Columbia River Gorge Commission
Executive Committee
Meeting Summary
October 1, 2026

Meeting format
Virtual

Call to Order and Roll Call
Chair Alex Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m., after confirming that the meeting was being recorded.

Committee Members Present:
- Valerie Fowler
- Nicolas Granum, USDA Forest Service
- Alex Johnson
- Nathan Reynolds

Committee Members Absent:
- Carina Miller

Staff Members Present:
- Krystyna U. Wolniakowski
- Jeff Litwak

Executive Summary
The Executive Committee focused primarily on preparing for the November 10 Commission meeting, particularly the discussion of the next management plan review. Members generally supported dedicating about 90 minutes to a strategic, commissioner-led conversation on the Gorge's long-term vision, broad goals, and priorities, rather than focusing immediately on technical regulatory changes.

The committee also reviewed the Wasco County disaster amendment, the Executive Order 25-26 work plan, planning for the Commission's 40th anniversary, committee governance, and the upcoming officer elections.

Key outcomes included approval of the previous meeting's summary, agreement on a preliminary structure for the management plan discussion, a proposed change to the November agenda to accommodate a public hearing, and follow-up work on officer election requirements and Indigenous representation in the anniversary logo.

Approval of August 19, 2026, Meeting Summary

- The August 19, 2026, Meeting Summary was approved without changes.
- Valerie Fowler moved to approve, and Alex Johnson seconded. There were no objections; the meeting summary was approved.

November 10 Commission Meeting Agenda

The committee reviewed the draft agenda for the November 10, 2027, in-person meeting at Skamania Lodge.

Planned agenda items include:

- Executive Director's report and Forest Service report.
- Oregon Executive Order 25-26 work plan presentation.
- Commissioner discussion of the next management plan review.
- Wasco County disaster amendment public hearing and consistency review.
- 40th anniversary event updates and other business.

The committee supported reading the Commission's Code of Conduct following the land acknowledgment to set expectations for respectful engagement.

Agenda adjustment: The Wasco County public hearing is expected to move immediately after lunch, tentatively to 1:00 p.m., to make the timing more predictable for the public.

Management Plan Review: Vision, Goals, and Process

Shared Direction

- Begin with a strategic discussion of the Commission's long-term vision and broad goals before deciding on specific topics or regulatory changes.
- Give each commissioner an opportunity to share their perspective.
- Use the PRES model of communication: Point, Reason, Example, Summary
- Maintain a structured planning process that meets administrative requirements and prevents premature definition of the Plan review's scope.
- Use the Commission's 40th anniversary as an opportunity to consider the National Scenic Area's next 40–100 years.

Potential Areas for Discussion

- The long-term vision for the Gorge's landscape, communities, economy, ecosystems, wildlife, and cultural resources.

- How to achieve the management plan's vision, including opportunities beyond the plan's current framework.
- How to make the management plan easier to read, use, and track progress against.
- How to improve county implementation of the plan, including clearer numbering and organization of the guidelines.
- How to incorporate climate resilience and other strategic priorities.
- How to prepare for different funding scenarios, including both constrained resources and potential future increases.
- Whether the Commission's committee structure and decision-making processes are appropriate for the review.

Proposed Meeting Format

The committee generally supported the following structure for the November discussion:

1. Spend approximately 5–10 minutes introducing the purpose, expectations, and discussion process.
2. Provide a brief example of the Forest Service's strategic approach, emphasizing leadership intent and strategy rather than tactics.
3. Use several open-ended prompts focused on long-term vision and broad goals.
4. Use a round-robin format so every commissioner has an opportunity to speak before anyone speaks a second time.
5. Consider using the PRESS model — Point, Reason, Example, Summary — to help commissioners organize their contributions.
6. Allow approximately two to two-and-a-half minutes per commissioner per round as a possible guideline, with further refinement before the November meeting.

The next Executive Committee meeting will review and refine the proposed prompts and discussion structure.

Wasco County Disaster Amendment

- Wasco County has adopted ordinance amendments implementing the relevant management plan amendment.
- The Commission must review the ordinance for consistency with the management plan within 90 days, making the November meeting the target for review.
- Staff anticipate a straightforward review, followed by submission to the Secretary of Agriculture/Forest Service for concurrence.
- Staff have been working with Hood River and Clark counties but cannot confirm their adoption timelines. The status of Klickitat and Skamania counties was also unclear.

- Counties have been encouraged to implement the plan amendment immediately, even as they complete formal adoption.

Oregon Executive Order 25-26 Work Plan

- Staff will present the work plan connecting the Commission's climate change action plan and implementation mechanisms to the state's Landscape Resilience Executive Order.
- Lisa will lead the presentation and review the associated spreadsheet.
- Commissioners will have an opportunity to ask questions and suggest improvements.
- Following the Commission's review, staff will report back to the Governor's Office that the Commission has been briefed.
- Staff noted that the Commission's existing climate metrics and work through VSI provide a useful model for other agencies.

