

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Lisa Naas Cook, Climate Program Manager, Columbia River Gorge Commission
Sage Ebel, Vital Signs and Natural Resources Planner, Columbia River Gorge Commission
Casey Gatz, Resources, Planning, and Lands Staff Officer, USDA Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

DATE: July 9, 2024

RE: **Information Item*:** Climate Change Action Program and Vital Sign Indicators Monitoring Program Quarterly Progress Reports – July 2024

This memo provides an overview of progress on Climate Change Action Plan implementation and Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) monitoring program implementation using a standardized reporting template initially approved by the Commission in June of 2023 and adapted slightly to incorporate reporting elements from the Climate Change Action Plan Annual Report.

The purpose of the two quarterly reports that follow is to share progress on the key work items included in the 2024-2025 Work Plans for Climate Change Action and VSI programs, presented to the Commission in February 2024. As background, the attached report includes an overview of all climate priorities, the Climate Change Action Plan Implementation Actions for FY 2024-2025, and the 2024-2025 VSI Work Plan Timeline.

Staff welcomes questions on these quarterly updates at the July 9th Commission meeting.

For more information on Vital Sign Indicators and the Climate Change Action Plan, see the Gorge Commission website:

- Climate Change Action Plan: <https://www.gorgecommission.org/initiatives/climate-change>
- Vital Sign Indicators: <https://www.gorgecommission.org/initiatives/vital-sign-indicators>

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



Climate C
Action
Priorit

Climate Change Action Plan Implementation Actions FY 2024-2025

2025

2030

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



Goals, Strategies and Policy Approaches for First Foods



2,200 Acres of Fuels Reductions Complete



Oak Habitat Maps and Policy Options



Wetlands Extent and Distribution Mapping



DEI Plan in Place with Climate Equity Goals and Actions



DC Fast Charging Stations Available



Locations and Types of EV Charging Stations Identified



Gas Powered Vehicle Numbers Down



Transit Riders Increasing from 2022-2025

Develop Oak Policy Options and Supporting Maps

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

Begin Fire Adapted Communities Regional Inventory and Assessment

Coordinate with Partners to Develop a Strategy for EV Charging Station Locations in the Gorge



Carbon Sequestration Goals and Strategies



Summer Baseflows and Winter High Flow Goals Set



Summer water temps not Increasing



Oak Woodlands are Maintained or Improved



Wetland Extent & Function Increasing



6 Community Fire Adaptation Groups



Climate Change Action Program: July 2024 Quarterly Update

On Track	On Hold
At Risk	Complete
Off Track	











Goal(s)	Climate Action Priority Tasks for 2024-2025	Key Accomplishments	Next Steps	Status
<p>Goals, Strategies, and Policy Approaches for First Foods by 2025</p>	Continue Coordination with Treaty Tribe Staff for First Foods Protection and Associated Habitat Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs staff to explore opportunities to support Tribal priorities through Commission's 2024-2025 Climate Change Action Plan implementation funding. Identified two potential projects: Coordination support for Tribal youth program in the Gorge and cultural resource program staff support. Met with Confluence Project to discuss Indigenous restoration projects along the Columbia River and opportunities for collaboration on training and educational programs. Continued coordination with staff from Columbia River Treaty Tribes to discuss approaches for First Foods Protection, including Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs presentations to the Commission in summer-fall 2024. 	Continue coordination with Treaty Tribes to explore priorities for climate funding, including identified potential projects for Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.	
<p>Oak Habitat Maps and Policy Options by 2025</p>	Develop Oak Policy Options and Supporting Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated USFS-CRGC staff workshop to discuss Oregon White Oak Woodlands mapping and implementation guidance priorities to inform potential policy updates. Coordinating with USFS and East Cascades Oak Partnership on the development of a habitat scale map of oak woodlands to support climate and VSI efforts. 	Finalize oak habitat map for VSI. Coordinate with county planners and other partners to identify oak management priorities.	
<p>Climate Equity Goals and Actions in Established DEI Plan by 2025</p>	Develop Climate Equity Goals and Actions with Pro-Equity Anti-Racism Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in Festival of Nations in June: Distributed Cold Water Refuge brochure and hosted an Animals and Habitats of the Gorge game. Hired contractor to support meeting planning and facilitation for upcoming Pro-Equity Anti-Racism meeting focused on climate equity topics in the Climate Change Action Plan. Sophia Caesar, Summer Climate Fellow, will support the development of the DEI plan through a review, research, and coordination role. 	Convene PEAR team meeting in July/August. Climate Fellow to develop summary report and recommendations on incorporating climate equity goals in DEI Plan.	
<p>Six Community Fire Adaptation Groups by 2030</p>	Begin Fire Adapted Communities Inventory and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sydney Tamplin, Summer Hatfield Fellow, is working on an inventory of current wildfire risk reduction and community fire adaptation efforts across the National Scenic Area. Incorporated defensible space principles in Building in the Scenic Area Handbook update currently underway. Participating in stakeholder workgroup for development of Skamania County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. 	Hatfield Fellow to continue work on inventory and assessment. Collaborate with key partners to update defensible space in the NSA informational materials for landowners.	
<p>DC Fast Charging Stations Available, Locations and Types of EV Charging Stations Identified by 2025</p>	Coordinate with Partners to Develop a Strategy for EV Charging Station Locations in the Gorge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance and Mid-Columbia Economic Development Council on annual reporting for transit and EV charging station goals. Collaborated with Experience Mount Hood and the Gorge to attain map of existing and desired EV charging locations in OR portions of the Gorge. Serving on the Hood River County Energy Council County-Level EV Infrastructure Committee. 	Facilitate staff work session to explore how EV charging stations will be considered as a review use in the Management Plan. Continue to work on current Gorge EV charging station map.	

