

2025 Climate Action Annual Report

Columbia River Gorge Commission



March 10, 2026

www.gorgecommission.org

Letter from the Columbia River Gorge Commission

As we reflect on our climate action work in 2025, a theme that comes to mind is resilience. One understanding of resilience is having the strength to achieve a purpose when faced with many challenges. In the Ichishkíin language spoken by the Yakama people, Xtu'wit means "strength to achieve." Stewarding the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area in a changing climate requires our collective Xtu'wit, as we work together to fulfill the purposes of the National Scenic Area Act.

Despite the Commission's state budget challenges and a shifting federal funding landscape that affected many of our partners, we continued to advance work toward our climate goals in 2025, as you will see in this report. We also adapted our priorities in response to community needs following the Rowena and Burdoin fires that resulted in the devastating loss of homes and structures for residents in Oregon and Washington. Through collaboration with Wasco County and the USDA Forest Service, and consultation with the Columbia River treaty tribes, we approved a Management Plan amendment that improves the rebuilding process following a disaster such as wildfire. We thank all of the community members who shared their stories with us and the counties and emergency management agencies that work tirelessly to help residents impacted by these fires. We are committed to supporting long-term recovery and taking a comprehensive look at how we can improve wildfire policies as part of our next Management Plan review.

A focus of our work this past year was leveraging the power of partnerships to accomplish the set of 2025 goals in our Climate Change Action Plan. In this report, we summarize these regional efforts by climate action priority. Here are just a few highlights from 2025:

- We partnered with Nch'i Wana Housing to fund workshops for Columbia River tribal elders to teach traditional ways of gathering and preparing First Foods and medicines to 30 tribal members from across the region.
- The USDA Forest Service, our co-managers of the National Scenic Area, completed 437 acres of forest thinning and prescribed burning in 2025 to reduce wildfire risk and improve habitat conditions.
- Our Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) team worked with staff to develop climate equity goals and actions to strengthen engagement with communities most impacted by climate change in the Gorge.
- We hosted a second Climate Stewards training course in spring 2025, with participants from 5 Gorge counties working on projects supporting climate action priorities including reducing fire risk, conserving Oregon white oak habitat, and protecting cold water streams for salmon.

As you will see in this annual report, the Climate Change Action Plan identifies regional goals that connect the Gorge Commission's role and opportunities for action with those of strategic partners. This report focuses on outcomes for the 2025 goals in the Action Plan. We are also thrilled to announce the launch of the Vital Signs Data Hub in 2026. The Vital Signs monitoring program assesses the health of the National Scenic Area over time, while helping us track progress toward many of our climate action goals.

We appreciate all of those who contributed their energy, expertise, and hard work to accomplish the climate actions in this report. We welcome all in our collective stewardship of this place so that the lands, waters, and communities here may thrive for generations to come.

Sincerely,

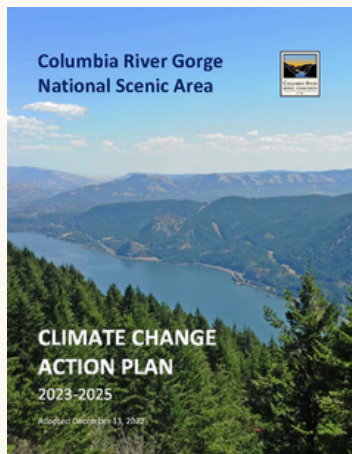


Carina Miller, Chair
2023–2027 Oregon Governor Appointed Commissioner




Jerry Meninick, Vice Chair
2023–2027 Washington Governor Appointed Commissioner

Climate Action in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area



The **Climate Change Action Plan** is a regional guide to climate action in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The Action Plan includes priorities for adaptation (adjusting to climate change impacts) and mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing storage of carbon in habitats and working lands).

This report highlights our work with many partners to accomplish 2025 climate action goals. Completed goals are noted with a  symbol. Below is a summary of all 10 climate priorities in the Action Plan. A full list of the goals for these priorities is included in the appendix on page 11 of this report.

