

# Partnerships on Every Forest

Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

March 11, 2024



**National Forest Foundation**

# Agenda

- Introductions
- Background – Why Partnerships on Every Forest?
- PEF Results and Open Discussion
- Vision
- Regional Forest Priorities
- Partnership Goals
- Partnerships In Action
- Story Map
- Action Items
- Town Hall Q&A with Forest Supervisor and Staff

# Outline

- ❖ Intro to the NFF
- ❖ Partnerships on Every Forest
- ❖ Methodology
- ❖ Results
- ❖ Conclusions
- ❖ Questions



***We work on behalf of the American public to inspire personal and meaningful connections to our National Forests, the centerpiece of America's public lands.***



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# Partnerships on Every Forest

- Jointly managed between the NFF and the NPO
- Initiated in 2019
- 4 assessments completed
- 3 wrapping up
- 2024 application cycle recently closed



# PEF Methodology

1. Application process
2. Focus group conversations
3. Semi-structured interviews and snowball sampling
4. Qualitative interview coding
5. Results analysis
6. Share out
7. Other deliverables?



Goal: Gather insights and recommendations for fostering sustainable partnerships for mutual benefit.

# Working with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

- Initial conversations were held in early 2023
  - Focus area: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Interviews conducted May-September 2023
- Analysis October 2023
- Present results to FLT December 2023
- Present results to partners: Today!



Source: USFS



# Interview Questions

1. To start, can you share your **position title and your role with your organization**?
2. When you think of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, what are some **values** that come to mind?
3. What is your **favorite thing** about the Scenic Area?
4. What **types of partnership work** are you involved with on the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area? What kinds of projects or agreements do you participate in?
5. What aspects of your partnership with the Scenic Area are **working well**?
6. **What challenges do you face** in your partnership with the Scenic Area? Is there anything you are **particularly concerned** about?
7. What kind of **metrics** embody a successful partnership program? Where should the **focus** be?
8. What is your group doing to **diversify your outreach and engage** with **underrepresented** populations?
9. **Are there any gaps** in who the Scenic Area is partnering with? Any groups or stakeholders that you feel should be included that are not currently? If so, who?
10. What **opportunities** is the Scenic Area missing that could **improve engagement with partners and/or expand outreach**?
11. We are trying to speak with as many existing and potential partners as possible. **Can you recommend other individuals or groups we should speak with** about partnerships at the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area?





# Results

- 29 interviews conducted
  - 9 conservation (nonprofit/volunteer)
  - 8 recreation (business/volunteer)
  - 7 education (nonprofit/university)
  - 4 CRGNSA staff
  - 2 economic development
  - 2 community group (nonprofit)
  - 1 Tribal government



# Values

- Environmental Stewardship and Connection (26)
- Nature and beauty (25)
- Personal well-being and fulfillment (10)
- Recreation (8)
- Indigenous culture (5)
- Natural Resources (3)

*"The whole ecosystem and how people engage at the CRGNSA is very special."*

*"Keeping it pristine and natural, and protecting views are values for the community. There are efforts to reduce impact and increase access."*

*"There is a rich cultural history of Indigenous Tribes in this area, our organization is trying to protect and preserve this, in addition to natural resources."*

# Strengths

- Communication and outreach (13)
- Positive relationships (10)
- Partnership opportunities (8)
- Common goals (4)
- Economic development (3)
- Resourceful and innovative (3)

*"FS staff are making an effort to reach out and assist us with whatever we need."*

*"Good communication, a good plan laid out from the start together, and coordination to change the plan while staying within FS policy; The FS trusts us to carry out the work as planned."*

# Challenges/Barriers

- Forest Service staff turnover and capacity (23)
- Bureaucracy (17)
- Transportation and parking (12)
- Grant funding (7)
- Partner Capacity (5)
- Planning (5)
- Lack of volunteer coordination (4)
- Conflicting priorities (4)
- Government Mistrust (4)

*"The main challenge is the turnover of staff at the FS, a lot of institutional knowledge does not get passed along."*

*"Due to limited time and capacity, it is difficult for projects to move forward in a timely manner."*

*"With the FS being federal, there are more hoops to jump through which can be challenging."*



# Gaps in Engagement

- People of Color (5)
- Tribal Government (3)
- Immigrants (2)
- Disabilities community (2)
- Transportation (2)

*"There could be more work around diversifying engagement and finding way to engage with folks who aren't historically engaged."*

*"Some efforts to diversify the outdoors don't seem authentic. There are a lot of groups that want to diversify the outdoors, but they are not being led by minority or underrepresented organizations."*

*"It can be hard for non-English speaking communities to find information about how to access the Gorge."*

