



March 7, 2008

To: Columbia River Gorge Commission

From: Scott Keillor, AICP

**Re: Broughton Resort/Recreation Resort Amendment**

Dear Commissioners,

I have lived and worked in the Gorge for 20 years and have had the pleasure of working professionally on many projects, from economic development studies to project and site development gorge-wide. This includes working to implement the NSA through local codes and amendments, implementing it through project design, and assisting staff with creation of the NSA Economic Development Handbook.

I wish to speak in favor of the proposed Recreation Resort Plan Amendment as a longtime resident, professional planner and recreational enthusiast. I support the proposal not only because it expands economic and recreational opportunities, but also because it takes a balanced approach to the two purposes of the Act – resource protection and economic development.

Adoption of this plan amendment will facilitate redevelopment of the former mill site. Under the current regulations, the Broughton site could only be redeveloped as a large RV campground, which could be located anywhere on the CR-zoned site within Recreational Intensity Class 4. Not only would this leave potential for development outside the industrial footprint, but it is also possible that the owner would leave the existing mill site intact. This type of cost-saving approach would allow RV facilities to be built in and around huge mill site buildings, ultimately leaving the site blighted and non-conforming. It would also have limited economic impact.

In contrast, a destination resort has real economic development potential, as substantiated in the 2003 Skamania County Trade and Revenue Study which I co-authored. Here are a few facts:

- Skamania County experiences \$30M (\$36M adjusted to 2008 dollars) annual retail outflow. These are retail dollars spent outside the County that could be captured and circulated within the local economy.
- Nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  (72%) of all retail dollars coming into the County are attributed to visitor spending. That means visitors account for nearly \$3 of every \$4 spent in the County.
- Skamania County's per capita tourism income is more than twice that of Washington State (2001: \$4,141 County; \$1,841 State). So visitors do impact the local economy.

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The Broughton project is projected to generate \$8M annually. This equates to a capture of approximately 25% of the current trade leakage in Skamania County. While tourism is not the entire solution, the Broughton Resort alone has potential to replace \$1 of every \$4 currently being spent by residents in areas outside of the County. Clearly, this proposal will assist the County in meeting economic goals through enhanced tourism and recreational facilities

I am also a windsurfer, and previously worked for Washington State Parks on a plan to improve launch facilities at the Hatchery. It's satisfying to see the Broughton redevelopment plan provides the public parking and connected SR 14 pedestrian underpass recommended in that mid-1990's master plan.

In summary, I support this Plan Amendment because it facilitates superior site planning, enhances the County's economic development efforts, and promotes safe access for recreational facility users. The proposal reflects the intent of the Act by providing a balance between resource protection and economic development efforts, but it goes a step beyond. This Plan Amendment represents a rare and exceptional public/private partnership opportunity. It's a win-win proposal.

I urge the Commission's approval of the proposed Recreational Resort Plan Amendment.