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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

February 8, 2008

Columbia River Gorge Commission  
P.O. Box 730  
White Salmon, WA 98672

Dear Commissioners:

In the twenty years since the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area was established by federal law, the families and communities that call the Gorge their home have experienced significant change. Change in local economies, in livelihoods, in their new hopes for the future of the place where they live and raise families, and in the unfulfilled federal promises made to local Gorge communities in 1986 to support economic development and recreation enhancement.

In recognition of these changes, I write to strongly support the proposed Management Plan amendment concerning conversion of the Broughton Mill industrial site to a recreation resort.

There is absolutely no question that the past two decades have seen a dramatic decline in the local timber economy and real growth in the importance of tourism and recreation to local livelihoods. The loss of timber jobs was not by choice, it was largely the result of forced actions and deliberate policies established by federal and state governments. Tourism and recreation have increased in economic importance as local communities reacted to the changes happening around them. Also, many groups from outside the Scenic Area have for years pursued their vision for the Gorge as a place of weekend enjoyment and recreation. For these reasons, the opportunity presented by the conversion of a river-side industrial site into a recreation resort has been embraced with enthusiasm by local communities and should be supported with equal vigor by those who've championed the Gorge as a tourist destination.

The local support for the proposed amendment and the Broughton Landing effort runs deep among those I represent in Congress: the Skamania County Commissioners, the Klickitat County Commissioners, the City of Bingen, the City of White Salmon, the Skamania County Chamber of Commerce, the Skamania County Economic Development Council, the Port of Klickitat, the Klickitat Tourist Advisory Board, and many more.

I believe one of the primary reasons for this deep local support comes from the open, collaborative manner in which the property owner has operated from the very earliest days of this proposal. It has been an inclusive endeavor undertaken with obvious respect for the

Scenic Area. Such sincere consideration of the views of locals and those living in nearby urban areas is to be commended.

It is regrettable that this level of respect for others has not been exhibited by all. I have often been disturbed by the dismissiveness and disregard exhibited towards local elected leaders and communities in the Gorge by some who live outside the area but have definite opinions on how life there should be lived. For example, with this matter not yet even considered by the Commission, it is disappointing that a colleague of mine has raised the threat of a lawsuit in their written public comments. Such actions are neither constructive nor appropriate, and I certainly hope are not an indication of a pre-determined strategy to dismiss the Commission's decision as invalid if it doesn't align with the agenda of persons or groups opposed to the proposed amendment.

I encourage the Commission to address the substantial changes that have occurred in the Gorge by adopting the proposed amendment to govern the transition of an industrial eyesore into an economically viable recreation resort that enhances the Gorge for local residents (through increased jobs and a stronger economy) and visitors (improved recreation and safety) with true sensitivity to the Scenic Area's environment.

This is truly the only viable and economically feasible alternative to transform the Broughton Mill site.

I recognize it's claimed in an analysis assembled by ECONorthwest that it would be economically viable to turn the likely-contaminated industrial site into an RV park for nearly 200 motor-homes and camper trailers. However, the Gorge Commission Executive Director's report highlights serious deficiencies and outright omissions in this contracted report. The underlying argument behind the report is that no action is needed and that the status quo is satisfactory and desirable. To be clear, rejection of the proposed amendment and acceptance of the status quo is to declare it preferable for there to be a deteriorating industrial site of little or no use residing on the banks of the Columbia River in the center of the Gorge Scenic Area.

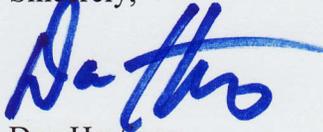
There is no alternative to the proposed amendment that can achieve an equal or better level of protections to Scenic Area conditions and economic development. Not only is the economic viability of an RV park, collection of rental cabins, or scaled-down resort undermined by the costs of cleaning up a heavily used industrial site, but none of those scenarios would require the Scenic Area enhancements encompassed in the proposed amendment. Achieving a higher standard of protections and greater improvements to the Scenic Area requires a reciprocal level of resort development.

Finally, I must note that the tax base of local towns and counties have been heavily impacted by the creation of the Scenic Area. The level of resort development allowed at the Broughton Mill site not only ensures beneficial enhancements to Scenic Area conditions, it also provides an economic boost in the form of new jobs and a larger tax base for local governments. Far too often the economies and tax base of local governments have taken a back seat to Scenic Area regulations and federal land acquisitions. The proposed amendment before the Commission would achieve both a more scenic Gorge for the future and a sustained

economic boost to local communities. This is an opportunity that I encourage the Commission to seize and approve with enthusiasm.

The Commission's consideration of my comments and the strong support for the proposed amendment by the local communities that I represent is sincerely appreciated. Please feel free to contact me or my staff, Todd Young at 202-225-5816, with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Hastings", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Doc Hastings  
Member of Congress