OVERALL PRIORITIES



Inclusive Climate Action

Engaging with diverse communities and partners across the Gorge



High Climate Resilience Areas

Identifying and conserving areas expected to support species in a changing climate

ADAPTATION



Cold Water Refuge Streams

Protecting water temperature and flow for fish



Wetlands

Improving wetland habitat for associated plants and wildlife



Tribal Treaty Rights

Supporting Tribes to ensure ecosystems and land use promote accessible, thriving First Foods



Oak Woodlands

Improving oak woodland habitat and corridors

MITIGATION



Regional Transportation

Reducing single-passenger vehicle travel and promoting regional transit



Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

Increasing charging stations and collaborative electrification planning



Carbon Sequestration

Enhancing land-based carbon sequestration in habitats and working lands



Fire Risk

Supporting resilient forests and fire-adapted communities




2025 Climate Action Overview

In 2025, we continued work on the 2025 goals in the Climate Change Action Plan, while shifting our focus to address the immediate recovery and rebuilding needs of residents impacted by the Rowena and Burdoin fires. Through consultation with the Columbia River treaty tribes and collaboration with Wasco County and the USDA Forest Service, the Commission approved a Management Plan Amendment that improves the rebuilding process following a disaster such as wildfire. We are thrilled to announce that the US Secretary of Agriculture concurred with the Management Plan Amendment on February 24, 2026. Counties may start implementing these new guidelines immediately while they amend their ordinances. We appreciate all who worked on this amendment to help residents rebuild their homes after disaster—now and into the future.

Below and on the pages that follow, you will find a summary for each of the climate action priorities we focused on this past year to achieve 2025 goals and to lay the groundwork for meeting future goals. Some goals focus on concrete actions, while others involve regional coordination and collaborative efforts that have become an ongoing part of our work. For a full list of Climate Change Action Plan goals, see the appendix on page 11.



Inclusive Climate Action

Goal: By 2025, the Commission has identified specific goals and actions to advance climate equity. 

Status: We worked with the Commission’s Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team of community leaders to develop climate equity goals, actions, and outreach strategies with a focus on protecting First Foods, improving Tribal and low-income housing, and reducing fire risk for communities most impacted by climate change in the Gorge. These PEAR Team recommendations will be presented to the Commission at its meeting on March 10, 2026.

2025 Highlights

- Hosted our second Columbia Gorge Climate Stewards training course with community members from 5 National Scenic Area counties. See page 9 for more details.
- Partnered with several PEAR Team organizations on projects: First Foods Workshops with Nch’i Wana Housing (see page 3) and Wildfire Preparedness Event in Spanish with Comunidades (see page 4 for more on efforts to reduce fire risk).



A. Hunter, Commission intern, at a Spanish language community wildfire preparedness event in Hood River



Tribal Treaty Rights: First Foods Protection

Goal: Goals, strategies, and policy approaches for First Foods protection and access are developed with the Columbia River treaty tribes.

Status: In 2025, work toward this goal focused on two areas. First, the PEAR Team identified First Foods protection as a climate equity priority and developed a guiding strategy and key actions to support the long-term protection of healthy, abundant, and accessible First Foods for tribal communities. Second, staff focused on consultation with the Columbia River treaty tribes to ensure that the Disaster Replacements Management Plan Amendment upheld cultural resource and treaty rights protections. These consultation efforts support ongoing relationships that help center tribal priorities and lay the foundation for developing policy approaches for First Foods with the tribes.



Photo Credit: Nch'i Wana Housing

Project Summary

Partnered with Nch'i Wana Housing to fund workshops for Columbia River tribal elders to teach traditional ways of gathering and cooking Wakamoo (camas). Over 30 tribal members participated, including elders, youth, and cultural educators.

2025 Highlights

- **Carbon and Culture Symposium** hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Discussed impacts and opportunities of carbon management projects on tribal communities. Learned about First Foods and traditional lifeways as climate resilience strategies.
- **Tribal-State Government-to-Government Summit** with Governor Kotek and federally recognized Tribes in Oregon. Topics included bill signing, Tribes' priorities and actionable requests, and improved guidance on tribal consultation for state agencies.



First Foods display at the Carbon and Culture Symposium. Photo credit: Janine Gordon.



