

**COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
BI-STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Notice and Agenda**

**ANNUAL MEETING
Tuesday, July 19, 2022
**** 3:00 P.M. ******

Maple Leaf Events, 401 Maple Way, Stevenson, WA
Or via Zoom Meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86249496876> Meeting ID: 862 4949 6876

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Estimated Time</u>	<u>Item</u>
Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions <i>WIB; Skamania EDC</i>	5 minutes	Information
Approval of May 2021 Minutes	5 minutes	Approval
Overview of Bi-State Advisory Committee	5 minutes	Information
2022-27 Columbia Gorge Economic Development Strategy Presentation <i>Jessica Metta, Executive Director, MCEDD</i>	20 minutes	Information
Vital Sign Indicators for Economic Vitality	25 minutes	Discussion
Oregon/Washington Investment Board Updates <i>Jessica Metta, Executive Director, MCEDD Kevin Waters, Executive Director, Skamania EDC</i>	10 minutes	Information
Opportunities for Further Collaboration	5 minutes	Discussion
Updates from Agencies	5 minutes	Discussion
Good of the Order	5 minutes	Discussion
Adjournment		

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. If you have a disability that requires any special materials, services or assistance, please contact us at 541-296-2266 at least 48 hours before the meeting so arrangements for appropriate accommodations can be made.

**COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
BI-STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

May 12, 2021

11:00 A.M.

Via Zoom Meeting

Zoom Host Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

ATTENDANCE:

OIB MEMBERS: Kirk Wright, Craig Bowder, John Kasberger, Jill Amery, Doug Roof, Tammy Miller, Jessica Metta (MCEDD staff),

WIB MEMBERS: Kathy McKenzie, Anita Crow, Matt Masco, Jaclyn Perez, Kevin Waters (Skamania EDC staff)

GUESTS: Ken Bailey, MCEDD Board (Orchard View Farms), Andrea Klaas (Port of The Dalles), Krystyna Wolniakowski (Columbia River Gorge Commission), Lynn Burditt (USFS), Michael Held (Business Oregon), Gordon Zimmerman (City of Cascade Locks), Greg Price (CGCC Small Business Development Center), Tammy Kaufman (Gorge Commission), Scott Clements (MCEDD Loan Administration Board), Dave Sauter (Klickitat County), Bob Hamlin (Skamania County), Rodger Nichols (Gorge Commission), Casey Gatz (USFS)

CALL TO ORDER & COMMUNITY WELCOME

Jill Amery (OIB Chair – Wasco Co) called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. A round of introductions took place.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 2020 MINUTES

Anita Crow motioned to approve the December 15, 2020 meeting minutes. Kathy McKenzie seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

OVERVIEW OF BI-STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL AND ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

Jessica Metta gave an overview of the history, composition and purpose of the Council. Created for the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area, the council provides a joint structure to coordinate both states with investment boards to further economic development in the region. OIB and WIB are voting members of the Council. There are also non-voting members that represent the various communities and agencies involved. The group is generally brought together yearly.

In 2010, the Columbia River Gorge Bi-State Advisory Council began a process to consolidate the Oregon and Washington Economic Development Plans into a single document. The Council included a process for future updates and required review of the plan at least once every five years. That plan was approved in 2011, updated in 2016, and is therefore on schedule for review this year. An update to the plan is generally initiated by the Investment Boards through the Bi-State Advisory Council, with support from the Commission and approval through the respective states.

The plan provides overall guidance in acceptable uses for funds and acts as a guideline for the Boards. The 2010 process incorporated the Oregon and Washington updates into one plan. While economic development funds are administered separately by each state, the coordinated plan reflects the status of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act as one geographic region. It creates a similar look between the two states' plans, includes a process for future revisions and timeframe, and was strategically designed to allow the equitable administration of new funds if/when appropriated.

The current review was begun by the Council at its December 2020 meeting. Feedback was submitted after the meeting and reviewed by staff from MCEDD, Skamania County Economic Development Council, the US Forest Service and the Gorge Commission. Separately, the OIB and WIB also updated their sections. Updates included:

- Reaffirming the joint mission;
- Updating the language about seeking appropriations;
- Review of the Program Administration Goals;
- Updating the Economic Outlook;
- Updating impact information about the programs; and
- General language throughout for consistency and other minor adjustments.

Other updates to note include an update to the mission statement (p.6), the map (p.7), and updated language for current and future funding requests (p. 9-10). The addition on p.11 reflects an incorporation of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) principles into active policy. Once this plan is approved by the Council, it will be submitted to Business Oregon and the Washington Department of Commerce for their submittal to the US Forest Service.

