



COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE TOURISM STUDIO PROGRAM SUMMARY

August 2017



IMBA/LESLIE KEHMEI/GETTY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Foreword.....	3
2.0	Executive Summary.....	4
3.0	Gorge Tourism Studio – Achievements and Highlights	6
3.1	15-Year Vision for Sustainable Tourism.....	6
3.2	Statement of Intent	8
3.3	Key Tourism Studio Activities (2015–16).....	9
3.4	Outcomes and Early Success (2015–16)	10
3.5	Building Momentum (2016–17).....	12
3.5.1	Formation of Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance	12
3.5.2	Tourism Studio Action Teams Successes.....	13
3.5.3	Associated Accomplishments in the Gorge	15
3.6	Collaboration and Vision Drives Success (2015–17)	15
4.0	Next Steps – 2017 and beyond	16
5.0	References.....	17
6.0	Appendix.....	18
7.0	For More Information.....	20

BUILDING OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE

Every day, I witness the beauty and the grandeur of the Columbia River Gorge. I am fortunate to live and work in it. For as many years as I've had the pleasure of enjoying its abundant resources, I have also watched it change. Increased visitation in the Gorge puts pressures on certain locations. I also understand the challenges of convening the many organizations and businesses to discuss visitation impacts.

The Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association (renamed the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance in 2017) brings together Gorge stakeholders to exchange ideas and resources for marketing the region. I have watched my organization change as Gorge businesses and partners respond to change, like they did when the Washington tourism office closed in 2009.

When the opportunity to apply for Travel Oregon's Tourism Studio with a focus on the Gorge region came up, I jumped at the opportunity to be involved. The region is stronger when we all work together. Hosting a tourism studio was an opportunity to bring together both sides of the river for tourism in the Gorge. The conversation we started through the Gorge Tourism Studio about managing visitation in the region will continue. We have generated great momentum and brought together a diverse and committed alliance invested in the strength of our collective voice.

Casey Roeder, President, Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association

WORLD-CLASS DESTINATION – LOCAL SOLUTIONS

In 2015, conditions were ripe to convene a diverse group of community and business leaders to consider how to manage visitation in the Columbia River Gorge. This resulted in the Gorge Tourism Studio, a community-based tourism development program, created by Travel Oregon in partnership with a bi-state steering committee comprised of 26 stakeholder representatives. This group has now built a 15-year vision, and invested in the work of action teams devoted to implementing priority strategies and a broad and inclusive tourism alliance. Due to their success and experience, Travel Oregon has identified value in sharing what we collectively learned in the process. We see this case study being useful in several ways:

- To share accomplishments with the representatives and organizations that participated in the Gorge Tourism Studio
- To recognize the collective investment made to strategically manage and develop the Gorge as a sustainable tourism destination
- To orient newcomers to this collaborative effort about the process that led to the 15-year vision and work accomplished to date
- To provide a resource for others seeking to develop sustainable tourism strategies, particularly for destinations with national recognition that experience similar visitation, management and marketing complexities

An early result of the committed group that attended the Gorge Tourism Studio is a robust, positive and well-functioning bi-state tourism alliance that is willing to put the time, resources and energy into making vibrant and useful impacts over the long term. Travel Oregon is proud of this demonstrated investment in collaboration and appreciative of the communities' efforts to make it a success.

Kristin Dahl, Vice President of Destination Development, Travel Oregon

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Columbia River Gorge (referred to as “the Gorge”), is a canyon carved out by the mighty Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, forming a state border between Oregon and Washington. The destination attracts people from near and far to take in its scenic beauty, experience its unique heritage and savor its abundant local cuisine. Designated as a National Scenic Area in 1986 by the federal government, the region experiences visitation patterns on par with iconic National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges with concentrated visitation during the summer months at a handful of notable and well-publicized sites. With this visitation pattern, and a high number of significant scenic, natural, cultural, recreational and ecological resources, the Gorge may be vulnerable to unintended negative impacts due to overuse.

Managing the destination can be challenging, as it's entering a new period in its destination lifecycle. A key focus must be finding the right balance between the economic benefits of tourism and the impacts of high visitation on local services, amenities, quality of life, while preserving natural and cultural resources; and enhancing community livability, expectations and satisfaction.

