



April 24, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Subject: Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI)

Dear Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education:

I am writing on behalf of the Columbia River Gorge Commission to express the importance of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI) in the climate action work we do in the Columbia Gorge. The Gorge Commission is a bi-state agency responsible for protecting and enhancing the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources, and supporting local economies, of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, a diverse landscape that spans about 290,000 acres along 85 miles of the Columbia River in north-central Oregon and south-central Washington. We develop and administer land use and development policy for the National Scenic Area, across portions of six counties in Oregon and Washington. In December 2022, the Gorge Commission adopted a Climate Change Action Plan, a guide to adaptation and mitigation action in the National Scenic Area. OCCRI has played a valuable role in both the planning and implementation phases of our Climate Change Action Plan.

First, the annual Oregon Climate Assessment produced by OCCRI served as an incredible resource to help us describe the impacts and risks of climate change in the Gorge within our Climate Change Action Plan. As an agency whose mission encompasses protection of both natural and working lands, we appreciate how this report takes a multidisciplinary look at climate impacts to ecosystems, economies, and diverse communities. As we review progress on our Action Plan goals and update information as needed each year, we will be looking forward to the next Oregon Climate Assessment as a trusted summary of the latest scientific research on climate impacts in our region.

Secondly, we are excited to be partnering with OCCRI and OSU Extension Service to pilot a Climate Stewards training program in the Columbia River Gorge in fall 2023. Developed by the University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources program, this Climate Stewards course prepares participants to effectively communicate about climate change and engage in transformative action in their local communities. Director of OCCRI and Professor, Erica Fleishman, serves on our Columbia River Gorge Climate Stewards Pilot Program planning team, lending her climate science background to review and adapt course content for our region. Through our work with OCCRI and

OSU Extension to pilot this training program, we are helping connect local community members with opportunities for action that support goals in our Climate Change Action Plan.

We are grateful for OCCRI's role as a provider of science-based climate change information to partners and the public and as our key partner in bringing quality climate change education to communities in the Columbia Gorge.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Krystyna U. Wolniakowski".

Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director

c: Carina Miller, Chair, Columbia River Gorge Commission

About the National Scenic Area: *The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area was created by Congress in 1986 as the largest national scenic area in the nation covering 292,500 acres in Oregon and Washington and spanning 85 miles of the Columbia River. The governing body, the Columbia River Gorge Commission, was created as a bi-state compact agency in 1987. Our mission is to protect and enhance the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources, and support local economies, of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. We develop and administer land use and development policy for the National Scenic Area across portions of six counties in Oregon and Washington. The work of managing this complex landscape relies upon strong partnerships with the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes, six Gorge counties, thirteen Urban Areas, USDA Forest Service, and many more partners. The Gorge Commission is responsible for upholding the Treaty Rights of the Columbia River Treaty Tribes in managing the National Scenic Area. These Tribes include the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Nez Perce Tribe.*