



TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Lisa Naas Cook, Climate Program Manager, Columbia River Gorge Commission

DATE: May 12, 2026

RE: **Guest Presentations:** Introduction to Oregon Governor Kotek’s Executive Orders 25-26 and 25-29 and the Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy

Purpose

This memo provides background information on two guest presentations at the May 12th Commission meeting that are focused on the climate change policy landscape in Oregon and Washington. It also highlights key areas of alignment among these state-level initiatives and the Commission’s Climate Change Action Plan.

During this meeting, Geoff Huntington, Natural Resource Policy Advisor, and staff of the Governor’s Office, will present Executive Order 25-26: Directing State Agencies to Take Urgent Action to Promote the Resilience of Our Communities and Natural and Working Lands and Waters, and Executive Order 25-29 on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Advancing Oregon’s Clean Energy Future. Jimmy Kralj, WA Climate Resilience Strategy Planner, will discuss priorities in the Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy and efforts to strengthen outreach and coordination with local planning jurisdictions. Presenters and staff welcome questions and discussion during the May 12th Commission meeting.

Background on Climate Change Action Plan Priorities

The [Climate Change Action Plan](#) (Action Plan) identifies ten priorities for climate adaptation and mitigation in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. See summary graphic (right). *Climate adaptation* actions adjust to changing climate conditions in order to reduce risks to ecosystems, resources, and communities. *Climate mitigation* actions reduce the amount and speed of future climate change by reducing emissions of heat-trapping gases or removing them from



the atmosphere.¹ Many actions have both climate adaptation and mitigation benefits, such as reducing risk of catastrophic fire to forests and communities.

Each priority has associated goals, strategies, and actions detailed in the Climate Change Action Plan. Staff provided an overview of progress toward climate goals during the [2025 Climate Action Annual Report](#) presentation at the March 9, 2026 Commission meeting.

Oregon and Washington Climate Change Policy Landscape

Below is a brief summary of Oregon Governor Kotek’s Executive Orders 25-26 and 25-29 and the Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy. Key areas of alignment with the Commission’s Climate Change Action Plan are also noted.

While the Gorge Commission is not explicitly named as an agency in these state initiatives given our unique bi-state compact agency status, the Commission participates in ongoing executive level natural resource agency coordination in Oregon. In Washington, the Commission works with specific natural resource agencies on a case-by-case basis. The Commission’s climate action budget is also funded jointly by both states. Addressing climate change in a complex, multi-jurisdictional landscape such as the National Scenic Area requires ongoing coordination and engagement at various scales. For all of these reasons, it is important to understand the policy environment in both states to identify opportunities to work together with state agencies to leverage resources, data, and staff expertise to advance shared climate resilience goals for this region.

Executive Order 25-26: Directing State Agencies to Take Urgent Action to Promote the Resilience of Our Communities and Natural and Working Lands and Waters

Overview: [Executive Order 25-26](#) directs Oregon’s natural resource agencies to define key resilience attributes for lands and waters to scale up coordinated climate resilience strategies that benefit communities and ecosystems across the state. This EO addresses a range of natural and working lands and waters including forests, grasslands, farmlands, wetlands, and parks. EO 25-26 includes this definition of “climate resilience,” established by the Oregon State Legislature in House Bill 3409 (2023): “the capability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from significant climate-related threats while minimizing damage to social wellbeing, the economy and ecosystem functions.”

In March 2026, staff participated in the Design Workshop: Resilience Attributes for Oregon’s Lands & Waters, providing input on state-wide resilience attributes and metrics. EO 25-26 also requires development of a Plan for a Resilient Oregon (PRO) through collaboration with communities across the state. Staff joins the monthly PRO Statewide Resiliency Forum meetings to track progress on this plan. The anticipated completion date for the Plan for a Resilient Oregon is fall 2026.

Key Areas of Alignment: EO 25-26 and the Climate Change Action Plan

- **Cross-Agency Coordination:** A key goal of EO 25-26 is to identify a set of resilience attributes for Oregon’s lands and waters that will serve as the “north star” to guide strategic and coordinated climate resilience action across state natural resource agencies. The Action

¹ Climate adaptation and mitigation definitions are adapted from the [U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit](#) used to develop the Climate Change Action Plan.

Plan also prioritizes improved coordination with state and federal agencies on shared priorities such as cold water refuge monitoring and habitat enhancement efforts. Additionally, statewide resilience attributes, metrics, and supporting data may help inform how we track progress and trends for both the Commission's Climate Action and Vital Signs monitoring programs.

