



For immediate release:

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Gorge Commission Completes Training; Resumes Public Business

The Columbia River Gorge Commission spent the past three months in a series of intensive training sessions to improve communication, gain skills in problem solving and collaboration, and refresh the volunteer Commissioners on the fundamentals of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. As a result, Commissioners and staff are prepared to provide better leadership and regional problem solving. The trainings were recommended by Oregon Consensus and the Ruckelshaus Center following interviews conducted in 2012 with more than eighty regional leaders. The centers recommended the training as a first step to strengthen collaboration between the Gorge Commission, other agencies, communities and the public.

“The future of the National Scenic Area depends on collaborative regional leadership,” said Commission Chair Carl McNew. “The sessions helped Commissioners better understand their role and work in the region.” The three training sessions covered Scenic Area fundamentals, group facilitation skills, collaborative problem solving, and effective decision-making. “The internal board development work was invaluable; now we’re excited to get back to work on issues of regional concern,” added Commissioner Jim Middaugh.

On March 12th, the Commission will resume its public meeting schedule. Commissioners will recap the recent training sessions and conduct officer elections. The Commission will also welcome presentations from northwest and national experts: First, the Commission and the US Forest Service will present a report on recent work to address recreation demand and impacts to sensitive resources.

Next, Brian Campbell, President of the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association, and Gil Kelley, adjunct professor of urban design at Portland State University, will showcase their work on a national model for regional planning and sustainable communities.

After that the Commission will welcome lead researchers from the United States Geological Survey (USGS), Washington State University School of the Environment and Portland State University School of the Environment for a discussion of the Commission's Vital Signs Indicators Project, a cutting edge framework for monitoring the health of the Gorge.

Together, the presentations will help lay the foundation for the Gorge Commission's regional planning efforts over the next several years.

The meeting will be held at the Hood River County Administration Building. A full agenda will be posted on the Commission's website around March 4th.

Information on the Columbia River Gorge Commission is available on the web at www.gorgecommission.org.

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The Columbia River Gorge Commission is a thirteen-member public body established through an innovative agreement between Oregon and Washington and the United States Congress to oversee land use and resource protection policy for the 292,000-acre Columbia River National Scenic Area. The Commission's unique structure and its state/federal mandate include regional roles in resource protection and economic development. Volunteer Commissioners are appointed by six counties, Oregon and Washington Governors, and the United States Secretary of Agriculture. The Commission hires a small professional staff that works closely with Tribal, state, local and regional leaders on a wide range of important issues.