



TINA KOTEK  
GOVERNOR

September 5, 2025

Columbia River Gorge Commission  
57 NE Wauna Avenue  
White Salmon, WA 98672

Dear Chair Mills and Commissioners:

On June 11, 2025, the Rowena Fire swept through Wasco County, forcing immediate evacuations and displacing thousands of residents. The fire destroyed more than 56 homes, 91 accessory structures, and damaged vital community infrastructure. This devastating loss will continue to weigh on the residents of Rowena and Wasco County for years to come, and we must all do our part to help the community recover and heal from this traumatic event. The additional losses in the July Burdoin Fire just across the river in Washington State have compounded the effects and challenges.

In light of these disasters, I am writing to express my strong support for the joint Klickitat County and Wasco County proposed amendment to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Plan. The requested changes will modernize outdated provisions adopted in the 1980s and align them with Oregon's statewide best practices for disaster recovery. These amendments will:

- Streamline permitting for replacing dwellings damaged or destroyed by disaster;
- Provide flexibility in siting replacement homes within development;
- Extend timelines for rebuilding to reflect the realities of long-term recovery; and
- Allow temporary placement of RVs and accessory structures so families can remain on their property while they rebuild.

These amendments strike an appropriate balance between protecting the cherished scenic, cultural, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge and ensuring that residents can recover and rebuild their lives in a timely manner.

Events like the Rowena Fire require us all to step up and be nimble in response to the needs of our communities, and I ask the Commission to be a full partner in helping Wasco County, the Rowena Community, and impacted residents on both sides of the river to recover.

Columbia River Gorge Commission  
September 5, 2025  
Page 2

I urge the Columbia River Gorge Commission to act swiftly and adopt these amendments to the Management Plan and to be responsive generally to fire-related recovery matters. Doing so will support the recovery of the Rowena community and strengthen the Gorge's preparedness and resilience in the face of future wildfire events.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tina Kotek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tina" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Kotek".

Governor Tina Kotek

TK:zp