

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission
FROM: Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director
DATE: July 8, 2023
SUBJECT: **Work Session*:** DRAFT 2025-2027 Work Plan Priorities

Summary

The Gorge Commission staff is proposing workplan priorities for the 2025-2027 biennium for Commission discussion. Staff recommends the Commission continue the priorities submitted to the two Governors and legislatures with some modifications based on the biennial budgets that were approved during the 2025 legislative sessions for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027. Even with a reduction from the Gorge Commission's original budget request, staff will continue to move forward by implementing the mandatory non-discretionary responsibilities of our agency and those specifically funded by the legislatures.

Funding approved from both states for the 2025-2027 biennium includes fixed operational and administrative costs, Commissioner expenses, and climate program work. The states did not provide the dedicated funding for Klickitat County Planning, Phase 3 Access Database Replacement, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work which was previously funded. Staff intend to seek additional funding in winter/spring 2026 during the supplemental legislative sessions in both states to request funds to cover some of these unfunded Commission priorities.

To meet the budget limitations, staff members will be reducing their work hours to a four-day work week, and we will close the office on Fridays. *We will have the equivalent of 8.25 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) funding to cover the Commission's 10 staff positions.* There will be no layoffs, which prevents loss of staff expertise and experience. Reducing staff hours will allow us to continue working on, and completing, our agency's responsibilities. However, tasks will be stretched out over more time and take longer to complete. We will be exploring ways to become more time efficient and to maximize productivity by implementing cost and time-saving measures. Some discretionary work that was envisioned to begin in the 2025-2027 will need to be postponed until the 2027-2029 biennium or later when more resources will become available.

Some of the same 2023-2025 Commission Initiatives will continue in 2025-2027. Attached is the 2025-2027 Work Plan submitted to the Oregon and Washington Governors as part of the Commission's biennial budget requests. However, this version of the Work Plan is adjusted to describe the work that can be accomplished with current 8.25 staff resources.

Staff Recommendations for Commission Work Plan Priorities - 2025-2027 (details for tasks within categories are in the attached workplan for 8.25 FTE)

The National Scenic Area Act, Bi-State Compact, and Commission Bylaws specify and imply many functions and tasks for the Commission. Given day-to-day administrative work, specific requirements from both states, day-to-day planning and legal work, maintaining our technology, and other non-discretionary work, we identified the following five categories of our work. The proposed Work Plan details the following allocation of staff time. As a guide, 1 FTE = approximately 2,000 hours per year.

Administration:	2.60
Planning:	2.10
Decision Support (Legal, GIS):	1.25
Outreach:	0.50
Commission Program Initiatives:	1.80

The FTE allocations for each category reflect that staff operate within multiple categories. For example, the 2.1 FTE for “planning” reflects that the planners also assist with Climate Change, VSI, Commission Initiatives, Legal, Commission meetings, etc.

What are the critical tasks for 2025-2027?

Administration, Legal, and Planning are the Work Plan categories of day-to-day required tasks. In addition to these, we will focus our work on the following Outreach and Commission Program Initiatives:

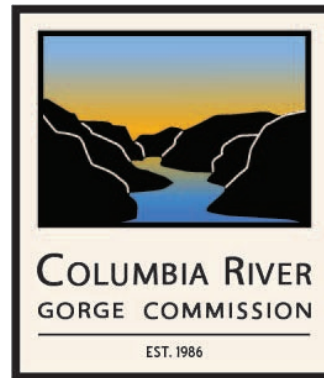
- ✓ Increase strategic outreach, information materials, conversations with counties, legislatures and the public through articles, public meetings, and in-person dialogues, work with Commissioners on social media protocol and content.
- ✓ Climate Change and Vital Signs Indicators
- ✓ Policy issues that the Commission has identified for research and counties have identified as critical, including (1) the Management Plan’s one year rule for replacement structures damaged or destroyed by fire, which past large disasters have shown may be too short; (2) agriculture income test for new dwellings on large-scale agriculture; and (3) ADUs in certain land use designations.

In addition, the work plan shows a decrease in the number of Commission meetings and staff attending Commission meetings, and an increase in staff focus on the four Commission Committees: Rules, Executive, Communications and Economic Vitality to reflect a reduced number of Commission meetings.