- **Natural and Working Lands:** EO 25-26 and the Action Plan focus on protecting lands and waters that are already highly resilient to climate change impacts and restoring those with potential to strengthen ecosystem and community resilience. For example, EO 25-26 includes a goal to conserve 10 percent of lands and waters in 10 years to serve as resilience anchors, while the Action Plan includes a goal that 70% of high climate resilient areas in the National Scenic Area are protected in conservation status by 2035. Both emphasize the importance of partnerships with tribes, federal agencies, local governments, non-profit organizations, and private landowners to scale up climate resilience practices on natural and working lands.
- **Community Resilience:** Both frameworks acknowledge interconnections between climate change impacts to ecosystems and communities such as increased wildfire risk, extreme heat events, and warming waters. One example of strong overlap is the focus on creating Fire Adapted Communities and promoting defensible space, home hardening, and other community-based wildfire preparedness efforts.
- **Collaboration with Tribal Nations:** Collaboration with sovereign tribal nations on climate resilience efforts is central to EO 25-26 and the Climate Change Action Plan. The Action Plan specifically identifies strategies and actions to strengthen protection of Tribal Treaty Rights and First Foods in the National Scenic Area.
- **Community Engagement and Reporting:** This EO calls for extensive and meaningful outreach across all regions of the state to develop the Plan for a Resilient Oregon. It also directs agencies to establish clear feedback processes for public input and transparent, accurate reporting on public programs. Annual reports on Climate Change Action Plan implementation are provided to the Commission with opportunities for public comment. The Climate Stewards training course actively engages community members in local resilience projects that support Action Plan priorities. Additionally, the PEAR Team advises the Commission on strategies to strengthen relationships with communities that have historically been excluded from land use planning and decision making in this region.

Executive Order 25-29: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Advancing Oregon's Clean Energy Future

Overview: [Executive Order 25-29](#) directs specific executive branch agencies to align decisions, activities, and investments to advance the five Oregon Energy Strategy pathways supporting greenhouse gas reduction goals for Oregon: (1) energy efficiency, (2) clean electricity, (3) electrification of vehicles and buildings, (4) low-carbon fuels, and (5) energy resilience. Key components include accelerating deployment of clean energy projects, developing public-private partnerships, and evaluating emerging clean energy technologies.

Key Areas of Alignment: EO 25-29 and the Climate Change Action Plan

While the Commission's role with energy and transportation planning is more limited than its role with natural and working lands per current Management Plan guidelines, the Climate Change Action Plan does identify opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through regional transportation, electric vehicle infrastructure, and carbon storage in natural and working lands. The Action Plan's focus on increasing transit ridership and EV charging station connectivity across main travel corridors supports this EO's purpose of accelerating the clean energy transition in Oregon. More discussion with the Governor's Office is needed to explore opportunities for the Commission to align its work with this EO based on the unique regulatory framework within the National Scenic Area.

Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy

Overview: The [Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy](#) (Strategy) is a framework to improve coordination and project funding prioritization among natural resource agencies to advance eight climate resilience strategies across the state. The Strategy defines "climate resilience" as "the ongoing process of anticipating, preparing for, and adapting to changes in climate and minimizing negative impacts to our natural systems, infrastructure, and communities." Resilience strategies focus on specific climate change hazards such as increasing air and water temperature, drought, and wildfire.

Key Areas of Alignment: WA Climate Resilience Strategy and the Climate Change Action Plan

- **Cross-Agency Coordination:** Similar to EO 25-26 and the Commission's Action Plan, the WA Climate Resilience Strategy identifies improved coordination among state natural resource agencies as a key strategy to build climate resilience.
- **Natural and Working Lands:** Washington includes one strategy focused on improving land management and restoration practices to help habitats and species adapt to changing conditions. Habitat focused priorities in the Action Plan (e.g., oak systems, wetlands, and cold water refugia) align well with this strategy. Another WA strategy calls on agencies to support the viability of working lands through research, technical assistance, and incentives. The Action Plan includes several actions focused on connecting interested landowners and agriculture producers with technical assistance providers who offer incentives and funding for resilience projects on working lands.
- **Technical Assistance and Support to Tribes, Local Governments, and Communities:** Both the Strategy and Action Plan emphasize the vital role that agencies play in sharing best practices, data, and funding opportunities with tribes, local governments, and communities. Currently, the Commission primarily plays an information-sharing role and could be more directly involved in securing resources through grant writing if this is a need tribes and other partners identify. The Vital Signs Data Hub is also intended to be a helpful platform for interested partners to access status and trends information relevant to their resilience work.
- **Climate-Driven Hazards:** The WA Strategy calls for agencies to improve planning, response, and recovery related to climate-driven hazards and emergencies. Key hazards include wildfire, extreme heat, drought, and floods. While these hazards inform which priorities are

included in the Action Plan, the Commission has not played a lead role developing natural hazard mitigation plans, as these are typically county efforts. However, the recent disaster replacements amendment to the Management Plan illustrates how one climate-driven hazard, wildfire, can significantly impact residents in the National Scenic Area, requiring policy updates that balance community recovery needs with cultural and natural resource protection.

Topics for Commission Discussion

- Which topics in these presentations do you feel are most important to explore further, given existing Climate Change Action Plan priorities and the Commission's bi-state land use planning role?
- Are you interested in a follow-up work session to discuss and prioritize specific opportunities for alignment and collaboration with OR and WA state natural resource agencies on climate action priorities in the National Scenic Area?