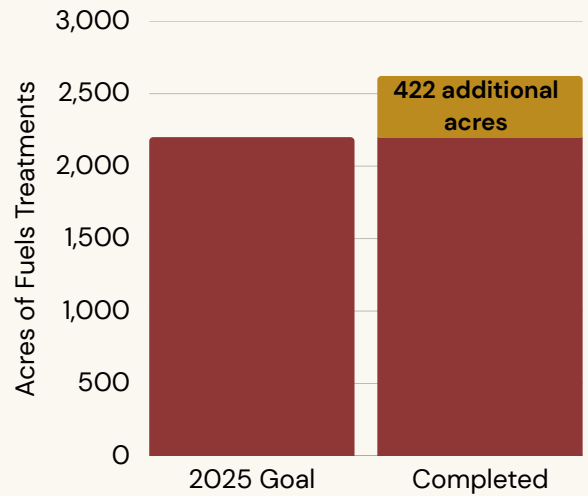
Wakamoo (camas) after harvest. Photo credit: Nch'i Wana Housing.



Fire Risk

Goal: By 2025, combined efforts on public and private lands result in at least 2,200 acres of fuels reduction treatments in the National Scenic Area.

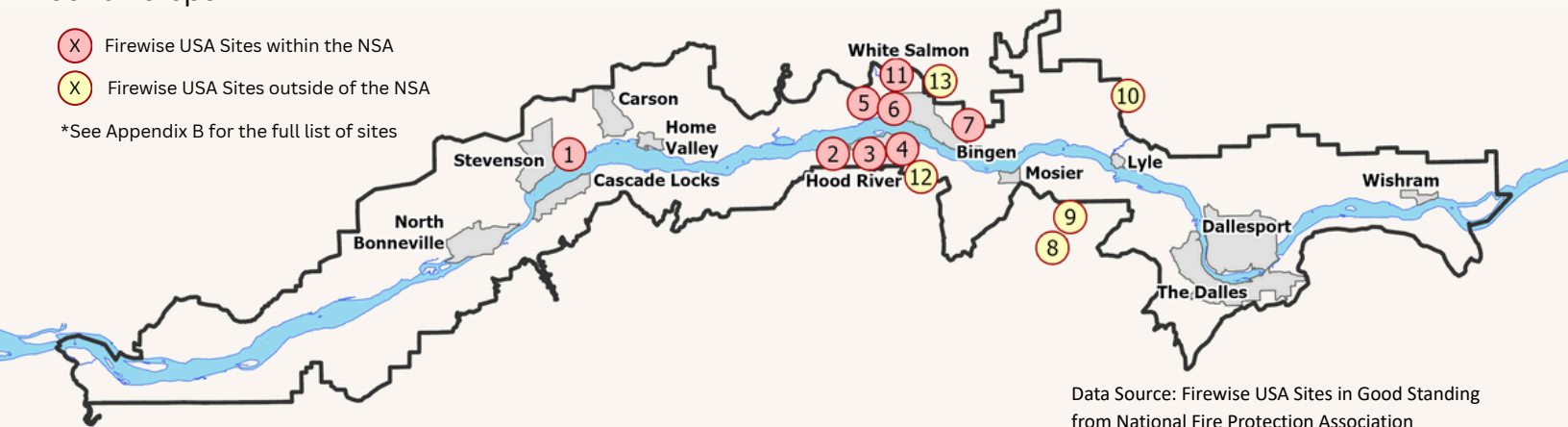
Status: 2,622 acres of fuels reduction treatments completed on National Forest System lands from 2023–2025 toward 2025 goal. Includes thinning and prescribed burning. Reporting focuses on Forest Service treatments, since comprehensive data across land ownership is not yet available.



Goal: By 2030, at least six community-based groups in the National Scenic Area are leading community fire adaptation efforts to prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire.

Status: 8 Firewise USA Sites are active in the National Scenic Area in 2025. Firewise USA is a national program that helps communities prepare for wildfire and reduce risk of damage to homes. To become a Firewise USA Site approved by the National Fire Protection Association, a community (minimum of 8 and maximum of 2,500 dwelling units) completes a wildfire risk assessment, community outreach, and other action steps.

- Firewise USA Sites within the NSA
 - Firewise USA Sites outside of the NSA
- *See Appendix B for the full list of sites



Data Source: Firewise USA Sites in Good Standing from National Fire Protection Association

2025 Highlights

- 437 acres of fuels reduction completed on National Forest System lands in 2025.
- Completed defensible space informational handout for National Scenic Area residents and distributed to county planning departments and regional wildfire partners.
- Worked with Hood River All Lands Partnership to host two wildfire community preparedness events in Hood River County, including one for Spanish speakers in partnership with Comunidades.

