

October 30, 2025

Senator Kate Lieber, Co-Chair
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Co-Chairs,

The Columbia River Gorge Commission (CRGC) is a bi-state compact agency that serves as the steward of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (NSA), which stretches 85 miles along the Columbia River from Troutdale eastward to the Deschutes River. The NSA encompasses 292,500 acres on both sides of the river, featuring diverse landscapes that include forests, grasslands, agricultural land, and recreation areas. It includes two National Wild and Scenic Rivers and 13 communities, including Cascade Locks, Mosier, Hood River, and The Dalles on the Oregon side. Established by Congress in 1986, the NSA is the largest and one of the most ecologically intact, unique, and treasured landscapes in the United States. This special area attracts over three million visitors and regional residents annually, supporting vibrant businesses and offering unparalleled access to nature and stunning scenic vistas.

To implement the NSA Act, Oregon and Washington formed a bi-state compact in 1987 and agreed to support CRGC with matching annual appropriations – each state pays 50% of the costs to protect the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources of the NSA. CRGC has received approximately \$2,000,000 from each state per biennium to fund its operations and staff, enabling it to fulfill its federal mission by implementing land use policies defined in the Management Plan. It employs a small staff of ten specialists in land use planning, GIS, legal, and administrative services.

During the 2025 legislative session in Washington, CRGC's budget was cut by 25%, or \$500,000 for the biennium, due to state budget constraints. Unfortunately, this also meant that Oregon had to cut its matching budget by 25%, resulting in a \$1 million reduction in the CRGC's operating budget.

The 25% reduction significantly reduced CRGC's ability to carry out the work needed to oversee the implementation of the Management Plan in six counties. Since each of the 10 staff members has unique, specialized skills required for the work, staff agreed to take pay cuts of 10-50% to avoid layoffs and the loss of long-term institutional knowledge. All

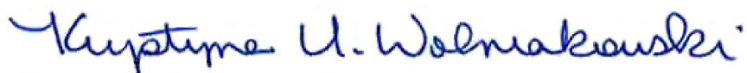
operational costs were reviewed, and cuts were made across the board, except for fixed fees such as lease payments, utilities, and payments to each state for administrative services.

With all the staff time and administrative cost reductions, including eliminating staff travel, supplies, janitorial services, and in-person Commission meetings, CRGC has no more room for reductions except for eliminating the very staff needed to implement the day-to-day work to meet the mission and administrative requirements of running a bi-state agency that must comply with the two states' financial and programmatic management systems.

CRGC is being asked to prioritize realistic reduction options. There are no realistic options to reduce the budget by an additional 5% beyond the existing 25% reduction. However, the attached spreadsheet demonstrates the consequences of an additional 5% reduction.

We do not have any other line items to cut except the final \$6,000 from service and supplies (which is \$12,000 with the required Washington state budget reduction match), a final \$4,000 from staff travel (which is \$8,000 with the required Washington state budget reduction match), and an additional \$67,640 in staff salary reductions (which totals \$135,280 with the required Washington state budget reduction match).

Thank you for your consideration. Our agency wants to continue to support economic vitality and be a key regional partner in Oregon and Washington to fulfill the vision that so many of us share to keep the NSA as a treasured place where agriculture, forestry, and tourism thrive, and communities call home.



Krystyna U. Wolniakowski
Executive Director

Agency Name - 35000 CRGC																
2025-27 Biennium																
2025-27 LAB				1,552,807	-	-	-	-	-	1,552,807						
Detail of Reductions to 2025-27 Legislatively Adopted Budget																
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Priority (ranked most to least preferred)		Agency	SCR or Activity Initials	Program Unit/Activity Description	GF	LF	OF	NL-OF	FF	NL-FF	TOTAL FUNDS	Pos.	FTE	Gov. Reduction Target Yes / No	One-Time Yes / No	Describe the reduction and associated impact on services and outcomes. Please identify the source of Other Funds reductions.
Dept	Prgm/ Div															
		35000		Service & Supplies	6,000						\$ 6,000			Yes	Yes	CRGC's only funding is matching General Fund from Oregon and Private/Local from Washington. CRGC is not allowed to charge any fees. Washington reduced the agency's budget by 25% in the 2025-27 biennium, which required a matching 25% reduction from Oregon, for a total reduction of \$1 million. In order to meet Oregon's September Target Spending Reduction of \$10,000, which doubles to \$20,000 with Washington's required reduction match, the agency has completely eliminated janitorial and reduced expenses, including office supplies, postage, subscriptions, and printing and reproduction by \$6,000, and has no other Services & Supplies to reduce. Oregon's share of this reduction equals \$6,000 GF AND has caused a matching reduction of \$6,000 from Washington funds. TOTAL REDUCTION TO AGENCY = \$12,000
		35000		Travel	4,000						\$ 4,000			Yes	Yes	CRGC's only funding is matching General Fund from Oregon and Private/Local from Washington. CRGC is not allowed to charge any fees. Washington reduced the agency's budget by 25% in the 2025-27 biennium, which required a matching 25% reduction from Oregon, for a total reduction of \$1 million. In order to meet Oregon's September Target Spending Reduction of \$10,000, which doubles to \$20,000 with Washington's required reduction match, the agency has completely eliminated all agency staff and commissioner travel by \$4,000 and has no other Travel to reduce. The reduction has eliminated face-to-face discussions with local governments, Treaty Tribes, state and federal agencies, citizens, and in most cases between the Commission itself. The reduction will also prevent the agency director from meeting with Commissioners, local, state, and federal agencies, and with the Governor's Natural Resource Cabinet. This reduction greatly reduces the Commission's ability to perform its day-to-day work and the overall function of the National Scenic Area. It will also place a greater burden on Oregon agencies to implement the National Scenic Area Act and bi-state Gorge Compact without technical assistance from the Commission. This reduction will also negatively impact Oregon KPM #5, which represents the number of presentations to civic and community groups each year. Oregon's share of this reduction equals \$4,000 GF AND has caused a matching reduction of \$4,000 from Washington funds. TOTAL REDUCTION TO AGENCY = \$8,000