40th Anniversary Planning and Logo

- The originally contemplated anniversary event following the November meeting at Skamania Lodge is unlikely to proceed as planned because of catering costs, uncertain attendance, and the time needed to dismantle audiovisual equipment would require a two-hour break.
- Staff are considering a more accessible, public event at a venue where staff could cater the event to reduce costs, potentially Hegewald Center in Stevenson or Cascade Pavilion in Cascade Locks.
- An event in May was discussed as a possibility, potentially aligning with the anniversary of the Commission's first meeting in June 1987.
- The Forest Service is still working to establish a date for a potential outdoor event at Eagle Creek.
- The Communications Committee approved a 40th-anniversary logo, and staff are arranging a commemorative tablecloth and stickers.

Indigenous Representation Concern

A public comment raised concerns that the logo does not clearly represent the Gorge's Indigenous peoples. Staff explained that they included salmon and wildflowers to reflect the region's ecology and First Foods, and they invited further suggestions. Valerie Fowler recommended proactively seeking input from all four treaty tribes to identify possible improvements.

Committee Structure and Decision-Making

- Commissioners proposed discussing whether the existing committee structure is appropriate for the Management Plan review.

- They also want to clarify how much authority committees should have to make decisions versus referring matters to the full Commission.
- Staff and counsel cautioned that additional committee meetings could slow the review because of public notice requirements, scheduling difficulties, and the possibility of needing to repeat discussions on topics already covered.
- The committee agreed that this topic warrants further discussion at the next Executive Committee meeting, without committing to adding committees.

Officer Elections and Vacancy

- Counsel Jeff Litwak reported a vacancy in the Wasco County position and explained his preliminary interpretation of the voting requirements for officer elections.
- His view is that the Commission must still satisfy the requirement for a majority from each state, including the applicable four-member threshold, despite the vacancy.
- Counsel will prepare a memorandum outlining election procedures, past practices, and the implications of the vacancy.
- Commissioner Fowler asked whether the election could be postponed until January. Counsel indicated that the bylaws allow postponement and that this has occurred previously, assuming the relevant officer's term continues through that meeting.
- No final decision to postpone the election was recorded.

Public Comment and Adjournment

- The committee opened the floor for public comment. No requests to speak were received during the formal public-comment period.
- Additional comments regarding the anniversary logo were raised during other business.
- The meeting was then adjourned.

Action items

The following action items are drawn from explicit commitments and proposed follow-up work in the transcript. Where no individual was assigned, the party responsible is identified by role.

#	Action item	Owner	Deadline/Timing

1	Develop draft prompts for the management plan vision and goals discussion, focusing on strategic outcomes rather than specific regulatory topics.	Wolniakowski and Litwak	Before the next Executive Committee meeting
2	Prepare a detailed proposed format for the November 10 management plan discussion, including a brief introduction, strategic framing, round-robin participation, and PRES model guidance.	Staff, in coordination with Alex Johnson	For review at the next Executive Committee meeting
3	Refine and prioritize the proposed discussion prompts and agree on speaking time and participation expectations.	Executive Committee	Next Executive Committee meeting
4	Update the November 10 agenda to place the Wasco County public hearing immediately after lunch, tentatively at 1:00 p.m.	Wolniakowski	Before November 10
5	Prepare the Wasco County ordinance for Commission review and confirm its consistency with the management plan.	Litwak and staff	November Commission meeting; within the 90-day review deadline
6	Present the Executive Order 25-26 Landscape Resilience work plan and gather commissioner questions and suggestions.	Naas Cook and staff	November 10 Commission meeting
7	Report the Commission's awareness of the work plan to the Governor's Office after the presentation and review.	Naas Cook	After the November review; within the Governor's Office reporting timeline
8	Continue coordinating with the Forest Service on a date for the Eagle Creek anniversary event and circulate a save-the-date when confirmed.	Nicolas Granum and Forest Service	As soon as a date is confirmed

9	Evaluate options for a more affordable, inclusive public anniversary event, including potential venues and a May date.	Wolniakowski and staff, in coordination with the Forest Service	Date to be determined
10	Seek suggestions incorporating more Indigenous representation in the anniversary logo, if possible.	Wolniakowski	Before finalizing future logo uses, if feasible
11	Prepare a memorandum explaining officer election procedures, applicable voting thresholds, prior practice, and the effect of the Wasco County vacancy.	Litwak	Before the officer election decision
12	Consider whether to hold officer elections at the next scheduled meeting or postpone until January, taking the vacancy and relevant term dates into account.	Commission, with counsel's guidance	Before the election agenda item
13	Include a strategic discussion of committee structure, committee authority, and decision-making processes among the management plan review prompts.	Staff and Executive Committee	Next Executive Committee meeting

Recommended priorities before the next Executive Committee meeting

1. **Finalize the strategic discussion framework.** Circulate draft prompts early enough for commissioners to review and prepare their individual visions and priorities.
2. **Prepare the November agenda and public hearing logistics.** Confirm the revised sequence and timing so the public knows when to attend.
3. **Advance the Wasco County review.** Ensure the ordinance and consistency analysis are ready for the required Commission action.
4. **Clarify anniversary planning options.** Identify feasible dates, venues, and budget parameters.
5. **Complete the officer election memorandum.** Give commissioners enough information to make an informed decision about election timing and voting requirements.

Approved – October 20, 2026