What will be put on hold or reduced?

- ✓ Continue to do, but reduce time for, Klickitat County permitting to avoid backlogs and delays, even without specific state or county funding.
- ✓ Postpone the design for the next Management Plan review process until the 2027-2029 biennium.
- ✓ Reduce the number of Commission meetings from 11 meetings per year to 6 or 7 meetings per year and limit staff attendance at Commission meetings to reduce staff workload and time commitments.
- ✓ Reduce the work related to the number of Vital Sign Indicator data collection, analyses, and collaboration with agencies to half-time.
- ✓ Put on hold Phase 3 of the Access Database Replacement project until funds are available (Phase 3 is conversion and migration of data to the new Enterprise Permitting & Licensing system).
- ✓ Reduce the number of PEAR meetings and other Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives until more funds are available to support the planning, policy development, and outreach work needed.

Columbia River Gorge Commission



Work Plan

2025-2027

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2027

(modified based on reduced budget)

2025-2027 Biennial Budget

		Oregon Share	Washington Share
2025-2027 Biennial Budget	\$3,122,000	1,561,000	1,561,000
Commissioners Funds	(40,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)
Joint Admin Budget	\$3,082,000	1,541,000	1,541,000

Joint Admin Budget	Total
Joint Admin Budget	3,082,000
Wages & Benefits	(2,458,238)
Operations	(623,762)

Program Area	Major Activity	General Description	Major Tasks	Staff Time	Notes
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10 Staff = 8.25 FTE

Finance and Administration				2.60 FTE	
	Oregon and Washington Budgets	Prepare and manage two budgets, one for each state's biennial legislative session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Commission priorities, anticipated workloads, and staffing needs for the biennium Prepare separate legislative budgets for submission to each state Prepare and submit agency budget allotment to both states following the completion of both states' legislative sessions Prepare and submit separate adjusted, legislatively approved budget for Oregon following the completion of each legislative session 	.30 FTE	This task requires dedicated time from the ED and the Finance and Administration Manager. The budget also requires time and travel of staff, Oregon and Washington contract fiscal staff, and commissioners
	Agency Reporting	Complete and submit required reports for each state	Prepare and submit annual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WA IT Security Report OR IT Security Report WA Asset Inventory Report OR Asset Inventory Report OR Risk Management/Disaster Plan WA Risk Management/Disaster Plan OR Performance Measures report WA Performance Measures report 	.20 FTE	Agency reporting requires time from the ED, Finance and Administration Manager, GIS manager, and other staff as needed
	Agency Audits	Complete and submit information as required to satisfy Oregon and Washington audits	Complete and submit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability audits Fiscal audits IT audits IT security audits 	.10 FTE	Agency reporting requires time from the ED, Finance and Administration Manager, GIS manager, and other staff as needed

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			Maintain records needed for various audits		
	Commission Meetings	Provides administrative and technical support for monthly Commission meetings and committee activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule facilities and services for regular Commission meetings • Prepare, submit, and process reimbursement forms for travel and stipends for all commissioners • Develop and distribute Commission meeting agendas • Prepare and distribute general information, updates, and Commission meeting packets • Record and prepare minutes for public meetings • Process and manage Commission personnel forms • Staff continuing education on open meetings laws. 	.50 FTE	<p>Commission support is provided primarily by the Finance and Administration Manager and Planners with strategic support from the ED, Legal Counsel, and Public Records and Administrative Analyst</p> <p>When all staff attend monthly Commission meetings, the FTE is approximately 1.0. Staff proposes to reduce the number of Commission meetings and staff attendance to use approximately .50 FTE elsewhere.</p>
	Commission Committees	Executive Comm. Communication Comm. Rules Comm. Economic Vitality Comm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate four Commission Committee meetings between Commission meetings monthly 	.40 FTE	<p>ED, Finance and Administration Manager, Public Records and Administrative Analyst, Legal Counsel, and other staff, as needed</p> <p>In 2023-2025, the Gorge Commission created three new committees. These require significant staff time to support.</p>
	Office Administration & Accounting	Track and report agency expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive, review, and authorize payment for agency bills • Prepare periodic reports to state fiscal offices 	.20 FTE	Finance and Administration Manager, with support and oversight from the ED –

