



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Land Conservation and Development

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September 8, 2025

Columbia River Gorge Commissioners and Staff

Columbia River Gorge Commission

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[Sent by email to Executive Director Krystyna Wolniakowski at [krystyna.wolniakowski@gorgecommission.org](mailto:krystyna.wolniakowski@gorgecommission.org) and Connie Acker at [cacker@gorgecommission.org](mailto:cacker@gorgecommission.org)]



Subject: Comment on Disaster Recovery Concepts Staff Report

Greetings Gorge Commissioners and Director Wolniakowski.

The Department of Land Conservation and Development wishes to express its condolences for the damage incurred this wildfire season. Affected residents have suffered deeply personal losses, some will prove irreplaceable. The landscape level impacts to sensitive and protected resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area are tragic. These conditions touch us all.

The department has recently participated in the state and county recovery meetings for the Rowena Fire in Wasco County and has connected with Klickitat County Community Development following the Burdoin Fire. These fires have resulted in immediate hardships for many gorge residents and provoked significant land use discussions regarding the challenges posed by current rules to allow for expedient recovery.

This letter intends to provide support to your decision-making process in which wildfire recovery strategies and corresponding rulemaking efforts are considered. The department supports the findings and recommendations of your September 9, 2025 staff report entitled: "Introducing Concepts for Plan Amendments to Clarify and Address Landowners' Needs for Disaster Recovery".

As referenced in the staff report, the state of Oregon underwent rulemaking for similar reasons following the catastrophic Labor Day Fires of 2020. State rules were amended temporarily to allow replacement home applications for five years instead of the typical two. The department has learned from experience that this amount of time is insufficient for many residents grappling with grief, language barriers, septic and other infrastructure damage, insurance policy battles, lack of insurance, lack of funds, securing builders, and other considerations. If the Gorge Commission pursues a similar rule, the department recommends providing more than five years for the receipt of replacement applications.

The department supports the staff report summaries of rule and opportunities, including the use of temporary structures and recreation vehicles needed to house displaced residents and their livelihoods while they pursue permanent recovery measures.

The department supports the prioritization of the proposed plan amendments to ensure land use regulations remain responsive to community needs and goals, including those of resilience and prosperity. Furthermore, cherished Gorge landscapes and sensitive resources will only benefit from thoughtful short and long-term recovery strategies.

The department is available for partnership and technical assistance at the Commission's request. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this matter.

Sincerely,



Gordon Howard  
Community Services Division Manager

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