Enter the Gorge Tourism Studio: a collaborative program designed through a close partnership between Travel Oregon and local stakeholder groups from the bi-state region. The Gorge Tourism Studio fulfilled a regional need to address these critical issues and identify ways to collaboratively address regional tourism challenges. The program was modeled after the highly successful Rural Tourism Studio, Travel Oregon's signature destination development program. Over approximately ten months in late 2015 and early 2016, the Gorge Tourism Studio was designed and delivered. A steering committee was convened during that time and worked intensively to prepare the public program; the committee continued to meet throughout the public workshop series to set strategic direction for the action teams created during the program and soon thereafter developed into a destination management organization known as the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance.



To guide the workshops, the steering committee developed a statement of intent. Over the course of the program, the information and ideas that surfaced influenced the creation of a 15-year vision for tourism in the region intended to guide and inspire short- and long-term actions aimed at improving the destination.

The tourism studio, from preliminary planning to the final community kickoff event at the program’s conclusion, occurred over one year and involved more than 300 individuals.

Greater levels of collaboration and alignment stand out as the most important impacts of the Gorge Tourism Studio. With closer working relationships among key stakeholders in the Gorge, a renewed sense of momentum and purpose is evident. It is a significant accomplishment to bring greater operational alignment in an environment where multiple jurisdictions and organizations operate. The creation of the shared vision has fostered purpose-based collaboration and has unlocked the potential in collective action.

GORGE TOURISM STUDIO

6 Workshops held over four months

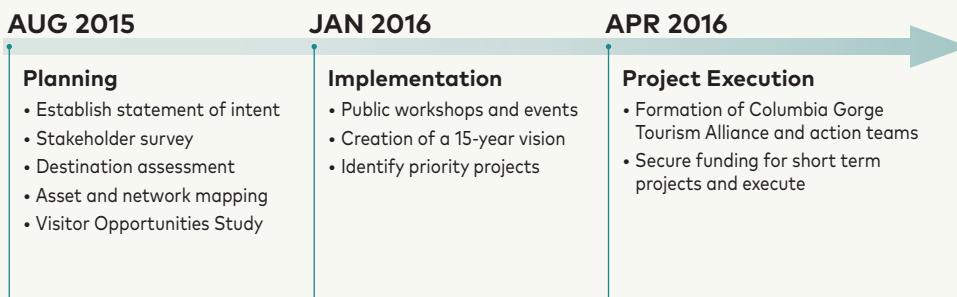
226 Participants

25% Attended five or more workshops

75% Oregon residents

25% Washington residents

GORGE TOURISM STUDIO PROCESS



3.0 GORGE TOURISM STUDIO – ACHIEVEMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Through the combined efforts of the program steering committee and the tourism studio participants, a 15-year vision for the region’s tourism economy was developed. This vision guided strategy development during the program and will serve as a North Star to guide development efforts over the next 15 years.

3.1 15-YEAR VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The Columbia River Gorge region, including the nationally recognized Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the majestic Cascades Range of Mt. Adams (12,281 ft.) and Mt. Hood (11,249 ft.), offers our target visitor a world-class adventure travel experience. While the mighty Columbia River is its defining feature, nationally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers are the life blood of the region. The Sandy and the Deschutes Rivers flank its east/west boundaries, while the White Salmon, Klickitat and the Hood Rivers carve pathways through the Cascade Mountains. Free-flowing whitewater draws in adventurous water recreation enthusiasts, skilled fishermen and most importantly, salmon. The westerly winds blow strong, making the Gorge one of the world’s most sought-after destinations for windsurfing, kiteboarding, paragliding and technical sailing. Access to snow sports abounds on the nearby peaks including year-round skiing on the Palmer Glacier. The region’s paved, gravel and single-track terrain provide bicyclists with an unmatched flight-like experience on the scenic landscape.

Signature trails, including Gorge Towns to Trails, the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail, are significant draws to the region. Hikers, cyclists and trail runners alike seek out the world-class experience they can find on these trails that connect waterfalls, basalt bluffs and the Gorge’s charming towns.

TRANSPORTATION

Our seamlessly integrated region-wide transportation system allows visitors to come, travel, explore and connect – all without needing a car. Public- and private-transit options, combined with our bike routes and trail systems, have created a multi-modal web that knits our communities, attractions and outdoor recreation experiences together. The region is vibrant with visitation, and traffic congestion is a thing of the past.