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and file agency fiscal records as needed • Perform personnel functions, process personnel forms • Assist with coordination of agency contract's billing and reporting • Oversee agency state vehicle – report monthly mileage, coordinate maintenance • Order supplies and maintenance when necessary • Perform notary functions 		<p>note that the FAM is also doing the work of the administrative analyst. More capacity is needed to complete all the finance and administration tasks for two states.</p>
	IT and Website Maintenance	Maintain, repair, and update agency IT infrastructure and website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with IT consultants on major issues • Maintain hardware • Perform server backup • Provide IT support to staff • Troubleshoot first-tier IT problems • Assess and procure hardware and software/ESRI licenses (etc.) as needed • Create and maintain user accounts on server and for Microsoft 365 and Adobe • Update website frequently with new information, Commission agendas, etc. 	.10 FTE	GIS Manager and Finance and Administration Manager
	Staff Support	Provide daily support to staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal support: prepare and send letters to legal parties, set up files, process administrative records for appeals and litigation • Provide daily administrative coordination 	.20 FTE	Finance and Administration Manager

Program Area	Major Activity	General Description	Major Tasks	Staff Time	Notes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning support: set up new files for incoming DR applications, help with planning inquiries • Rules coordinator: submit required rule forms to states 		
	Public Records Retention and Response to Record Requests	File, manage, and produce agency records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to requests for public records within 5 days • Create a search plan to identify records responsive to each request • Gather responsive records and provide them to requestor • Create and update agency retention schedule • Organize and file agency records based on retention schedules • Identify records that have met retention periods and can be destroyed or sent to state archives • Assist with implementing EP&L • Continuing education 	.40 FTE	Public Records and Administrative Analyst with support from Legal Counsel and Finance and Administration Manager.
	CRGC Management	Overall agency management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes HR functions, staff meetings, annual reviews, workload management, and staff training 	.20 FTE	ED

Program Area	Major Activity	General Description	Major Tasks	Staff Time	Notes
Planning				2.1 FTE	
	Development Reviews	Accept and review development applications from landowners in Klickitat County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with applicants to ensure complete applications • Conduct site inspection • Draft staff reports and issue permits • Conduct post permit inspections to achieve compliance • Monitor Klickitat County permits • Identify and assist ED with compliance and enforcement issues • Draft notice of violations and other actions, conduct hearings • Enter development review data into EP&L 	.80 FTE	In 2023-2025, Washington funded 1.0 FTE for this work. This work will be reduced to .80 FTE and all planners will now be involved
	County monitoring and assistance	Oversee the implementation of the NSA regulations in NSA counties that have enacted an NSA land use ordinance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review development review applications and decisions in NSA counties • Provide technical assistance on request and when needed to ensure compliance with NSA regulations • Enter development review data into EP&L • Review county land use ordinance amendments • Quarterly meetings with county planners • Write and issue comment letters to NSA counties, as needed • Continue to develop a "Gorge Academy" to train NSA county planners 	.80 FTE	Planners, GIS Manager. There are usually more than 100 county NSA DRs to review each fiscal year; Legal Counsel assist with Gorge Academy
	Plan amendments and urban area boundary revisions	Assist landowners and counties in reviewing applications for plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer landowner and county questions about requirements for plan amendments and urban area boundary revisions 	0.0 FTE	Planners, ED, Legal Counsel, and GIS Manager

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		amendments and urban area boundary revisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist landowners and counties as requested to prepare NSA applications Review NSA applications, prepare staff reports, present and answer questions at Gorge Commission hearings on applications 		
	Forest practice reviews	Provide oversight for applications in the NSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review forest practice permit applications from OR and WA state forest management agencies and determine if located in the NSA Issue letters/evaluations if located in NSA and consistency with LUD 	.03 FTE	GIS manager -Very short turnaround time for reviews once received from the states' Forestry Departments
	Technical Assistance to Agencies	Provide advice, guidance, and support to county planning departments and other local, state, federal, and tribal officials on issues pertaining to the NSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to agency inquiries 	.07 FTE	Planners, GIS, and ED
	Economic Certifications	Review NSA economic development grant and loan applications as needed, usually quarterly from the Oregon Investment Board and the WA Investment Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review economic development grant and loan applications received from Oregon and Washington Investment Boards for consistency with NSA Act and with states' economic development strategies Write staff report and prepare certificate for signature Consult with city and county officials and other economic professionals as needed 	.05 FTE	Sr. Planner and ED
	Public inquiries/ Customer service	Provide information to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to phone calls, email inquiries, and walk-in customers 	.10 FTE	The Commission office currently offers customer service four days per week

