit ridership increases annually from 2022–2025.

Status: Annual transit ridership has increased each year since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Annual total number of fixed route transit rides in the region includes Columbia Area Transit (CAT), Wasco County LINK, Mt. Adams Transportation Services (MATS), and Skamania County Transit.



Transit Rides are Trending Up: Here's Why

- **Service improvements:** New services like The Link fixed route and better route coordination have reduced transfer times.
- **Fixed route shift:** More dial-a-ride users now use fixed routes, boosting ridership and efficiency while lowering costs.
- **Increased awareness:** Expanded public outreach has improved recognition and usage of transit options.
- **Post-pandemic resilience:** The Gorge region's transit recovered faster than most U.S. systems after COVID-19.



The Columbia Gorge Express, the main transit option in and out of the Gorge on the Oregon side, experienced a 72% increase in annual ridership between 2021 and 2023.

Vital Sign Indicators Monitoring Program: Using Data to Advance Climate Goals

The Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) Monitoring Program helps us assess how well we are achieving Management Plan goals in the National Scenic Area. Vital Sign Indicators are measures that track trends and conditions over time.

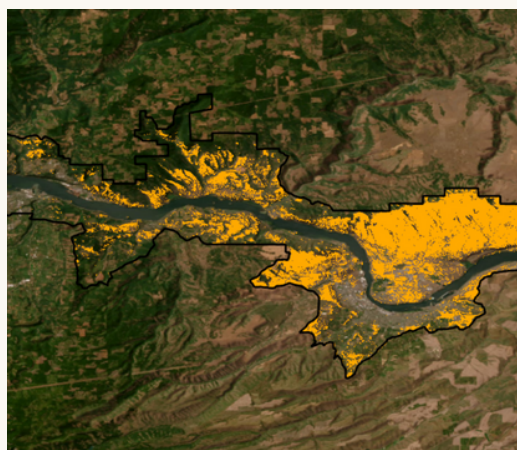
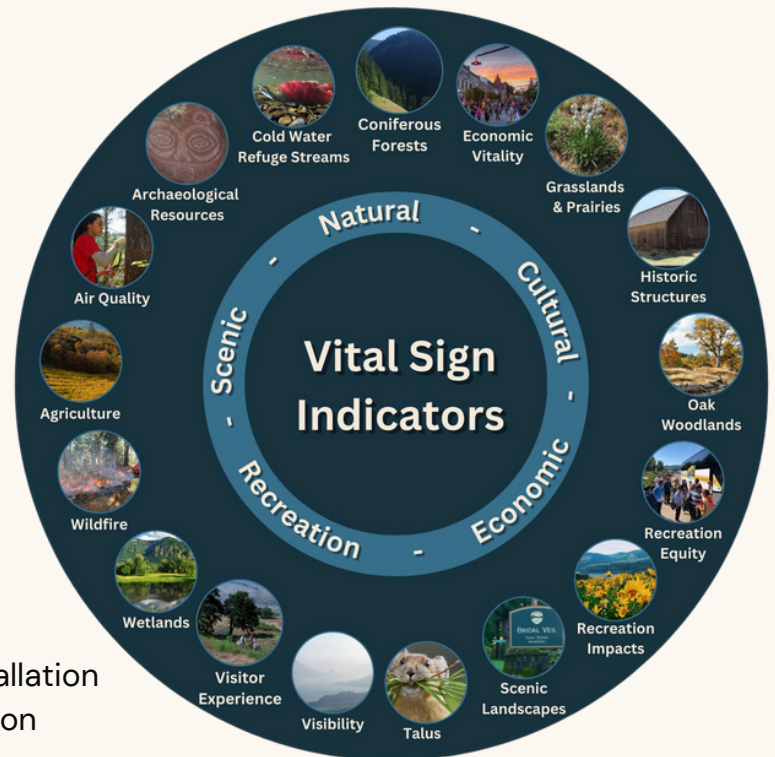
These indicators span a range of protected resources and habitats, and several of them serve as important progress measures towards goals in the Climate Change Action Plan. Cold Water Refuge Streams, Fire Risk, Oregon White Oak Woodlands, and Wetlands are all VSI and Action Plan priorities.

2024 Action Summary

Enhanced Water Monitoring: Supported the installation of a flow monitoring gage on the Little White Salmon River, a crucial cold water refuge, improving water management and conservation efforts (below left).

Improved Mapping Products: Coordinated with Doug Glavich, Ecologist with the USDA Forest Service, to develop a detailed mapping product to track habitat changes over time (below center).

Building a Centralized Data Platform: Designed an online reporting system to house and share datasets, making information more accessible to partners and the public (below right).



