



February 24, 2015

Oregon Representative John Huffman
Washington Representative Liz Pike

RE: Columbia River Gorge Commission recommendations to 2015 legislation

Representative Huffman and Representative Pike,

Thank you both for your strong support for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the work of the Gorge Commission to protect the Gorge and support its economy. We are pleased with your commitment to lead the states of Oregon and Washington to work together and with the Commission to improve the implementation of the National Scenic Area Act. The Commission has worked steadily for the past several years to build support for a renewed commitment from the states to their interstate compact agreement, to the relationship between the states and the Commission, and to a level of funding sufficient for the Commission to fulfill its mandates under the federal National Scenic Area Act.

The Commission discussed Oregon House Bill 2039 and Washington House Bills 1954 and 1453 at its regularly scheduled public meeting on Tuesday February 10 and again at an interim meeting February 24. The bills generated a healthy discussion among commissioners and an endorsement of the bills' intent. The bills offer a welcome opportunity to review the administrative functions of the Commission and to assess the relationships between the States, and between the states and the Commission.

That said, the interstate compact and its enabling federal Act embody a complex relationship and the details in the bills' language is critically important to build trust and to effect desired outcomes that meet the needs of Gorge resources, people and communities. Please accept the Commission's responses outlined below as our attempt to improve on your good work and to position all of the parties to make the most of these collaborative opportunities.

The Commission did not have opportunity to visit with you in advance of the legislative session. We understand the time sensitive nature of the legislative process and the pressures of your legislative responsibilities; please consider this letter as an open invitation to visit with the Commission as you are able to help us better understand the details, intent and purpose of the proposed legislation so we can fully support the bills and actively engage in the bi-state discussion going forward.

The Commission strongly supports HB 1453 and offers suggested amendments to clarify and strengthen the intent of the bill (attached).

The Commission also supports Oregon HB 2039 and Washington HB 1954 and offers the following amendments to clarify and strengthen the original bill drafts:

1. The Commission would prefer that the states create a single, bi-state task force to ensure coordinated support for and participation in the work of the task force. This is simply a suggestion for the sake of improving chances for success.
2. The legal structure of the National Scenic Area Act and interstate compact is complex. The bills should be amended to reflect that legal complexity and provide needed flexibility to the task force's review and recommendations.
3. The long-term durability of the task force's recommendations will require a careful political balance on the task force itself. The bills should require bi-partisanship on each states' task force membership.
4. The bills should clearly focus only on recommendations to improve the administrative functions of the National Scenic Area and should not address the substance of the Act and Compact.
5. The bills should clearly address the roles and relationships between the states, between the states and the commission, and between the commission and the states.
6. The bills should clearly identify the role of the Commission, the Gorge regional community, and the public in helping the task force in its work.
7. The bills should provide a mechanism for the Commission to play a leadership role with the states as the parties work together to develop mutually shared objectives.
8. The bills should provide funding resources to facilitate the discussion and develop task force recommendations.

We hope these suggestions help with the legislatures' deliberations. Please accept the Commission's proposed amendments in the spirit of partnership. We look forward to working together to develop the best chance for success in passing legislation and implementing needed improvements to the function of the National Scenic Area.

On behalf of the Commission, thank you again for your continued support and leadership.

Sincerely,



Keith Chamberlain, Chair

Recommended Changes to Oregon HB 2039 (and Washington HB 1954)

SECTION 1. (1) The Bi-State Task Force on the Columbia River Gorge Commission is established, consisting of the following ~~five~~ ten members:

(a) Two members from among members of the Oregon Senate appointed by the President of the Senate. ~~The One~~ members must represent a districts that ~~are~~ is within ~~or adjacent to~~ the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area as identified in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act, P.L. 99-663. ~~If possible, t~~The President shall appoint one member of the Democratic party and one member of the Republican party.

