

2025-27 Budget Review

Columbia River Gorge Commission

	2021-23 Actual	2023-25 Legislatively Approved *	2025-27 Current Service Level	2025-27 Governor's Budget
General Fund	1,377,034	2,502,980	1,729,687	2,076,661
Total Funds	1,377,034	2,502,980	1,729,687	2,076,661
Positions	-	-	-	-
FTE	-	-	-	-

* Includes legislative and administrative actions through December 2024.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Columbia River Gorge Commission (CRGC) was authorized by the 1986 Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act and created as a regional agency through an interstate compact between Oregon and Washington. The Commission was established to implement the National Scenic Area Act's purposes of protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Gorge while encouraging compatible growth within existing urban areas of the Gorge region and allowing future economic growth. The Commission acts as the primary regional planning agency for the Columbia River Gorge and is responsible for developing and implementing policy for land use and resource protection on non-federal lands in the National Scenic Area.

The Commission consists of 13 appointed members: six appointed by local governments (one each from the Gorge counties in Oregon and Washington), six appointed by the states of Oregon and Washington (three by each state's Governor), and one ex officio member appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture (generally filled by the manager of the U.S. Forest Services' National Scenic Area office). The Commission hires an Executive Director and has an office in White Salmon, Washington. Employees of the CRGC are Washington State employees.

BUDGET ENVIRONMENT

By the interstate compact, Oregon and Washington are required to equally share the operating costs of the Commission. The Commission's budget consists of two programs: Joint Expenses (operating costs) and Commissioner Expenses (direct cost of the Commission members appointed from Oregon). In addition to the costs above, Washington pays for the cost of one position responsible for permitting in Klickitat County. Only the Joint Expenses program is required to be equally funded by the two states. The current service level (CSL) budget for the Commission is generally only changed in the Oregon process for standard inflation and any adjustments to the State Government Service Charge (SGSC). Generally, the cost of salaries and other employee compensation related costs increase at a rate greater

than standard inflation. This means adjustments are likely needed so the Oregon professional services payment matches the Washington personal services costs.

The Commission is currently working on an Access Database Replacement project. The project will be implemented through the purchase of an industry standard, customizable, off the shelf cloud-based workflow license to replace the existing outdated database for tracking and recording land use applications and approving land use permits. This project has received endorsement from both state's information technology oversight agencies as well as the legislative and executive branch budget offices. CRGC anticipates starting the third phase in 2025 and fully implementing the database by the end of the 2025-27 biennium.

CURRENT SERVICE LEVEL

The 2025-27 current service level (CSL) budget of \$1.7 million is \$773,293, or 30.9%, less than the 2023-25 legislatively approved budget (LAB) of \$2.5 million. The significant decrease is primarily due to the phase-out of costs associated with the second phase of the Access Database Replacement project.

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET SUMMARY

The 2025-27 Governor's budget of \$2.1 million General Fund is \$346,974, or 20.6%, more than the 2025-27 CSL. The Governor's budget includes one policy option package to implement the third phase of the Access Database Replacement project, the final phase of the project.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

A copy of the Columbia River Gorge Commission Annual Performance Progress Report can be found on the LFO website:

https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/lfo/APPR/APPR_CRGC_2024-07-02.pdf

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