



INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL FACILITIES • AIRPORT • INTERSTATE BRIDGE • MARINA

1000 E. Port Marina Drive • Hood River, OR 97031 • (541) 386-1645 • Fax: (541) 386-1395 • portofhoodriver.com • Email: porthr@gorge.net

March 17, 2017

Honorable Senator Lew Frederick, Co-Chair
Honorable Representative Brad Witt, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Frederick and Representative Witt:

The Port of Hood River works in collaboration with our regional partners to advocate for the investments and support that our communities need to build and sustain a thriving economy in the Columbia River Gorge. As Executive Director, I wish to express my strong support of the Columbia River Gorge Commission's request to provide the modest funding increase needed to support their work for their 2017-2019 biennium. I recognize that this is a challenging period for state budgets, but believe that a \$250,000 increase from each Oregon and Washington would greatly increase the Commission's capacity at a critical time and not significantly impact either state's budget.

The National Scenic Area Act requires the Commission to review – and revise if necessary – its management plan every ten years. Because of budget constraints, the Commission's mandatory review is now two years overdue. Most of the management plan, which implements the Act, is 30 years old. The Commission's review must be a comprehensive process that engages the Gorge's many state agencies and local governments, four Treaty Tribes, the business community, landowners, and non-governmental organizations. In 2004, when the Commission last reviewed and revised its plan, it took four years and a staff of ten. The Commission now has a staff of six. As a bi-state compact agency, working on behalf of both states and serving as a regional planning agency, a \$500,000 increase over last biennium's budget, half from Oregon, half from Washington, would allow the Commission to more effectively engage its constituents in a public process that would address the economic and environmental issues now facing our communities. It will also provide the resources needed to allow the Commission to finally monitor and measure the Vital Sign Indicators which will be helpful information for all of us to measure our progress in the National Scenic Area.

Respectfully,

Michael McElwee
Port of Hood River