RANDY BOYERMAN



GREG ROBESON

CULINARY/AGRICULTURE

The Gorge, with its concentration of locally-owned boutique vineyards and small farms, boasts a rich local food scene. Locals and visitors alike can easily enjoy what's grown and produced here. Visitors are welcomed by growers to have meaningful and enriching agritourism experiences. Restauranters are well-connected with local growers, adding value to locally produced ingredients while delivering memorable foodie experiences. The visitor industry has contributed to alleviating hunger in the region.

CULTURE

The "Gorge Experience" is unparalleled due to visitors' exposure to its rich history and culture. Locals in the region's charming communities help travelers gain a deep understanding of the people who have inhabited the Gorge in the past, of people who reside here now, and of the natural and human forces that have shaped and reshaped the landscape. Stories of this powerful place, both cultural and natural, are infused into every element of the traveler experience. Local guides help travelers personalize and deepen their own connection to this place, while a unique and rich array of classes and events are offered to enhance appreciation of the local culture. Trails of national historic significance, including the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail, the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail, Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail and the Oregon Trail, also bring the region's history to life.

SEASONALITY/CONGESTION

Our intuitive visitor information system has reduced congestion and spread the positive economic impacts to all corners of our region. We have effectively targeted the high-value visitor who appreciates the outdoors and local culture, is sensitive to their surroundings, and enjoys people-powered activities. Visitors are coming year-round and staying multiple days.

BALANCE

We have found balance by offering an unforgettable visitor experience while preserving our unique ecosystem of people, culture and nature. Local residents live in a harmonious and symbiotic relationship with our environment and with the people who travel from around the world to experience a slice of life in the Gorge.



3.2 STATEMENT OF INTENT

In the Gorge Tourism Studio Baseline Assessment¹, which was developed prior to the public workshop series, the key challenge areas were summarized as:

- Leadership and destination management
- Marked seasonal variation in visitation
- Congestion at the “lures” during peak season; overtaxed infrastructure in some areas
- Integrating cultural heritage into the visitor experience
- Preserving cultural and environmental assets
- Capitalizing on visionary projects underway in the Gorge
- Developing and connecting new ‘product’ (experiences) throughout the entire region, particularly focused on three areas: outdoor recreation, culinary/agritourism and cultural heritage
- Connecting fragmented resources to market the area as a destination

Following a steering committee discussion of these challenges, a refined statement of intent emerged that has become the guiding framework to focus strategy development both during and after the program.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Gorge Tourism Studio steering committee is committed to developing the region as a world-class sustainable tourism economy. It is recognized this implicitly includes protecting and enhancing the scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources of the Columbia River Gorge and neighboring Cascades Mountains. Key to future sustainability is the need to continue to enhance the visitor experience, and understand and manage the impact of tourism on local communities and their economies. The Gorge Tourism steering committee believes the immediate focus must include strategies aimed to:

- Spread seasonality of visitation
- Reduce congestion during peak seasons and in high-use areas
- Spread the benefits and increase the economic impact of tourism throughout the entire Gorge
- Authentically and respectfully integrate cultural heritage into the visitor experience
- Ensure the Gorge continues to offer high-quality experiences, while protecting and enhancing the scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources
- Align resources to optimize destination marketing efforts, and support the continued development of unique and compatible product offerings
- Capitalize on the visionary projects already underway in the Gorge to ensure it remains a world-class destination

3.3 KEY TOURISM STUDIO ACTIVITIES (2015–16)

The Gorge Tourism Studio program (including planning and implementation) ran from August 2015 to April 2016. During the steering committee pre-planning meetings in 2015 (monthly from August-December), the following were main tasks and outcomes that came out of the tourism studio process:

- Stakeholder survey work/analysis (August – September)
- Destination assessment using global sustainable destination criteria (October)
- Asset and Network mapping (October - December)
- Columbia River Gorge Visitor Opportunities Study (October – November)
- Agreement on preliminary solutions to address core issues (November – December)

The public components of the tourism studio ran from January until April 2016. Workshops included:

GORGE TOURISM SUMMIT

JAN. 20, 2016 • 112 ATTENDEES

This kickoff event helped galvanize community members work toward the fulfillment of a common purpose. The summit provided an opportunity for local stakeholders to be part of the discussion about solutions and innovation.