Ongoing Work

- Participate in interagency wildfire resilience coordination and education efforts including the West Klickitat Fire Adapted Communities Work Group, Hood River All Lands Partnership, and WA Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network.



Oregon White Oak Woodlands

Goal: By 2025, comprehensive oak maps including critical habitat corridors are available and oak policy options are provided to the Commission.

Status: Through work with USDA Forest Service Ecologist, Doug Glavich, an oak map for the National Scenic Area is available to track habitat changes over time. The Vital Signs Data Hub uses this map for reporting on the Oregon White Oak Woodlands Vital Sign. We are continuing to work with state wildlife agencies and East Cascades Oak Partnership members to refine a map focused on the most important oak habitat areas from both protection and restoration management objectives. We also completed a staff assessment of oak policy issues to better understand the main needs and challenges that County, Forest Service, and Commission planning staff encounter when reviewing development proposals in oak habitat. A presentation to the Commission in July 2025 included key assessment themes and potential oak policy topics to focus on as part of the next Management Plan review. We plan to revisit next steps from this report with the Commission during a work session in 2026.

2025 Highlights

- Presented oak policy issues assessment findings to Commission to inform annual work planning and prioritization of topics for the next Management Plan review.
- Developed implementation tools for National Scenic Area county planners including oak planning map and development review checklist.



Oak planning panel discussion co-hosted with East Cascades Oak Partnership

Ongoing Work

As a core member of East Cascades Oak Partnership (ECOP), we share best management practices, educational resources, and mapping and monitoring tools with interested landowners and county planning departments in the National Scenic Area. In this role, we also provide input on ECOP's strategic plan implementation and priorities for funding proposals.



Fuels reduction and oak restoration field tour with ECOP in Wasco County

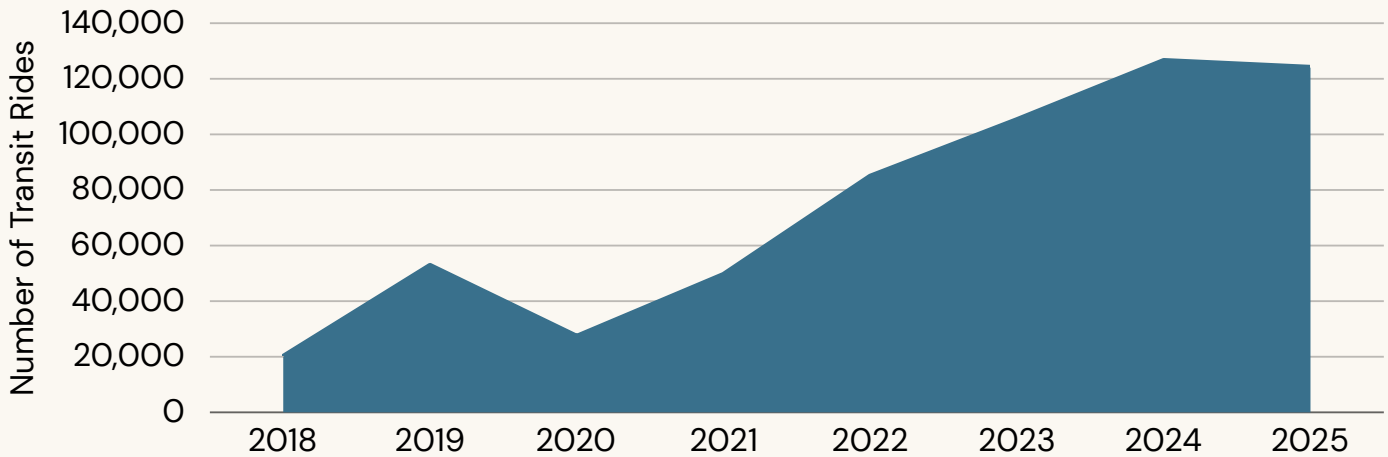
To learn more about **East Cascades Oak Partnership**, visit www.eastcascadesoakpartnership.org.



Regional Transportation

Goal: Transit ridership increases annually from 2022–2025.

