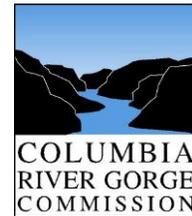


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Gorge Commission Launches Assessment of Gorge Future

The Columbia River Gorge Commission has asked the Oregon Consensus program and the William D. Ruckelshaus Center to conduct a series of individual and group interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and regional leaders to identify aspirations, concerns and willingness to find common ground for resource protection and community development in the Columbia River Gorge. The consensus programs will summarize the interviews and offer recommendations about the feasibility of collaborative problem solving. Oregon Consensus and the Ruckelshaus Center are university-based institutions devoted to promoting collaborative governance and consensus-based policy.

“To really gauge the potential for collaboration and consensus, we need neutral professional consensus experts asking questions,” said Carl McNew, Gorge Commission Chair representing Klickitat County, Washington. “We are extremely pleased to work with experts from both Washington and Oregon.”

The Gorge Commission, which has faced a multitude of budget cuts since 2008, received an unexpected funding boost when the State of Washington agreed to restore funds it anticipated saving by consolidating the Commission’s administration with a state agency. Because the consolidation never occurred, the “savings” were restored to the Commission’s budget this spring. “The restored funds provide a welcome opportunity to build on the regional vision identified in the Commission’s 2007 Future Forum and begin a regional conversation about growth and stewardship in the Gorge,” said Darren Nichols, executive director for the commission. “This is a project the commission has put off for years because of budget cuts. We are looking forward to using this approach to build consensus and work together to secure the successful future of the Gorge.”

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

Oregon Consensus (OC) is a program of the National Policy Consensus Center housed in Portland State University’s Hatfield School of Government. <http://www.orconsensus.pdx.edu/index.php>

The Ruckelshaus Center is a neutral resource for collaborative problem solving hosted at the University of Washington and Washington State University. More information is available at <http://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/>.

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