



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Tribal members to lead Gorge Commission in 2023 following historic vote

Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

White Salmon, WA (November 14, 2022) – For the first time in the history of the Columbia River Gorge Commission, a member of a federally recognized tribe will lead the agency. During the November 8, 2022 Commission meeting, Carina Miller, of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, was elected as Chair of the Commission and will serve a one-year term beginning January 1, 2023.

Joining Miller in executive leadership is Pah-tu Pitt, who is also a member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Pitt will be serving for a second year in the position of Vice-Chair.

“It has been a privilege to work together on a Commission with members and staff committed to honoring all people who have lived in the Gorge,” Miller said. “The Commission has undertaken heavy work to measure outcomes of the Management Plan and to identify ways to review and update it more efficiently.”

“As a bi-state Commission, we will face unique and complicated issues in the upcoming year,” Miller said. “The fact that Commissioner Pitt and I were elected as officers representing not only the Commission, but also our Tribes, is a powerful moment in my life. Kwalanawashayksh ayayat Nch’I wana (Thankful for the beautiful Columbia River).”

Miller was originally appointed to the Commission in 2019 by Oregon Governor Kate Brown. Pitt joined the Commission in 2021 as an appointee of Washington Governor Jay Inslee. The two governors have appointed tribal representatives to the Gorge Commission for many years. The representation of federal, state, county, and tribal perspectives on the

Commission provides a unique regional governance structure.

The bi-state land use agency implements the National Scenic Area Act and corresponding Management Plan throughout the Gorge. Comprised of thirteen members, three are appointed by the Oregon Governor, three are appointed by the Washington Governor, one representative is appointed by each of the six counties in the National Scenic Area, and the Secretary of Agriculture appoints one non-voting member.

Represented in Oregon are Multnomah, Hood River, and Wasco counties, and Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat counties are represented in Washington. The Forest Supervisor from the U.S.D.A Forest Service National Scenic Area Office serves on behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Act requires the Commission to consult with the four Columbia River treaty tribes. The Commission works closely with the tribes and relies on the expertise of their staffs.

“The milestone of electing tribal representatives into the Commission’s two leadership positions comes at a time when the Commission is preparing to approve its first Climate Change Action Plan for the National Scenic Area,” said Gorge Commission Executive Director Krystyna Wolniakowski.

“Both Commissioner Miller and Commissioner Pitt have provided knowledge and perspectives to advance this critical work,” Wolniakowski added. “We are grateful for their leadership and look forward to working with them, fellow Commissioners, and community partners to sustain a thriving, resilient National Scenic Area for future generations.”

Members of the public are invited to participate in Gorge Commission meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. Agendas and materials are available one week prior to meetings at www.gorgecommission.org.

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The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area encompasses 292,500 acres of Washington and Oregon, where the Columbia River cuts a spectacular river canyon through the Cascade Mountains. The USDA Forest Service manages National Forest lands in the National Scenic Area and works together with the Columbia River Gorge Commission to protect and enhance scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Columbia River Gorge while encouraging local economic development consistent with that protection. Learn more about the USDA Forest Service at www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa and more information about the Gorge Commission at www.gorgecommission.org.