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	Appeals	Provide information and assistance to the ED and Legal Counsel on any appeal of an NSA decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide background information to the ED and Legal Counsel • Consult with other agencies to gather additional information as needed • Assist with scheduling and preparation for hearings • Assist with preparing legal briefs and facilitating discussions on options 	.05 FTE	
	Emerging issues	Identify and track issues for ordinance amendments and next Management Plan review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify issues in the Gorge Commission's or a county's land use ordinance that require amending the ordinance or Management Plan. • Identify new issues in the Management Plan to address in the next plan review. • Identify emerging issues outside of the NSA and Management Plan to address in the next plan review (if needed). 	.10 FTE	This is work that the planners do as they discover issues in their day-to-day work
	Continuing education	Planners participate in continuing education to learn about land use issues and practices related to the NSA, and work towards AICP certification as professional planners		.10 FTE	

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Decision Support (Legal and GIS)				1.25 FTE	
	Commission and ED Support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise Commission, committees, and members, especially related to appeals that come before the Commission and all public records requests • Provide briefings and advice to Commission, ED, and staff on emerging data and legal issues • Assist ED in preparing for outreach meetings and communications. 	.25 FTE	
	Planning support	Assist with planning decisions and research for policy issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work directly with planning, climate change, VSI, and other staff as needed • Provide legal and geospatial research to assist with agency decision-making, <i>e.g.</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Development Reviews ✓ Policy issues ✓ Implementation of Commission priorities ✓ Administrative and Finance Reporting and Audits 	.40 FTE	Legal Counsel and GIS Manager (would also assist planners for plan amendments and urban area boundary revision applications if the Commission chooses to consider any during this biennium)
	GIS	Software and data upgrades to the agency's GIS system, analysis, and cartography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review satellite data into land use/land cover and perform analysis using these and other data to provide technical assistance for plan review • Acquire updated parcel and various natural resource data from counties and state agencies twice yearly • Develop and maintain application used by planners to evaluate 	.20 FTE	GIS Manager – this is basic maintenance only. Additional in-depth analyses and classification will require additional resources or be postponed until after the Access Database Replacement Project is completed. This will

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development reviews, work with county planners to refine this critical tool for DRs • Provide analysis and cartographic products to planning, VSI and legal as needed 		be a critical component of the next management plan review process.
	Appeals of land use decisions to the Commission	Receive and process appeals of county and ED decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist parties with appeal process • Handle legal filings and make recommendations to the Chair • Assist Commission in hearings and prepare final orders 	.15 FTE	Legal Counsel – planning two appeals per year as in recent years.
	Litigation and enforcement	File and respond to legal actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to claims against the Commission • File claims on behalf of the Commission • Participate in actions that implement Commission policy or impact the NSA. • Negotiate and prepare settlement agreements • Assist planners with notice of violations, other enforcement actions, and settlements 	.15 FTE	Expecting little litigation as in 2023-25 biennium
	Agency rules	Develop and amend Commission rules as necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft rule text and state forms for Commission action • Review proposed and adopted state legislation to keep Commission rules current • Lead staff for Rules Committee • Update several rules in 2025-26 	.10 FTE	Legal Counsel
	Continuing Education	Review new statutes, regulations, and case law to stay current; attend required continuing education courses; write on compact law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and monitor new statutory, regulatory, and case law and emerging issues that may affect the Commission • Serve as an advisor and writer on compact law • Attend required continuing legal education; speak at continuing 	As time allows	Legal Counsel and GIS

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			legal education programs when asked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS Manager stay current on software and new technical capabilities; attend ESRI trainings 		

