

Date: 15 December 2025

To: Columbia River Gorge Commission and Staff

From: Mary Repar
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Subj: Development Pressures on the Columbia River National Scenic Area (NSA)

Dear Commissioners and Staff,

The NSA and the Columbia River are being put under increasing development pressure from those who seek to use the Columbia River water. Data centers, alleged energy storage projects, small nuclear reactors, transmission lines in the Columbia River, all purport to be projects that will benefit—not us in the NSA!! And even if they did benefit us that does not mean that they are not environmentally destructive and have enormous cumulative effects.

The Gorge Commission needs to step up assert jurisdiction over these proposed projects and/or their environs. These projects all use the positive language that makes it seem as if they are good projects. As far as I and others are concerned, none of these projects are good for our environment or for creating energy that will actually be green and will help the NSA and its inhabitants leave the least footprints on the land that homes us. Most, if not all these projects look to be for data centers which produce a lot of heat and according to recent reports, can cause cancer. <https://www.techspot.com/news/110442-amazon-data-centers-linked-rare-cancers-miscarriages-oregon.html> Data centers are energy hogs. We can live without data centers. We can't live without clean water and other natural resources.

There are sand batteries that produce cleaner energy. “Polar Night Energy has built an industrial-scale Sand Battery in Pornainen for Loviisan Lämpö’s district heating network. The new Sand Battery delivers 1 MW of thermal power and offers a storage capacity of 100 MWh, making it ten times larger than the Sand Battery launched in Kankaanpää in 2022. The Sand Battery means a lot to Loviisan Lämpö. It allows us to drastically reduce our emissions and improve the reliability of heat production,” says **Mikko Paajanen**, CEO of Loviisan Lämpö. The Sand Battery is expected to reduce annual CO₂-equivalent emissions from the local heating network by around 160 tons, cutting climate emissions in Pornainen’s district heating by nearly 70 percent.” <https://polarnightenergy.com/news/worlds-largest-sand-battery-now-in-operation/>

There is also plug in solar: “What makes [plug-in solar systems](#) so unique is their size, price point, and simplicity. The panels can be mounted on a balcony or fence and easily transferred from one home to the next, making them a better option for renters and homeowners seeking electricity bill relief without the price tag and commitment of a large roof-mounted solar array. Basic kits include a set of solar panels, a microinverter, and connector cables. The panels convert sunlight into electricity during the day, while microinverters ensure that electricity can be used in the home. The systems plug into a regular household power outlet, meaning setup and installation are relatively simple.” <https://cleanenergy.org/news/what-to-know-about-plug-in-solar/> (Note: always check with your PUD and a expert electrician before using this option!)

Small nuclear reactors aren't any safer than big nuclear reactors and we do not need nuclear energy in order to produce green energy. We definitely do not need nuclear reactors near the Columbia River. (See Hanford and its radioactivity!!) "Amazon announced a partnership with [Energy Northwest](#) and [X-energy](#) to fund the development of advanced small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs) on land near the existing [Columbia Generating Station](#) along the Columbia River in Washington's Tri-Cities area, aiming to power its data centers with reliable, carbon-free energy, with initial operations targeted for the 2030s. The project is named the Cascade Advanced Energy Facility."

"Goldendale Energy Storage Project. Free Flow Power Project 101, LLC (FFP Project) proposes to build an off-channel energy storage system next to the Columbia River in Goldendale. The system would release water from an upper reservoir downhill to a lower reservoir to generate energy. Power produced would feed into the electrical grid at the nearby John Day Substation." <https://ecology.wa.gov/regulations-permits/permits-certifications/industrial-facilities-permits/goldendale-energy> This project would destroy indigenous cultural lands but it is being pushed ahead even though we have plenty of already drilled mining shafts all over America that could be re-purposed to generate energy!!

"The Cascade Renewable Transmission System is a proposed 320-kilovolt high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission line that would span approximately 100 miles between The Dalles and Portland. The majority of the HVDC line would be installed in the bed of the Columbia River using a Hydro Jet Cable Burial Machine, or "jet plow". The jet plow temporarily fluidizes sediment in an approximately 18-inch wide trench, places the cable in the trench, and allows the sediment to settle back over the cable, burying it at the prescribed depth in the riverbed. Where the cable cannot be buried, a concrete mattress or a rock berm would be used to keep the cable weighted down and protected from damage. An approximately 7.5-mile segment of the HDVC line would be buried in lands adjacent to the river near Stevenson, Washington to avoid the Bonneville Lock and Dam." <https://www.oregon.gov/energy/facilities-safety/facilities/Pages/CRT.aspx>

The Cascade Renewable Transmission proposal is definitely in the GC's jurisdiction and needs to be terminated as soon as possible. We are not digging up the Columbia River and raising toxic sediments and killing of the fish and other living things in the River!! This is a stupid project that should not have been proposed in the first place. The Columbia River is already overused and abused by the many human stressors put upon her. We're not digging out her bones to satisfy our human lust for power. Enough is enough.

This Planet Earth is our only home. There is no Planet B. The Gorge Commission should exercise its jurisdiction over any energy projects that are being proposed in the NSA. We are all being asked to do more with less. But if we don't stand up for our environment now less is what we will be left with and that is not acceptable for survival.

Thank you.

/e-signature/Mary Repar