Status: Annual transit ridership has increased from 2020 to 2024. In 2025, a slight decrease in ridership is likely due to three factors: a slower economy which affected visitors traveling to the Gorge; new systems of capturing ridership which can result in periodic reporting fluctuations; and a slower rate of riders shifting from dial-a-ride to fixed routes as efforts continue to increase awareness of fixed route options. Gorge Transit continues to attract new riders, while remaining a stable way for locals to get to work, school, medical appointments, shopping, and recreation sites. Annual total number of fixed-route transit rides in the region includes Columbia Area Transit (CAT), Wasco County LINK, Mt. Adams Transportation Services (MATS), and Skamania County Transit.



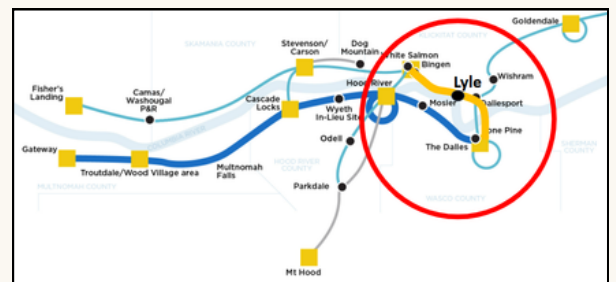
Data Source: Gorge Transit

2025 Highlights

- Gorge Transit Summit:** 200 local elected leaders, social services professionals, riders, industry supporters, curious locals, and business owners learned how transit supports climate mitigation, reduced congestion, affordable housing, emergency management, tribal communities, human and environmental health, and local economies.
- Accessibility Audits:** All Gorge Transit bus stops in the Gorge now have photos and information about seating, ground conditions, nearby bathrooms, and parking captured on Google maps. Available at gorgetransit.com/gorge-transit-bus-stops.



Speaking at Gorge Transit Summit



A new planned Lyle route (in orange) will provide access to more in-lieu fishing sites for tribal communities.

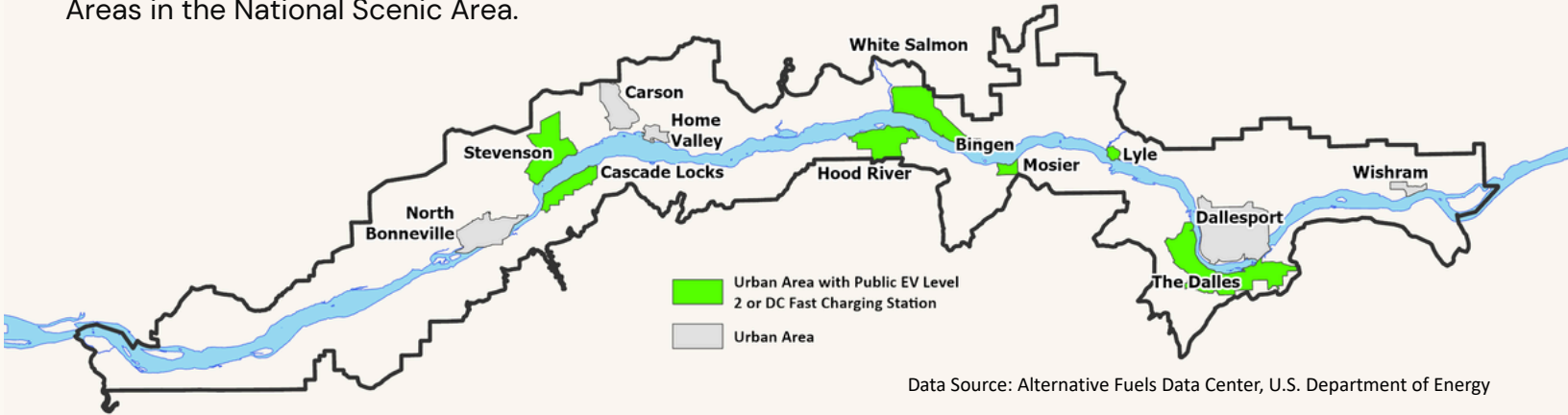
Special thanks to Gorge Transit, a Mid-Columbia Economic Development District initiative, for providing data and analysis for this report.



Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

Goal: By 2025, 50% of Urban Areas have public Level 2 or DC fast charging stations.

