

Columbia River Gorge Commission

I am a resident of The Dalles and live in the area by Rowena that was recently devastated by the wildfire. Although my house is still standing, most of my neighbor's houses are not. It was a very traumatic experience that has shaken my resolve to live here.

Even though I can appreciate what the committee is trying to do, I think that they miss the mark for the people who live here. The Gorge Commission's strict regulations on homes and property have undermined homeowner's ability to protect their interests in the event of a wildfire.

- 1) Eight years ago, we found an old house that we liked that was located in the Scenic Area. We chose to remodel, and in this process, we were told by the Gorge Commission that we could not have a metal roof. We asked this question repeatedly and were told we could not because of the shine it would create for cars driving down I-84. Our house is not visible to eastbound traffic, and for traffic headed westbound it would be visible if you were really paying attention about 5 seconds.

In the event of a wildfire, research shows that metal roofs are one of the safest material that you can have in wildfire prone areas. If the Gorge Commission wants to protect the beauty of this area, burned houses are not the way to do it. It is far less pleasing to look at the debris left by a house that has burned to the ground than the reflection from a metal roof.

- 2) The Gorge Commission also stipulated we had to plant a certain number of trees and we could not cut down other trees without approval. Is the Gorge Commission considering what is best for the homeowner in the event of a wildfire? Or are they just concerned with the beautification of the area?

The Gorge Commission has a responsibility to ensure that the residents within its boundaries can take the necessary precautions to protect their house and property from wildfires.

- 3) As a public entity protecting our Gorge, you also have a responsibility to protect the people who live here, not just land use monitoring. Have you toured the area affected by wildfire and talked to the residents? What changes are you going to take to minimize these devastating results in the future? Are any policies going to change? This topic wasn't even on your agenda for today.
- 4) Does the Gorge Commission have any jurisdiction over the railroads that come through our area? What are you going to do about their involvement in these fires that keep recurring? Why do you have strict regulations over the people who reside here, but take no action over entities, like the railroads, who use and abuse it. We have had oils spills and wildfires caused by the railroad and they are allowed to come back and do this repeatedly. Not to mention the mile long shiny railroad cars that come through here daily.
- 5) The Village of Rowena and Hwy 30 Residents just want to be able to protect their property the way that they see fit, period!! which is going to be better than someone who doesn't live here and see what we go through every fire season. We are private people and just want what every homeowner should have: the right to decide what happens on their property that they own. We bought it, you did not. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to buy our home and property and want to protect it to the best of our ability. The Gorge Commission's interests are in direct opposition ours as homeowners. Please hear our side of the story.

The interests of the homeowners should be factored into every decision that you are making. Moving forward, we want some of these stipulations to be relaxed so that when homeowners rebuild from this devastating wildfire or choose to live in this area that they can do what they need to protect their homes from wildfires.

Thank you for your time and we welcome any input that will address the comments brought before you.

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