NICHE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

Following the summit, workshops and networking events focused on product development themes critical to the Gorge region. Workshops educated participants on trends, destination case studies, successful local examples and marketing while giving attendees opportunities to meet one another and learn more about what is already happening in the region. While each themed workshop attracted different participants, most participants attended all three.

CULINARY AND AGRITOURISM

FEBRUARY 2-3, 2016 • 65 ATTENDEES

This program helped community organizations, businesses and residents work together to foster increased tourism based on the area's unique mix of food and agricultural products. Participants identified and prioritized strategies to increase culinary and agricultural tourism development.

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

FEBRUARY 23-24, 2016 • 63 ATTENDEES

Attendees identified strategies to ensure visitors are able to experience the region's rich cultural heritage. They further explored how to integrate cultural heritage tourism in the region's tourism development strategy.

ADVENTURE TRAVEL AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

MARCH 15-16, 2016 • 66 ATTENDEES

The group examined how the Gorge can evolve to meet the growing demand of the adventure traveler while addressing issues of sustainability and seasonality. They learned about big projects underway that could be gamechangers for this sector.

“The message that culture and history matter in the Columbia Gorge is important. What has been missing from our perspective is the story of the Columbia River - there is culture and heritage here, so let’s honor that legacy. It was an opportunity to spread the message. And people got it.”

Colin Fogarty, Confluence

“From my standpoint, being in this job 18 years, I’ve seen a lot of public planning processes on the local, state and federal levels and this is one of the better ones for the people who are participating to engage, interact, create and own, and then implement! Very effective.”

Kevin Gorman,
Friends of the Columbia Gorge

TOURISM MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOP

APRIL 5, 2016 • 52 ATTENDEES

This workshop educated participants on the following topics: current consumer trends, marketing on a small budget, leveraging collaborative opportunities with Travel Oregon and regional marketing organizations and measuring marketing efforts.

IGNITING ACTION TEAMS WORKSHOP

APRIL 6, 2016 • 49 ATTENDEES

This workshop established local action teams and began developing priority projects in line with the region’s 15-year vision for tourism and reinforced the value of teamwork for accomplishing projects.



3.4 OUTCOMES AND EARLY SUCCESS (2015–16)

Positive outcomes from the Gorge Tourism Studio manifested before the first public workshop was even held. Success has been seen throughout the process from the time the steering committee first convened in August 2015 starting with the strengthening of relationships, throughout the workshops and beyond in 2016 as participants organized and secured assistance.

During the planning and program period, the steering committee effectively coalesced through intensive work as they developed the studio program. In turn, the quality of this early collaboration fostered networking and exchange among program participants and led to development of the 15-year vision.

An important step in the studio program is the formation of action teams to carry out priority projects following the workshops. In March 2016, the steering committee designed an organizational structure to nurture collaboration and ensure the success of the action teams. The structure included evolving the steering committee into a regional tourism alliance with the Columbia River Gorge Visitor Association as the non-profit organization as the hub and convener. The regional tourism alliance was designed to set strategic direction and coordinate the work of the action teams.



Because the region involves two states and six county jurisdictions, identifying conveners and coordinators who work across state and county lines was crucial. The teams were asked to create operational procedures, a work plan, and identify their first meeting. Additionally, the action teams were challenged to come up with an “easy win” project that could leverage a portion of \$20,000 in matching grant funds from Travel Oregon. The five initial action teams, identified conveners and a short list of prioritized project concepts for each group, which include:

CULINARY & AGRITOURISM ACTION TEAM

CONVENER: GORGE GROWN

- Develop an event-driven farm trail for Eastern Gorge
- Increase use of local food and products to tourism-facing businesses
- Build and support regional food hub

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM ACTION TEAM

CONFLUENCE, GORGE OWNED

- Develop a podcast series
- Create a robust cultural heritage guide
- Host cultural interpretation training workshops

GORGE OUTDOOR ACTION TEAM

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

- Showcase and raise awareness of the Gorge Towns to Trails and Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail
- Create self-guided and tour-operated guided multi-day itineraries
- Connect missing trail linkages
- Engage local use and support of trails

MARKETING ACTION TEAM

COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE VISITORS ASSOCIATION

- Develop frontline staff training to strengthen messaging and knowledge of the region
- Develop a “one-stop” trip-planning website

CAR-FREE TRANSPORTATION ACTION TEAM

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

- Support existing initiatives (ex. Columbia Gorge Express)
- Provide clear transportation options
- Coordinate transit between the Gorge and Mt. Hood

Travel Oregon provided planning guidance and offered facilitation services for action teams to get started. Over the course of the next year, these action teams worked to execute projects and Travel Oregon provided backstopping and technical assistance when needed.