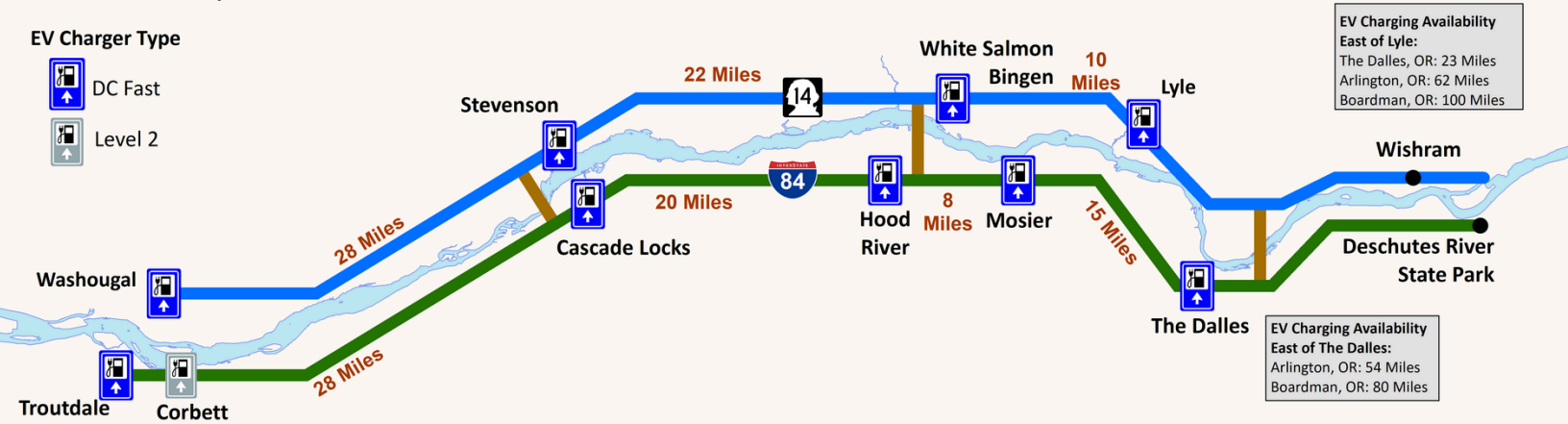
Status: Public Level 2 or direct current (DC) fast charging stations are available in 7 out of 13 Urban Areas in the National Scenic Area.



Data Source: Alternative Fuels Data Center, U.S. Department of Energy

Goal: By 2025, public DC fast charging stations are available every 25 miles on Interstate 84 in Oregon and State Route 14 in Washington.

Status: On I-84, DC fast charging is available every 25 miles from Cascade Locks to The Dalles. On SR-14, DC fast charging is available every 25 miles from Stevenson to Lyle. The main changes from 2024 are a shift from Level 2 to DC fast chargers in Stevenson and White Salmon/Bingen and a new DC fast charging station in Lyle.



Data Source: Alternative Fuels Data Center, U.S. Department of Energy

Goal: By 2025, the Gorge has a strategy for the desired locations and types of charging stations.

Status: Currently, there is not one strategy spanning different communities across the Gorge. The Hood River County Energy Council has developed a draft conceptual study of potential EV charging locations in Hood River County.

Ongoing Work

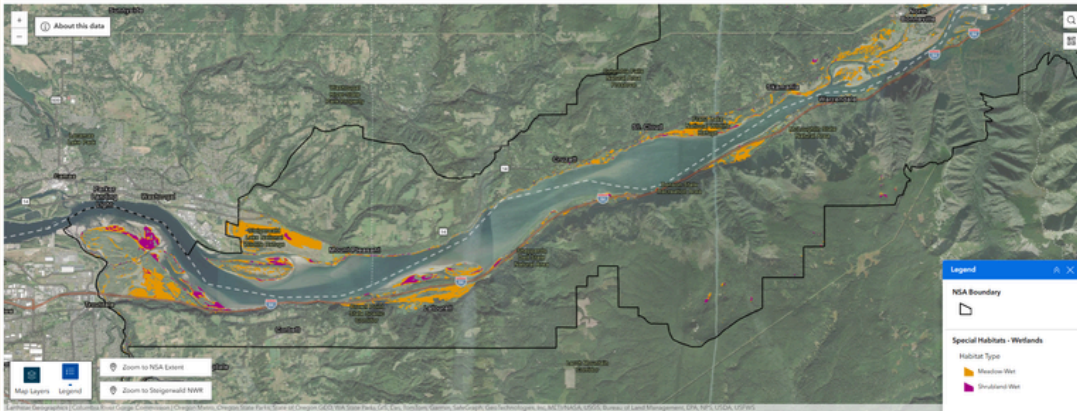
While we continue to track regional planning efforts that could shape a strategy for the Gorge, EV infrastructure planning was not a 2025 work plan priority due to our reduced budget and staffing.