Discussion: Matt Masco requested clarification on the breakdown of the taxing in Skamania County on p.21. He noted that the percentages do not add up to 100%. Bob Hamlin replied that he did not know the exact breakdown. There is a classification for a reduced tax...possibly this number discrepancy has occurred due to classification of non-profits that are not taxed fully as regular businesses.

Tammy Kaufman suggested the following amendments (highlight):

PAGE 9: "Current and Future Funding Requests"

"In the future, **working together**, the Investment Boards may seek new funding sources to recapitalize funding to support economic development loans and grants. **Funding secured from future appropriations will be equally split between OIB and WIB, in keeping with the intent of the Act.**

Page 11: Additionally, in the bullets under "Regional Approach" add a bullet after the third bullet: **Staff for the Investment Boards and/or members of the Bi-State Advisory Council, MCEDD and CRGC will seek to meet with legislators from Oregon and Washington in a bi-state approach to source additional funding to support economic development in the region. Appropriations secured for economic development within the NSA will be equally divided between OIB and WIB.**

Page 40: Tammy noted that she is listed as an ex-officio member of OIB, but per the Gorge Commission's review of commissioner activities in March, Rodger Nichols now holds that role and Tammy Kaufman will remain as the ex-officio for the WIB.

Tammy noted that this plan develops opportunities for both sides of the river to focus their future efforts to get funding cooperatively – noting that we are stronger when we work together. She emphasized that this amended wording aligns with original intent under which the Scenic Area was created.

Anita added that there was a typo to be corrected on p.14: “requests for” typed twice. Rodger Nichols supported Tammy’s suggestions.

Matt Masco motioned to approve the Economic Vitality Plan with Tammy Kaufman’s edits as presented. Kathy McKenzie seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

OREGON/WASHINGTON INVESTMENT BOARD UPDATES

Kevin Waters (ED Skamania Economic Development Council) gave the WIB update. The major loan recently closed since the last Council update was given was a \$500,000 loan to the Tenzen group to build a Japanese Spa in Home Valley. The expected opening for business is by the end of August/ early September. As a result of this loan, the WIB’s Loan fund is very low now, and the Board is excited about the projected million-dollar allocation that is coming up. Kevin also reported that the WIB is focusing efforts on encouraging the clients who hold current loans to re-finance and pay off their WIB debts, so that the funds can be returned to the pool and can then be reallocated to help other new businesses in need. Kevin gave a rough overview of WIBs current Loan Fund, stating the current balance at approximately \$120,000. The WIB is looking for payoffs from their existing accounts to get their funding pool back up to the \$500,000 range, in preparation for lending to new businesses who will be coming into the development in North Bonneville that is currently in process of being built by the Port. Kevin ended his report with appreciation for all the attendees for their time and efforts.

Jessica Metta gave the OIB update. She commented that the OIB currently has around \$1.5 million available for lending. She added that many of the OIB’s clients have used commercial lending to pay off their loans during the past year. Jessica reported that the OIB has invested their own funds to do a video project to market their funds. She then shared the Brigham Fish video to show this great tool that highlights the work of the OIB. Jessica then gave an update on \$2 million appropriation that passed in legislation last October. The 45-day window for application is due to open next week. MCEDD will be the applicant for the region and will equally divide any money that is received between OIB and WIB. She stated that she will be asking many in this group for letters of support to include in the application.

Discussion: Matt commented that this funding was originally authorized some 30 years ago, and it has only now actually been appropriated – a very long time coming! Comments on the Fish Market video were positive, and Kevin Waters noted that Brigham Fish Market has also been featured on Top Chef.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION

Tammy Kaufman stated that there is opportunity to approach funding for the future for the two organizations in the next budget cycle for Gorge Commissions. Tammy noted that there is money for infrastructure improvements, and asked if anyone needs support right now for things they want to do. Anita Crow commented that there is no reference in the infrastructure improvements for the development of fire protection and water supply for fire protection for local communities. She insisted that this is a key piece of infrastructure that should be addressed as part of the needs of the area. Anita explained that her community does not have a taxing fire district, and that Skamania has addressed this need through a non-profit since 1983. Now looking at annexation with an adjacent district to meet their needs for access to good pools for firefighting and refilling trucks, as well as firehouses for fire vehicles. This issue impacts business development as well as residential. Voting for the Annexation is coming up Aug. 5th. Adding to the firefighting needs commentary, Rodger Nichols brought up the oil tanker explosion in Mosier that occurred a couple of years ago. At that time, a firefighter came to the gorge commission to inform them that firefighters cannot access an area of the railroad in Skamania County that stretches for miles because of the cliffs.