# Opportunities

- Reassessment and communication of Forest Goals (11)
- Managing partners and volunteers (6)
- Bilingual services (4)
- Intentional outreach to organizations serving underrepresented communities (4)
- Strong, intentional leadership (2)

*"There could be a reassessment of what the public is looking for and what is being offered to reconcile some of the use and changing goals."*

*"It felt really good to see diverse groups get involved, but you can't just expect them to show up. You have to meet with them and form a mutually beneficial relationship."*

# Suggestions

## **Navigating Forest Service Administrative Policy:**

- Transition planning
- Partner Empowerment
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) staff and training

## **Transportation, Parking and Access:**

- Work with partners to develop strategy
- Opportunity for economic development

## **Volunteer Coordination, Planning, and Communication:**

- Provide clear direction regarding Forest priorities and strategize partnership planning
- Create a partnership spotlight on the CRGNSA website



# Suggestions: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



## **Be Mindful of Historical Context:**

- Conservation and the outdoors has historically excluded BIPOC
- Knowledge of treaties

## **Empower Underrepresented Communities:**

- Acknowledge the work and histories
- Leverage partners with existing connections
- Be mindful of capacity limitations
- Host social opportunities to build trust and relationships

## **Trail Accessibility and Safety:**

- Bilingual and graphical formats
- Inclusive environments

By consulting with partners and keeping diversity, equity, and inclusion as a major driver of land management strategy, the Forest will attract a wider diversity of visitors and partners.



**Is there anything you'd like to share with the Forest Service?**



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# Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Partnership Program Vision

*The CRGNSA partnership program fosters an environment where all communities in and around the Columbia River Gorge feel safe, motivated, and inspired to connect and engage with the Gorge's unique ecosystems and landscapes.*

# Regional Forest Service Priorities

# Co-Stewardship with Tribes



Partnerships on Every Forest- Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility



# Wildfire Crisis Strategy



# Post Fire Recovery



# **CRGNSA Partnership Program Goals**

- Engagement with Underserved Communities**
- Ecological Restoration and Landscape Resilience**
- Youth Engagement**
- Language Services**
- Community Building**



# Engagement with Underserved Communities: Gorge Accessibility Project





## Engagement with Underserved Communities: Ranger Outing with CultureSeed

# Ecological Restoration and Landscape Resilience: Klickitat Mile 1 Plantings





**Ecological Restoration  
and Landscape  
Resilience:  
Prescribed Burning w/  
Washington  
Department of  
Natural Resources**

# Youth Engagement: Next Door Youth Crew





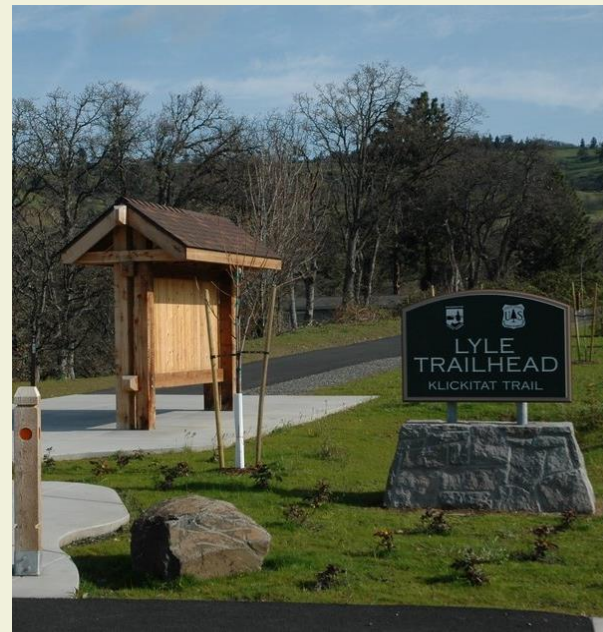
# Youth Engagement: Forest Youth Success

# Youth Engagement: Every Kid Outdoors Programming





# Language Services: Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance Audio Tours





# Language Services: Multnomah Falls Visitor Center Renovations





# Community Building: Trailkeepers of Oregon Trailhead Ambassadors

# Community Building: Skamania Schools



# StoryMap



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# Action Items

- **Establish Partnership Program Metrics**
- **Update CRGNSA Website/ Story Map**
- **Expand multilingual services**
- **Annual Review of Goals and Vision**

# Town Hall Q&A and Next Steps

To learn more about partnership opportunities on the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, contact Claire Fernandes:

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503-730-8598

# Thank You

Please contact Emily Jochem or Nerissa Barling with questions

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# Guided Discussion

- How can the FS support partners?
- How can we collectively develop a partnership network to empower each other?
  - What resources should the partnership network provide?
  - Who will facilitate/lead this network?
- Were there any surprises in this assessment? What stood out to you?