

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 3, 2007

Columbia River Gorge Commission
PO Box 730
White Salmon, WA 98672

RE: Recreation Resort Plan Amendment

Dear Gorge Commissioners:

As long-time supporters of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, we respectfully and officially submit for the record our comments regarding the proposed Recreation Resort Plan Amendment to the Management Plan that addresses the conversion of the Broughton Mill industrial site.

In addition to touring the Broughton site, we and our staff have personally met on several occasions with the various stakeholders of the proposed project, including members of the Friends of the Columbia River Gorge, County Commissioners, and the Broughton site property owners. We believe the Broughton redevelopment proposal will provide recreational opportunities to visitors to the Columbia Gorge, and economic benefits to Skamania County, its residents and surrounding areas.

Traditionally, the economy of this region has been heavily dependent on timber harvests on federal lands. Because federally-owned land is not taxable, local governments received a percentage of timber harvest revenue. As you know, due to a number of factors, there has been significant decrease in timber harvest on federal lands. As those timber sales dropped, so did payments. Congress responded in 2000 by enacting the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act, which provided payments to counties impacted by timber revenue decline. These payments to rural counties are due to expire at the end of this fiscal year, creating economic uncertainty for counties

Congress has asked rural communities to find alternative funding sources, and explore different options for economic development. The Broughton redevelopment is such an option that will help Skamania County regain some of its lost revenue.

We are strong supporters and proponents of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act. During the Act's 21 years, Congress has appropriated millions of dollars in land acquisition funds. While in office, we have worked hard to acquire those funds to protect the Columbia River Gorge. We also support the local economies along the Columbia River Gorge area and encourage limited growth that enhances future economic development in a manner that protects the Gorge. We encourage the Gorge

Commissioners to pass a plan amendment which allows for an economically viable and successful development while protecting and enhancing the Gorge.

We were asked to look into the possibility of federal funding to offset the cost of redeveloping the site in order to reduce its size. Our staff researched this option and found it was not a viable alternative. In these tight budgetary times, there are simply no significant sources of funds available which could be guaranteed for use for a private development.

We strongly urge all the stakeholders to continue their work together in adopting a suitable plan aimed at revitalizing the Broughton Mill industrial site into an environmentally sound, economically viable, and successful project. We offer our assistance as needed and appropriate in order to see the Broughton industrial site redeveloped from its current state, to a recreational destination, enhancing the area and providing much needed economic relief to the county.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and for all the work you do to protect and enhance our natural wonder that is the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact our respective staff members, Page Phillips at 360.695.6292, or Mindi Linquist at 360.696.7797.

Sincerely,



Brian Baird
United States Congressman



Patty Murray
United States Senator