Doug Roof asked if it is possible for the lending boards to share information across the river. Jessica replied that MCEDD does work often with the Skamania EDC, as MCEDD funds can go across the river when the OIB cannot. She noted that there are times when confidentiality agreements are signed. She added that it is public information who the loan clients are – this information could be shared. Doug asked if the information shared can include line of business. Kevin Waters explained that the WIB funding is very confidential due to their guidelines with the Dept. Of Commerce. Kevin added that the WIB is currently working with an attorney to allow for more public disclosure.

AGENCY UPDATES

Rodger Nichols gave the update for the Gorge Commission. The agency is focused on DEI and has added it to their management plan this year. A huge capital improvement that has been added into this year's budget is an upgrade for equipment and data storage. Rodger added that Oregon has to match Washington's investment in this project in order for funding to happen. The ultimate goal is to have everything online so people can access all the information from the last 35 years. Further updates reported on are the work plan this year includes a climate change action plan and there is currently underway an audit of the land use permits in Klickitat County – checking if they match what has happened on the ground. Krystyna Wolniakowski added that the Gorge Commission will be seeking technical assistance for the computer system project, since they do not have any resident computer experts on staff. She also reported that the budget allows the staffing level to remain intact- no layoffs expected! To wrap up her report, she noted that both Wasco County and Hood River County have both updated their ordinances, and that both Counties will remain eligible for OIB funding.

Casey Gatz gave the USFS update which focused on relating the staffing change for the permanent Forest Service Supervisor Area Manager. The incoming Manager will be Donna

Mickley. She is currently posted in the Siskiyou Range down in the Rogue River area. Donna will be starting in the Columbia Gorge area in June.

Greg Price stated that this has been the best quarter ever reported for the SBDC. Much of their activity has come out of the CARES and ARPA funding. Q1 reporting highlights include: the SBDC received almost 5 million dollars in capital infusion. 164 clients received counseling. They sponsored 26 training events and recorded over 252 hours of counseling. 19 new jobs were created. There was a huge sales increase. The agency hired a new bilingual culture advisor and can now provide services in Spanish. He added that the Restaurant revitalization fund and PPP are taking applications for grants and loans.

Lynn Burditt gave her update that was focused on the current status of wildfire response and the impacts on recreation in the National Forests. Many closed areas have open trails although the area itself is closed, and ONLY the trail is open. Many people do not understand the distinction. She explained that the areas are closed to protect search and rescue responders. She stated that information can be found on wildfire.oregon.gov. There will also be a PSA on social media later this week to explain fire conditions and fire and rescue operations. Mt. Hood Forest was affected by fire in Wasco Co. and Beachie and Riverside fires, and that changes in recreation patterns will result from this. She mentioned that Wasco County had declared a disaster for the fires that occurred last year as well.

Jessica Metta gave MCEDD's report. She explained that MCEDD is currently in the process of updating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 5-year plan. Jessica added that this Economic Vitality Plan feeds into the CEDS and she provided the link for everyone attending via the chat. Jessica explained the public monthly meetings that are in process and invited everyone present to participate. Jessica also included the OIB youtube channel in the chat so that everyone could access the OIB marketing videos as a reference tool for the work of the OIB (and WIB) that provides support for local business in the Gorge.

Michael Held gave the Business Oregon update, stating that his agency is involved in beginning the COVID-19 recovery planning effort which will culminate at end of year. This is a long-term look at recovery and represents a shift away from the more immediate response needs. For this process, his agency has brought in a third-party to gather information. Michael added that the state is providing additional guidance in how to spend funds. The agency expects to continue to deliver funding.

NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

Nothing noted.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 am.

Respectfully submitted by Jill Brandt, MCEDD Administrative Assistant

Memorandum

To: Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Bi-State Advisory Council

From: Jessica Metta, MCEDD Executive Director

Re: 2022-2027 Columbia Gorge Economic Development Strategy

Date: July 13, 2022

Overview

Through 2021, partners across the Columbia Gorge region came together to develop a five-year strategy for economic development known as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Staffed by Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD), the process resulted in a plan for the five-county region that outlines goals, action plans and metrics to move the region to the future economy as stated in the vision:

A bi-state Mid-Columbia region with a resilient, thriving, sustainable, rural economy that supports equitable access to diverse business opportunities that act in harmony with the area's unique qualities, values, cultural and natural resources.

The final plan is available at www.gorgeeconomy.org and a summary will be presented to the Bi-State Advisory Council. The strategy works together closely with the Council's Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Economic Vitality Plan.