(b) Two members from among members of the Oregon House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. ~~The One~~ members must represent a districts that ~~are~~ is within ~~or adjacent to~~ the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area as identified in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act, P.L. 99-663. ~~If possible, t~~The Speaker shall appoint one member of the Democratic party and one member of the Republican party.

(c) Two members from the Washington House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. One member must represent a district that is within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area as identified in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Act, P.L. 99-663. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses in the House of Representatives.

(d) Two members from the Washington Senate appointed by the President of the Senate. One member must represent a district that is within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area as identified in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Act, P.L. 19 99-663. The President of the Senate shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses in the Senate.

(e) The Oregon Governor, or the Governor's designee.

(f) The Washington Governor or the Governor's designee.

(2) The bi-state task force shall meet and work with the Columbia River Gorge Commission ~~and a corresponding task force authorized by the Washington legislature to address a range of the following topics relating to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act, P.L. 99-663, that may include, but not be limited to:~~ Columbia River Gorge Compact (codified at ORS 196.150 and RCW 43.97.015):

(a) Ensuring stable and adequate Ffunding of the commission by the States of Oregon and Washington or otherwise;

(b) The various effects of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act, P.L. 99-663 on Oregon and Washington The states' and the commission's administration of the Columbia River Gorge Compact to enhance the efficient administration of the Gorge Compact; and

(c) Changes to the ~~Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act, P.L. 99-663~~ and to the ~~Columbia River Gorge Commission~~ Columbia River Gorge Compact, state legislation, state and commission regulations, and means of intergovernmental cooperation, that could enhance the relationship between the commission, ~~and Oregon and Washington, and tribal and local governments.~~

(3) A majority of the members of the bi-state task force constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business.

(4) Official action by the bi-state task force requires the approval of a majority of the members of the task force.

(5) The bi-state task force shall elect one of its members to serve as chairperson or may elect one member from each state to serve joint chairpersons.

(6) If there is a vacancy for any cause, the appointing authority shall make an appointment to become immediately effective.

(7) The bi-state task force shall meet at times and places specified by the call of the chairperson, chairpersons, or of a majority of the members of the bi-state task force. The bi-state task force shall ensure public involvement in the development of its report.

(8) The bi-state task force may adopt rules necessary for the operation of the bi-state task force.

(9) The bi-state task force shall submit a report in the manner provided by ORS 192.245 and RCW 43.01.036, and may include recommendations for legislation, to the Washington Legislature and to the interim committees of the Oregon Legislative Assembly related to the environment and natural resources no later than September 15, 2016.

(10) The Oregon Legislative Administration Committee shall provide staff support to the bi-state task force.

(11) Oregon ~~M~~members of the bi-state task force who are not members of the Legislative Assembly are not entitled to compensation, but may be reimbursed for actual and necessary travel and other expenses incurred by them in the performance of their official duties in the manner and amounts provided for in ORS 292.495. Claims for expenses incurred in performing functions of the bi-state task force shall be paid out of funds appropriated to the Legislative Administration Committee for purposes of the bi-state task force.

(12) All agencies of Oregon state government, as defined in ORS 174.111, are directed to assist the bi-state task force in the performance of its duties and, to the extent permitted by laws relating to confidentiality, to furnish such information and advice as the members of the bi-state task force consider necessary to perform their duties.

(13) Washington Legislative members of the bi-state task force are entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members of the bi-state task force, except those representing an employer or organization, are entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(14) The Washington portion of the expenses of the bi-state task force must be paid jointly by the senate and the house of representatives. Bi-state task force expenditures are subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee and the house of representatives executive rules committee, or their successor committees.

(15) All Washington departments in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the state government must assist the bi-state task force in the performance of the bi-state task force's duties and, to the extent permitted by laws relating to confidentiality and upon request of a bi-state task force member, furnish information and advice that a member of the bi-state task force considers necessary to perform his or her duties.

(16) Washington staff support for the bi-state task force shall be provided by the house of representatives office of program research, senate committee services, and the governor's office.

