

Gorge Ecology Outdoors

PO Box 1104

Hood River, OR 97031

March 13, 2023

To: Oregon Legislature, Ways and Means Sub-committee

Subject: HB 5008

Good morning:

My name is Bill Weiler and I am the founder and on the Board of Directors of Gorge Ecology Outdoors, an environmental education organization based in Hood River. We serve rural and disadvantaged youth of the mid-Columbia Gorge region, and over the past 26 year, 25,000 students have participated in our programs.

We are urging passage of HB 5008, and the restoration of POP 103, 104, and 105 funding for the Columbia Gorge Commission.

The Gorge Commission recently published their Climate Change Report, which will have positive far-reaching results for the Gorge's natural resources. We need the Commission to be fully staffed in order to implement their report's recommendations. For Columbia River feeder streams that are presently cold water refuges for salmon and steelhead, the Commission will have a major role in insuring these areas do not become warmer, and as a result, unusable habitat for migrating salmonids.

The Gorge Commission's equity goals are in line with those of the State of Oregon, but they will need staff to implement them.

And like many areas in Oregon, the Gorge has a number of conservation challenges including the resumption of a large mine that is situated next to the Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge near Vancouver, WA. The Gorge Commission will have a major role in determining the fate of the mine as well as many other legal issues.

With Governor Inslee's budget including full support for the Gorge Commission, it is imperative that Oregon follows suit, because with the Gorge Commission needing both Washington and Oregon's budget approval, Washington's support will be for naught unless Oregon follows Washington's lead.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bill Weiler

GEO

Hood River, OR