Wetlands

Goal: By 2025, baseline extent and condition for wetlands are established and support implementation of the Management Plan’s goal of no wetland loss.

Status: Through continued collaboration with USDA Forest Service Ecologist Doug Glavich, we have accomplished this goal and developed a baseline wetlands extent map as part of the Vital Signs Monitoring Program effort to map specific habitats in the National Scenic Area. We will continue to work with the USDA Forest Service and other land managers to better understand the condition of existing wetlands and identify opportunities to improve wetland habitat. The Vital Signs Data Hub will report on changes to wetland extent and distribution over time to help us evaluate how well we are meeting Management Plan and Climate Change Action Plan goals for wetlands.



Data Source: Vital Signs Data Hub, Wetlands

Vital Signs Data Hub: Using Data to Track Climate Action Goals

The **Vital Signs Monitoring Program** supports several climate action goals with data and analyses that are stored and shared on the publicly available **Vital Signs Data Hub**. The hub is updated regularly to share what we are learning about the health of the National Scenic Area, including progress towards climate action goals.

For more information, visit our website: <https://gorgecommission.org/our-work/vital-sign-monitoring-program>.



2025 Action Spotlight: Columbia Gorge Climate Stewards

Growing a community of Climate Stewards since 2023



Climate Stewards



Community Contributors



Capstone Projects



Gorge Counties Represented

In Spring 2025, we launched a second Climate Stewards training course with community members from across the Gorge. Stewards learned about climate change impacts, communication methods, and local efforts to build community and ecosystem resilience. Presentations, field trips, and online learning provided opportunities to work on Climate Change Action Plan priorities. Special thanks to Climate Corps Fellow, Colin Jarvis, for his incredible work coordinating the 2025 course!

The Climate Stewards course is made possible through a partnership with the Oregon State University Extension Service and the University of California, the creators of the curriculum that we adapt for our region.

We look forward to growing our community connections and impact through the next course in Fall 2026!



Oregon State University
Extension Service



Capstone Celebration: Climate Stewards capstone projects support Action Plan priorities including reducing fire risk, conserving Oregon white oak habitat, and protecting cold water streams for salmon.



Fire Adapted Communities: Residents outside of White Salmon share their defensible space work to reduce fire risk.







Cold Water Refuges and Tribal Treaty Rights: Elaine Harvey, Yakama Nation Member and Columbia Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Watershed Department Manager, and Bill Sharp, Research Scientist with Yakama Nation Fisheries, describe habitat restoration projects on the Klickitat and White Salmon rivers.



Climate Resilient Farms: Eduardo Garcia and Sarah Risorto discuss soil health at their cherry orchard in Wasco County.

2026 Climate Action Next Steps

Building on the efforts described in this report, we continue to collaborate with tribes, agencies, organizations, and communities across the Gorge to accomplish our next set of climate action goals for 2030. Many of the remaining actions in our Climate Change Action Plan are policy-related, such as reviewing fire protection policies for potential updates. In 2026, we will prioritize policy topics for review and analysis to inform the next Management Plan update. Below are some next steps for 2026:

-  Coordinate work sessions with the PEAR Team and Commission to discuss approaches for integrating climate equity recommendations in the Commission’s work plan.
-  Lead a field tour with NSA county planners and fire professionals to explore examples of local residents’ defensible space projects and opportunities for risk reduction efforts.
-  Operationalize oak planning checklist and mapping tools for NSA county planners and prioritize recommendations in the oak policy issues assessment for Commission action.
-  Host a Fall 2026 Climate Stewards course to continue growing community-based efforts toward shared climate resilience goals for the region.