Challenges & Planned Action

Due to uncertainty of continued climate funding in WA, staff was unable to hire an additional 1.0 FTE to support Climate Change Action Plan implementation. In lieu of a full time FTE, summer climate and Hatfield fellows will work on discrete projects to move climate goals forward. Plans are underway to hire a 10-month climate fellow for the remainder of FY 2025.

Note: The climate actions above are the focus for 2024. An accomplishment summary for all ten priority goals in the Climate Change Action Plan will be provided in the 2024 Climate Action Annual Report.

2024-2025 Vital Sign Indicators Work Plan Timeline

	VSI Program Task	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	Jun 2024	Jul 2024	Aug 2024	Sep 2024	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025	Jun 2025
Commission Update					Progress Update			Progress Update			Progress Update				Annual Report			Progress Update	
Staff Work	Completing Monitoring Plans				 Monitoring Plans Completed for 7 Vital Signs		 Monitoring Plans Completed for 10 Vital Signs												
	Developing Reporting Platform							 Staff Workshop: Reporting Platform Design			 Reporting Platform Conceptual Designs Complete				 VSI Public Reporting Dashboard Complete				
	Data Collection & Reporting				 Partner Spotlight: Data Provider Presentation (Topic TBD)			 Partner Spotlight: Data Provider Presentation (Topic TBD)			 Partner Spotlight: Data Provider Presentation (Topic TBD)				 VSI Annual Reporting				 Partner Spotlight: Data Provider Presentation (Topic TBD)

Key:










Interim VSI Outcome










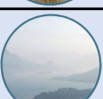


Completed VSI Outcome

2024-2025 Vital Sign Indicators Work Plan Timeline Targets

Vital Sign		Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	Jun 2024	Jul 2024	Aug 2024	Sep 2024	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	
	Agriculture				Monitoring Summaries Complete	Initial Data Compiled				Data Refined by CRGC				Integrate Data into Online Platform	VSI Annual Reporting	
	Cold Water Refuge Streams					Initial Temp Monitoring Design Complete	Temp Probes Installed	Historic Data Compiled			Flow Monitoring Design Workshop					
	Economic Vitality			Initial Data Compiled		Partner Spotlight							Data for 2024 Compiled			
	Oregon White Oak Woodlands					Initial Data Compiled				Data Refined by CRGC	Partner Spotlight (TBD)					
	Recreation Impacts on Other Protected Resources						Map Complete				Initial Analysis of Priority Impact Areas					
	Scenic Landscapes						Integrity Map Procured				Scenic Photos Utilization Workshop					
	Wetlands						Initial Data Compiled				Data Refined by CRGC					

Proposed Vital Signs to Sequence First in 2024

2024-2025 Vital Sign Indicators Work Plan Timeline Targets

Vital Sign		Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	Jun 2024	Jul 2024	Aug 2024	Sep 2024	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	
	Air Quality						Monitoring Summaries Complete	Partner Spotlight (TBD)	Historical Lichen Record Compiled			Precipitation Chem Data Compiled		Integrate Data Into Online Platform	VSI Annual Reporting	
	Archeological Resources												Data Compiled			Heritage Site Annual Update (USFS) TBD
	Conifer Forests									Initial Data Compiled						Data Refined by CRGC
	Grasslands & Prairies									Initial Data Compiled						Data Refined by CRGC
	Historic Structures												Data Compiled			Heritage Site Annual Update (USFS) TBD
	Recreation Equity										Public Transport Data Compiled		Fees Data Compiled			
	Talus					Pika Surveys Begin						Partner Spotlight (TBD)	Data Compiled			
	Visibility									Initial Data Compiled						
	Visitor Experience								Receive USDA Forest Service Data			Data Refined				
	Wildfire				Historical Fuels Data Compiled						Extent & Distribution Data Compiled		Fuels Data Received			