Agency Name - 35000 CRGC																		
2025-27 Biennium																		
2025-27 LAB				1,552,807	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,552,807							
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Priority (ranked most to least preferred)		Agency	SCR or Activity Initials	Program Unit/Activity Description	GF	LF	OF	NL-OF	FF	NL-FF	TOTAL FUNDS	Pos.	FTE	Gov. Reduction Target Yes / No	One-Time Yes / No	Describe the reduction and associated impact on services and outcomes. Please identify the source of Other Funds reductions.		
Dept	Prgm/ Div																	
		35000		Additional Staff Time Reductions	38,820						\$ 38,820			No	Yes	CRGC's only funding is matching General Fund from Oregon and Private/Local from Washington. CRGC is not allowed to charge any fees. Washington reduced the agency's budget by 25% in the 2025-27 biennium, which required a matching 25% reduction from Oregon, for a total reduction of \$1 million. Staff have already been reduced by 10-50%. CRGC has no full-time staff and the office is closed on Fridays due to these reductions. This will impact CRGC's customer service key performance measure. To reach the target of \$77,640, which doubles to \$155,280 with the Washington match, deeper cuts to all staff will be necessary, with additional reductions of 4.9%. No other discretionary funds are available to achieve this 2.5% target, as they were all eliminated to meet Oregon state's required reductions. Each of our ten staff members possesses a unique skill set, with long-term institutional knowledge, experience, and specialized expertise to fulfill the Gorge Commission's mandate and programmatic responsibilities. Should these reductions be implemented, there is a risk that the agency will lose staff seeking full-time employment, which will impact the capacity to effectively accomplish our work. With further staff reductions, a backlog of permit development and review will occur causing lengthy delays for landowners to build in the NSA after the Rowena and Burdoin fires destroyed their homes and structures. This delay will impact economic vitality in the NSA and impact our customer service performance measure. This reduction will also negatively impact Oregon KPM #5, which represents the number of presentations to civic and community groups each year. Oregon's share of this reduction equals \$38,820 GF AND will cause a matching reduction of \$38,820 from Washington funds. TOTAL REDUCTION TO AGENCY = \$77,640		
		35000		Additional Staff Time Reductions	28,820						\$ 28,820			No	Yes	CRGC's only funding is matching General Fund from Oregon and Private/Local from Washington. CRGC is not allowed to charge any fees. Washington reduced the agency's budget by 25% in the 2025-27 biennium, which required a matching 25% reduction from Oregon, for a total reduction of \$1 million. Staff have already been reduced by 10-50%. CRGC has no full-time staff and the office is closed on Fridays due to these reductions. This will impact CRGC's customer service key performance measure. To reach the target of \$77,640, which doubles to \$155,280 with the Washington match, deeper cuts to all staff will be necessary, with additional reductions of 3.6%. No other discretionary funds are available to achieve the reduction target, as they were all eliminated to meet Oregon state's required reductions. Each of our ten staff members possesses a unique skill set, with long-term institutional knowledge, experience, and specialized expertise to fulfill the Gorge Commission's mandate and programmatic responsibilities. Should these reductions be implemented, there is a risk that the agency will lose staff seeking full-time employment, which will impact the capacity to effectively accomplish our work. With further staff reductions, a backlog of permit development and review will occur causing lengthy delays for landowners to build in the NSA after the Rowena and Burdoin fires destroyed their homes and structures. This delay will impact economic vitality in the NSA and our customer service performance measure. This reduction will also negatively impact Oregon KPM #5, which represents the number of presentations to civic and community groups each year. Oregon's share of this reduction equals \$28,820 GF AND will cause a matching reduction of \$28,820 from Washington funds. TOTAL REDUCTION TO AGENCY = \$57,640		
											\$ -							
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		2025-27 LAB - CRGC Reduction Options										\$ -						11/4/2025
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Agency Name - 35000 CRGC																
2025-27 Biennium																
2025-27 LAB				1,552,807	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,552,807					
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Priority (ranked most to least preferred)	Agency	SCR or Activity Initials	Program Unit/Activity Description	GF	LF	OF	NL-OF	FF	NL-FF	TOTAL FUNDS	Pos.	FTE	Gov. Reduction Target Yes / No	One-Time Yes / No	Describe the reduction and associated impact on services and outcomes. Please identify the source of Other Funds reductions.	
Dept																

Target (5%)	77,640	-	-	
Difference	(0)	-	-	

Agency Name - 35000 CRGC

2025-27 Biennium

[illegible]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Agency	SCR	Program Establishment / Expansion			Program Description	GF	LF	OF	NL-OF	FF	NL-FF	TOTAL FUNDS	Pos.	FTE	Implementation Status
		Biennium	Effective Date	Authorization											
35000		2021-23										\$ -			CRGC started no new programs in the 2021-23 biennium.
35000		2023-25										\$ -			CRGC started no new programs in the 2023-25 biennium.
35000		2025-27										\$ -			CRGC will not start any new programs in the 2025-27 biennium.
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				TOTAL		-	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0	0.00	

Instructions

Column (5) - Authorization should identify the source of the new program or program expansion, which could include enabling legislation, approved policy option package, or administrative establishment.

Column (6) - Program description should include a summary of the program and the expansion (if applicable), including any partner state agencies.

Column (16) - Current status of program implementation should be summarized, including any future budget requests anticipated upon full program implementation.