



The Honorable Greg Walden
United States House of Representatives
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

September 8, 2015

OneGorge Advocacy Group
c/o Port of Hood River
1000 E. Port Marina Drive
Hood River, OR 97031

RE: Actionable priorities for Gorge communities

Dear Congressman Walden:

The OneGorge Advocacy group is a network of private businesses and public agencies in the bi-state Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. With over 80 individual participants, OneGorge works to coordinate legislative advocacy for regional priorities. The undersigned participants of the OneGorge Advocacy Group wish to express our thanks to you for working with your colleagues throughout our bi-state region to advance regional priorities. In response to your request for a list of near-term, actionable items that a coalition of Northwest legislators could work together on, we submit to you the following:

Near term:

- Add funding for the Oregon Investment Board (OIB) and Washington Investment Board (WIB) economic development programs in the President's budget proposal to Congress in 2016.
- Work with Chairman Shuster of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to ensure that "the improvement of transportation and safety and the movement of people and freight in National Scenic Areas" be included within the Purpose and eligibility clauses of any discretionary funding program(s) included in the reauthorization of MAP21. Currently, the House T&I Committee is anticipated to include discretionary funding in either the Projects of National and Regional Significance (PNRS) or the Assistance to Major Projects (AMP) Programs.

Longer term:

We urge you to work with your colleagues to ensure the delivery of the twin purposes of the National Scenic Area Act; environmental protection and economic development. To create and maintain economically viable communities and provide jobs while protecting the area's natural and cultural resources, we seek your support for the following:

- Comprehensive transportation plan for the entire National Scenic Area that addresses the critical safety, freight capacity, and infrastructure needs and public enjoyment of the region. Along with much needed improvements to WA State Route 14, the replacement of the Hood River Interstate Bridge and improvements to the Bridge of the Gods would be critical components of this plan. Bike/ped crossings on both bridges are in great demand by growing communities on both sides of the river as people seek alternatives for their commutes to work and school.

- Affordable workforce housing.
- Forestry and sustainable forest management, including forest fire mitigation along with wildlife habitat restoration.
- Expanded fiber connectivity and broadband in rural areas.
- Strengthening our schools.
- Sustainable tourism development and destination management.

As evidenced by the very formation of the OneGorge Advocacy Group, community and private business leaders in the Gorge are ready to come together to support your efforts to advance these priorities in any way that we can. OneGorge echoes and supports the efforts of the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD); County, City and tribal governments throughout the Gorge; Oregon and Washington state government agencies; and our partners in private industry to engage with your staff for substantial advancement of these issues in the coming months.

We welcome your recommendations for a work plan on these initiatives and hope that you will let us know of any advocacy actions we could undertake in support of your work.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned, facilitated by OneGorge

Frank Cox



Frank Cox, Mayor
City of Stevenson, WA

Tammara Toppel



Tammara Toppel, Director of Human Resources
Custom Interface, Inc.

Andrea Klaas



Andrea Klaas, Executive Director
Port of The Dalles

Pat Albaugh



Pat Albaugh, Executive Director
Skamania County Economic Development Council

Joyce Brake



Joyce Brake, Attorney at Law
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GORDON ZIMMERMAN



Gordon Zimmerman, City Administrator
City of Cascade Locks

Maria Foley



Maria Foley, Executive Director
Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce

John McSherry



John McSherry, Executive Director
Port of Skamania County

Jess Groves



Jess Groves, President
Port of Cascade Locks

David M. Roth



David Roth, Financial Advisor
Edward Jones Investments

Cheryl L Park



Cheryl Park
Ascendente Winery

Brian Thomas Mullis



Brian Mullis, Executive Board Chair & Founder
Sustainable Travel International

John Hardham



John Hardham, Owner
Lightwave Communications

Paul Koch



Paul Koch, Interim General Manager
Port of Cascade Locks

Michael S. McElwee



Michael S. McElwee, Executive Director
Port of Hood River