Vital Sign Indicators Program: July 2024 Quarterly Update

	On Track		On Hold
	At Risk		Complete
	Off Track		

	Program Tasks	Key Accomplishments	Next Steps	Status
	Developing Reporting Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff workshop to draft visualizations for each of the 17 indicators ESA provided a broadsheet for reporting platform options ranging from an additional webpage on the CRGC website to a comprehensive web application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft visualizations for each of the indicators and provide data to ESA for development of platform 	
	Indicator	Key Accomplishments	Next Steps	Status
	Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with Doug Glavich, Ecologist with Forest Service Northwest Oregon Area Ecology Program, on finalizing Special Habitats Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize land types for analysis 	
	Cold Water Refuge Streams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with partners (EPA, USGS, USFS, NOAA, and others) to discuss current state of temperature monitoring on streams in the NSA Purchased temperature sensors for installation on the Sandy and Klickitat Rivers Ongoing coordination with USFWS and Little White Salmon Fish Hatchery staff to reinstall temp and flow monitoring on the Little White Salmon River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siting analysis for Klickitat and Sandy Rivers followed by instrumentation installation Support USFWS with reinstallation of LWS Temp and Flow Gauge 	
	Economic Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation to Commission at April 2024 in-person meeting in the Dalles Coordinated meeting with MCEDD and Skamania EDC to discuss data application and visualization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize visualization plan 	
	Oregon White Oak Woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with Doug Glavich, Ecologist with Forest Service Northwest Oregon Area Ecology Program, on finalizing Special Habitats Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with ECOP to compare map products for mutual benefit Refine/combine map as needed 	
	Recreation Impacts on Other Protected Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received completed unofficial trails map data from the USFS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize visualization plan Workshop public facing reporting options for sensitive information 	
	Scenic Landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update monitoring plan summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with USFS staff to discuss visualizations and data applications 	
	Wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with Doug Glavich, Ecologist with Forest Service Northwest Oregon Area Ecology Program, on finalizing Special Habitats Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize visualization plan considering the comparatively small area of this habitat 	

*Key actions and accomplishment from the two program tasks shown in the 2024-2025 Vital Signs Indicator Work Plan that are not shown here (*Complete Monitoring Plans; Data Collection & Reporting*) are included within individual vital signs.



Vital Sign Indicators Program: July 2024 Quarterly Update

	On Track		On Hold
	At Risk		Complete
	Off Track		

Indicator	Key Accomplishments	Next Steps	Status
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explored visualizations for precipitation chemistry data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with USFS to obtain lichen monitoring dataset 	
Archeological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with Forest Service CRGNSA Heritage program staff; staff capacity challenges and a large data input backlog were discussed Brainstormed ideas for visual representations of sensitive data and yearly quality report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options for supporting additional capacity for data entry 	
Coniferous Forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with Doug Glavich, Ecologist with Forest Service Northwest Oregon Area Ecology Program, on finalizing Special Habitats Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support USFS staff as needed with ground truthing or other tasks 	
Grasslands & Prairies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with Doug Glavich, Ecologist with Forest Service Northwest Oregon Area Ecology Program, on finalizing Special Habitats Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support USFS staff as needed with ground truthing or other tasks 	
Historic Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with Forest Service CRGNSA Heritage program staff; staff capacity challenges and a large data input backlog were discussed Brainstormed ideas for visual representations of sensitive data and a yearly quality report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options for supporting additional capacity for data entry 	
Recreation Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of spreadsheet to track fees at recreation sites created in draft form Coordination meeting with the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance staff set to discuss Ready-Set-Gorge Dataset and data visualizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compile data, finalize visualization plan 	
Talus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in Pika Watch Training in White Salmon Purchased 30 air temperature monitoring devices in collaboration with the USFS and Cascade Pika Watch for deployment at monitoring locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize data application plan Support the installation of the temp monitoring devices 	
Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light Pollution Monitoring Locations are being finalized; permits for installation of monitoring equipment are being processed with the USFS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the installation of the monitoring equipment Create a visualization plan 	
Visitor Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on monitoring plan summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain Data 	
Wildfire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on USFS fuels reduction planning efforts Brainstorming data application questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain Data 	

Challenges & Planned Action

Timelines and actions for the VSI program are largely dependent upon partner collaboration. Staff will continue to coordinate closely with key partners to adapt to changing capacity and availability where possible.