



Office of the Washington State Auditor
Pat McCarthy

Accountability Audit Report

Columbia River Gorge Commission

For the period July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2023

Published October 31, 2024

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**Office of the Washington State Auditor
Pat McCarthy**

October 31, 2024

Krystyna Wolniakowski
Executive Director
Columbia River Gorge Commission
White Salmon, Washington

Report on Accountability

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you to promote accountability, integrity and openness in government. The Office of the Washington State Auditor takes seriously our role of providing state and local governments with assurance and accountability as the independent auditor of public accounts. In this way, we strive to help government work better, cost less, deliver higher value and earn greater public trust.

Independent audits provide essential accountability and transparency for Commission operations. This information is valuable to management, the governing body and public stakeholders when assessing the government's stewardship of public resources.

Attached is our independent audit report on the Commission's compliance with applicable requirements and safeguarding of public resources for the areas we examined. We appreciate the opportunity to work with your staff and value your cooperation during the audit.

Sincerely,

Pat McCarthy, State Auditor
Olympia, WA

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AUDIT RESULTS

Results in brief

This report describes the overall results and conclusions for the areas we examined. In those selected areas, Commission operations complied, in all material respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, and its own policies, and provided adequate controls over the safeguarding of public resources.

In keeping with general auditing practices, we do not examine every transaction, activity, policy, internal control, or area. As a result, no information is provided on the areas that were not examined.

About the audit

This report contains the results of our independent accountability audit of the Columbia River Gorge Commission from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2023.

Management is responsible for ensuring compliance and adequate safeguarding of public resources from fraud, loss or abuse. This includes the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls relevant to these objectives.

This audit was conducted under the authority of RCW 43.09.310, which requires the Office of the Washington State Auditor to examine the financial affairs of all state agencies. Our audit involved obtaining evidence about the Commission's use of public resources, compliance with state laws and regulations and its own policies and procedures, and internal controls over such matters. The procedures performed were based on our assessment of risks in the areas we examined.

Based on our risk assessment for the years ended June 30, 2023, 2022, 2021 and 2020, the areas examined were those representing the highest risk of fraud, loss, abuse, or noncompliance. We examined the following areas during this audit period:

- Land use monitoring and permitting
- Professional service contracts
- Compliance with general fund state appropriation
- Accounts payable – general disbursements

RELATED REPORTS

Financial

Our opinion on the Commission's financial statement is provided in a separate report, which includes the Commission's financial statement. That report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

We also perform an annual audit of the statewide basic financial statements, as required by state law (RCW 43.09.310). Our opinion on these financial statements is included in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). The ACFR reflects the financial activities of all funds, organizations, agencies, departments and offices that are part of the state's reporting entity. The results of that audit are published in a report issued by the Office of Financial Management in December of each year and can be found at www.ofm.wa.gov.

Federal programs

In accordance with the Single Audit Act, we annually audit major federal programs administered by the state of Washington. Rather than perform a single audit of each agency, we audit the state as a whole. The results of that audit are published in a report issued by the Office of Financial Management in March of each year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Columbia River Gorge Commission serves as the primary regional land use planning and regulatory agency and one of the chief stewards of a national treasure – the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, in partnership with Washington, Oregon, six counties, thirteen communities, the United States Forest Service, the four Native American Treaty Tribes, residents and citizens. Created under the National Scenic Area Act of 1986 and an interstate compact between Washington and Oregon, the bi-state Commission is mandated to protect and enhance the scenic, natural, cultural and recreational resources of the Columbia River Gorge and to protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area by encouraging growth in existing urban areas and by allowing economic development consistent with resource protection.

Among its many roles, the Commission develops and implements policies for land use and resource protection and is responsible for coordinated and consistent implementation of the National Scenic Area Management Plan and land-use ordinances adopted by the counties. The Commission is also responsible to hear and resolve appeals of land-use decisions in the National Scenic Area. The Commission's programs are based on its federal statutory responsibilities described by the National Scenic Act, and in the bi-state Columbia River Gorge Compact.

The mission of the Columbia River Gorge Commission is to establish, implement, and enforce policies and programs that protect and enhance the scenic, natural, recreational and cultural resources of the Columbia River Gorge, and support the economy of the area by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and allowing economic development consistent with resource protection. The Commission operates on a 2023-2025 biennial budget of approximately \$2.6 million.

Contact information related to this report	
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Information current as of report publish date.

Audit history

You can find current and past audit reports for the Columbia River Gorge Commission at <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

ABOUT THE STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE

The State Auditor's Office is established in the Washington State Constitution and is part of the executive branch of state government. The State Auditor is elected by the people of Washington and serves four-year terms.

We work with state agencies, local governments and the public to achieve our vision of increasing trust in government by helping governments work better and deliver higher value.

In fulfilling our mission to provide citizens with independent and transparent examinations of how state and local governments use public funds, we hold ourselves to those same standards by continually improving our audit quality and operational efficiency, and by developing highly engaged and committed employees.

As an agency, the State Auditor's Office has the independence necessary to objectively perform audits, attestation engagements and investigations. Our work is designed to comply with professional standards as well as to satisfy the requirements of federal, state and local laws. The Office also has an extensive quality control program and undergoes regular external peer review to ensure our work meets the highest possible standards of accuracy, objectivity and clarity.

Our audits look at financial information and compliance with federal, state and local laws for all local governments, including schools, and all state agencies, including institutions of higher education. In addition, we conduct performance audits and cybersecurity audits of state agencies and local governments, as well as state whistleblower, fraud and citizen hotline investigations.

The results of our work are available to everyone through the more than 2,000 reports we publish each year on our website, www.sao.wa.gov. Additionally, we share regular news and other information via an email subscription service and social media channels.

We take our role as partners in accountability seriously. The Office provides training and technical assistance to governments both directly and through partnerships with other governmental support organizations.

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