Oregon White Oak Woodlands
Indicators: Extent and Distribution, Land Cover Change

Definition: These indicators measure the total, average, seasonal distribution, and percent change of Oregon white oak woodland cover over time in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

PRELIMINARY

NATURE'S NETWORK: FROM TRUCKEE TO MICHIGAN, OREGON
WHITE OAK WOODLANDS SUSTAIN COLLEGE AND RESEARCH ECOSYSTEMS in the National Scenic Area. These hardy trees thrive in drought, fire, and insect infestations, providing shelter and food for countless wildlife species. In fact, you can find white oaks nowhere else on Earth—only here in the Pacific Northwest! By protecting these woodlands, we are also safeguarding clean air, healthy soils, fire fuels for recreation, scenic landscapes, and the native plants and wildlife that call them home—all while strengthening our communities for the future.

XX% Change in acreage of Oregon white oak woodlands in the NSA since 2005

27,207 Total Acres of Oregon white oak woodlands in the NSA in 2024

For more information on VSI, visit: www.gorgecommission.org/initiatives/vital-sign-indicators

2025 Climate Action Next Steps

Building on the collective efforts described in this report, we continue to collaborate with Tribes, agencies, organizations, and communities across the Gorge to accomplish our 2025 climate action goals, which we are on track to meet by the end of the calendar year. Our 2025 work plan focuses on key actions to meet these goals while laying the groundwork for 2030 and 2035 goal outcomes. Below are the main actions included in our 2025 work plan.

We also plan to share our first Vital Sign Indicators monitoring report on the health of the National Scenic Area in summer 2025.



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

Relationships with partners are the foundation of our climate work. We are grateful to all those who support climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation efforts in unique and necessary ways across the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and broader region. We look forward to our continued work together in the year ahead.

- 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
- 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

5

Our Climate Fellows

Special thanks to our three Climate Fellows for their hard work advancing projects across Climate Change Action Plan priorities.



Sophia Caesar

A Climate Equity Fellow from University of Southern California, Sophia was integral in supporting the PEAR Team and Inclusive Climate Action work.



Colin Jarvis

A Climate Corps Fellow with us for 10 months, Colin is leading the Climate Stewards course this Spring.



Sydney Tamplin

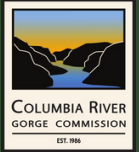
Drawing on her graduate studies in Environmental Public Policy, Sydney helped create Fire Adapted Communities and EV charger maps for the Gorge.

Interested in learning how you can support climate action in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area?

Learn more by visiting our website or contact Lisa Naas Cook with the Gorge Commission at Lisa.NaasCook@gorgecommission.org. The Commission typically meets by Zoom on the second Tuesday of every month, with a few hybrid meetings each year. All meetings are open to the public.

2024 CLIMATE ACTION ANNUAL REPORT

APPENDIX: GOAL LIST



Priority	Goal
Tribal Treaty Rights	By 2025, the Commission has identified specific goals, strategies, and policy approaches for First Foods protection and access, created with the Columbia River Treaty Tribes.
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	By 2025, public direct current (DC) fast charging is available at least every 25 miles along I-84 or SR-14, and 50% of Urban Areas have public Level 2 or DC fast charging stations.
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	By 2025, the gorge has a strategy for the desired locations and types of charging stations, and partnerships in place to implement them by 2030.
Fire Risk	By 2025, combined efforts on public and private lands in the NSA result in at least 2,200 acres of fuels reduction treatments. Fuels reduction includes thinning encroached or overstocked stands and prescribed burning. With support from the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network and multiple partners, the Commission will set long-term acreage targets based on forest types, Land Use Designations, and other considerations.
Inclusive Climate Action	By 2025, the Commission has completed a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan with specific, measurable, and timebound goals to advance climate equity.
Oregon White Oak Woodlands	By 2025, critical corridors for oak woodlands and deer habitat connectivity are identified and policy options are provided to the Commission. Through work with East Cascades Oak Partnership (ECOP), comprehensive oak habitat maps are available.
Regional Transportation	By 2025, the number of gas-powered single occupancy vehicle trips across the Gorge decreases from 2022 levels. This goal will be supported by transit, shuttle, and parking solutions.
Regional Transportation	From 2022-2025, transit ridership increases each year.
Wetlands	By 2025, baseline extent and condition for wetlands are established and support implementation of the Management Plan's goal of no wetland loss.
Carbon Sequestration in Habitats and Working Lands	By 2030, based on VSI monitoring and with partner input, the Commission has set goals for summer baseflows and winter high flows.
Cold Water Refuge Streams	By 2030, summertime water temperatures on NSA cold water refuge streams do not increase and are trending towards federal/state water quality standards for temperature
Cold Water Refuge Streams	By 2030, summertime water temperatures on NSA cold water refuge streams do not increase and are trending towards federal/state water quality standards for temperature.
Fire Risk	By 2030, at least six community-based groups in the NSA are leading community fire adaptation to prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire.
Oregon White Oak Woodlands	By 2030, based upon information generated through Goal 6, Oregon white oak woodlands and corridors in the NSA are maintained or improved.
Wetlands	By 2030, wetland extent and function are increasing. Based on VSI information, more detailed goals can be set at this time with targets for wetlands acreage and condition.
High Climate Resilient Areas	By 2035, 70% of high climate resilient areas are protected by conservation status, as defined in this plan.