Program Area	Major Activity	General Description	Major Tasks	Staff Time	Notes
Proactive Outreach				.50 FTE	
	Interagency and Gorge Meetings		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Forest Service meetings • Monthly State Agency Director meetings • Local government meetings (city councils and quarterly county commissions) • Tribes' meetings • Gorge Partner Meetings (MCEDD, OIB, WIB, etc.) 	.20 FTE	ED and all staff when directly related to projects – Commission to assist
	Governors and State Legislators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oregon Governor's Cabinet meetings in Salem (required in-person once per month and virtual once per month) • Washington Governor's meetings periodically • In-person and virtual meetings with Oregon and Washington legislators 	.10 FTE	ED
	Presentations about the NSA, conferences, and workshops	Meet state-mandated performance measure targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make presentations at professional conferences and trade associations, and conduct workshops about the Commission's work • Prepare press releases and other informational materials • Hold or assist commissioners' town hall meetings 	.10 FTE	All staff as needed
	Public meetings/ Communications		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend public meetings and interest group meetings 	.10 FTE	ED and staff
	Social Media		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research social media and public records retention policies and procedures • Outreach to Governors' offices and other state agencies 	?? FTE	Exploring options

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Commission Program Initiatives				1.80 FTE	
	Climate Change Action Plan	Work with four Treaty Tribes; state and federal agencies, counties, and community partners to implement a regional Climate Change Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Treaty Tribes to develop strategies for First Foods protection and access in the NSA • Develop maps and policy options for Oregon White Oak to inform the next Management Plan review process • Work with partners to implement fire-risk reduction strategies, support fire-adapted communities, and develop fire protection policy options for consideration in the next Management Plan review process • Coordinate with USDA Forest Service, OR and WA Governor's and state agencies to ensure alignment of Commission policies and practices with emerging federal and state climate focused initiatives 	.80 FTE	Climate Action Program Manager
	Vital Signs Indicators (VSI) Program – 2.0	Implement the new Vital Signs framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue compilation of data and analyses for VSI • Work with USDA Forest Service, and topic experts to determine how best to update, refine and monitor the indicators/utilize VSI as a tool during the next Management Plan review process • Refine the data hub for sharing key data and analysis for VSI • Perform spatial data analysis and progress reporting for climate adaptation and mitigation 	.50 FTE	GIS Manager and VSI Planner

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	Policy Deep Dives	Work on policy issues that the Commission has identified for research	<p>priorities in the Climate Change Action Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-year rule for replacement of structures damaged or destroyed by fire or other natural disaster may be insufficient time for large-scale disasters • Research agricultural income test for new dwellings on Large-Scale Agriculture; recommend policy changes if any • Research ADUs; where they may be permitted, conditions, and issues from other cities and counties' experiences 	.40 FTE	Planners, ED with support from GIS Manager and Legal Counsel
	Access Database Replacement Project Phase 3	Work with staff and software provider to implement the new EP&L cloud-based data management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect user feedback from planners regarding user experience • Identify and escalate bugs to Tyler Technologies support • Review of user guides and software training materials for new releases • Update workflow and custom field configurations based on user requests • <i>Configure custom document types in Tyler Content Manager and migrate non-planning related documents into TCM</i> • <i>Configure additional metadata fields for planning documents in TCM to improve searchability</i> • <i>Develop a process to integrate VSI data into a new software platform</i> • <i>Configure EP&L map to increase efficiency (i.e., adding more geo-rules)</i> 	.10 FTE	<p>GIS Manager, Public Records and Administrative Analyst, and Planners</p> <p>This shows a small amount of time that would be for the first four bullet points, which reflect maintenance and on-going use. <i>Italicized tasks possible with additional resources.</i></p>

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	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	DEI Workplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Management Plan to identify systemic inequities and policy changes that may be needed Hold PEAR meetings if time allows. 	If time allows	Systemic inequalities work will be integrated into the next Management Plan review process
	Plan Review	Prepare for next plan review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review issues that were unaddressed during Gorge 2020 review process and begin work to find ways to address them in the next Gorge 2030 Management Plan review process with counties, four Treaty Tribes, agencies, USDA Forest Service, and the public 	If time allows	