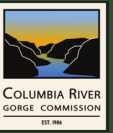
Thank You

We are grateful to all those who have contributed to the actions described in this report. Special thanks to Climate Corps Fellow, Colin Jarvis, for his enthusiasm, curiosity, and hard work over the past year!

- Columbia Gorge Community College
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Columbia Riverkeeper
- Comunidades
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of Yakama Nation
- East Cascades Oak Partnership
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Friends of the White Salmon River
- Gorge Transit and Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
- Hood River All Lands Partnership
- National Scenic Area County Planning Departments (Clark, Skamania, Klickitat, Multnomah, Hood River, and Wasco)
- Nch’i Wana Housing
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Oregon Climate Change Research Institute
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Department of the State Fire Marshal
- Oregon State University Extension Service
- The Next Door, Inc.
- Underwood Conservation District
- University of California, Climate Stewards Program
- USDA Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
- US Geological Survey
- Washington Department of Ecology
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network
- Washington Gorge Action Programs
- West Klickitat Fire Adapted Communities

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APPENDIX A: GOAL LIST



Priority	Goal
Tribal Treaty Rights	The Commission has identified specific goals, strategies, and policy approaches for First Foods protection and access, created with the Columbia River Treaty Tribes.
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	By 2025, public direct current (DC) fast charging is available at least every 25 miles along I-84 or SR-14, and 50% of Urban Areas have public Level 2 or DC fast charging stations.
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	By 2025, the gorge has a strategy for the desired locations and types of charging stations, and partnerships in place to implement them by 2030.
Fire Risk	By 2025, combined efforts on public and private lands in the NSA result in at least 2,200 acres of fuels reduction treatments. Fuels reduction includes thinning encroached or overstocked stands and prescribed burning. With support from the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network and multiple partners, the Commission will set long-term acreage targets based on forest types, Land Use Designations, and other considerations.
Inclusive Climate Action	By 2025, the Commission has completed a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan with specific, measurable, and timebound goals to advance climate equity.
Oregon White Oak Woodlands	By 2025, critical corridors for oak woodlands and deer habitat connectivity are identified and policy options are provided to the Commission. Through work with East Cascades Oak Partnership (ECOP), comprehensive oak habitat maps are available.
Regional Transportation	By 2025, the number of gas-powered single occupancy vehicle trips across the Gorge decreases from 2022 levels. This goal will be supported by transit, shuttle, and parking solutions.
Regional Transportation	From 2022-2025, transit ridership increases each year.
Wetlands	By 2025, baseline extent and condition for wetlands are established and support implementation of the Management Plan's goal of no wetland loss.
Carbon Sequestration in Habitats and Working Lands	By 2030, based on VSI monitoring and with partner input, the Commission has set goals for summer baseflows and winter high flows.
Cold Water Refuge Streams	By 2030, summertime water temperatures on NSA cold water refuge streams do not increase and are trending towards federal/state water quality standards for temperature
Cold Water Refuge Streams	By 2030, summertime water temperatures on NSA cold water refuge streams do not increase and are trending towards federal/state water quality standards for temperature.
Fire Risk	By 2030, at least six community-based groups in the NSA are leading community fire adaptation to prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire.
Oregon White Oak Woodlands	By 2030, based upon information generated through Goal 6, Oregon white oak woodlands and corridors in the NSA are maintained or improved.
Wetlands	By 2030, wetland extent and function are increasing. Based on VSI information, more detailed goals can be set at this time with targets for wetlands acreage and condition.
High Climate Resilient Areas	By 2035, 70% of high climate resilient areas are protected by conservation status, as defined in this plan.

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APPENDIX B: FIREWISE USA SITE LIST



Firewise USA Number	Firewise USA Site Name	Within the NSA?
1	Nelson Creek Watershed Cooperative	Yes
2	Stonegate HOA	Yes
3	Rocky Ridge Court	Yes
4	Prospect Montello Hood River	Yes
5	Brislawn	Yes
6	White Salmon Sterling Estates HOA	Yes
7	Columbia Rim Owners Association	Yes
8	Further Valley Vensel Roads	No
9	Paradise Ridge	No
10	Silva Ridge Water Group	No
11	Bella Vista Estates	Yes
12	Eastside-Old Dalles	No
13	Jewett Heights Subdivision	No

Firewise USA site numbers correspond to the figure on page 4 of this report.