3.5 BUILDING MOMENTUM (2016–17)

In order to maintain momentum in the first year after the final workshop the group formed the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance, fostered the work of the five action teams, and engaged in partner projects.

3.5.1 FORMATION OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE TOURISM ALLIANCE

Formation of an alliance ensured that stakeholders working on shaping a sustainable tourism economy had a structure for coordination. To form the alliance, the original Gorge Tourism Studio steering committee identified gaps and invited additional members to ensure all key facets of the tourism industry and all sub-regions in the Gorge were well-represented.

To form the alliance, the steering committee added action team coordinators, additional government agencies, associations, non-profits and businesses. See appendix for a comparison of the membership from the steering committee to the alliance. Efforts are still underway to secure participation from tribal representatives and more elected officials. The group meets every other month in person at locations throughout the Gorge.

In addition to embarking upon a process to develop an operational plan, the alliance has completed the following as of July 2017:

- Raised \$24,000 and successfully applied for two, one-year professional placements through the University of Oregon’s Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) program. These placements have served to add full-time human capacity to the alliance from September 2016 – September 2018
- Received a matching grant from Travel Oregon for \$20,000 to fund three action team projects
- Reported to the Columbia River Gorge Commission and Oregon Tourism Commission on the Gorge Tourism Studio process and the work of the alliance
- Legally renamed the Columbia River Gorge Visitor Association 501©3 and 501©6 to the Columbia River Gorge Tourism Alliance
- Established new board members and governance structure for the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance reflective of leadership needed to guide this organization in this new era
- Developed a funding model and secured seed funding to aid in the hiring of staff for 2017–18

The alliance leadership team considers the congratulatory response of the Columbia River Gorge Commission to their early September 2016 update on the Studio process a notable success. This favorable reception of the commission reinforced the importance of forming the alliance to carry forward the vision.

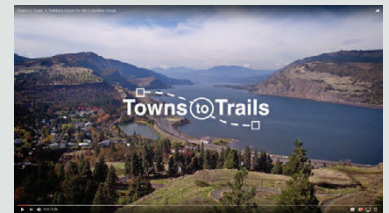
At the time this report was published (August 2017) the new alliance board was forming to provide the legal governance to the organization. The formation of a strong network supported by a formal organization and the alliance structure stands to be the Gorge Tourism Studio’s greatest long-term outcome.

3.5.2 TOURISM STUDIO ACTION TEAMS SUCCESSES

The five action teams that assembled during the last workshop of the studio were the work units formed to complete the highest priority projects identified by the steering committee. In the six months following the studio, action team meetings were organized by individual team coordinators. Action team coordinators also served on the alliance to facilitate two-way information sharing and project alignment. Action team successes that have occurred in the first six months following the final workshop include:

- Identification of three fundable and achievable projects (see table below)
- Fundraising match to advance the three projects (see table below)
- Increased collaboration, information sharing and participation among groups and organizations oriented around action team work areas

PROJECT	TRAVEL OREGON GRANT AWARD	PARTNER MATCH FUNDING
<p>GORGE OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTION TEAM</p> <p>Produce video to visually communicate the vision of Gorge Towns to Trails to garner more public, government and agency support for the project</p>	\$7,500	\$7,500 (cash) \$15,000 (in-kind)
<p>MARKETING ACTION TEAM</p> <p>Execute a front-line staff training to elevate the level of customer service. Educate front-line staff on all tourism assets the region offers and provide consistent messaging on the visitor experience across the region</p>	\$5,000	\$2,500 (cash) \$2,500 (in kind)
<p>CULTURAL HERITAGE ACTION TEAM</p> <p>Create a podcast based on the “Sense of Place” lecture series to bring visitors closer to the human and natural history of the Gorge</p>	\$7,500	\$3750 (cash) \$3750 (in kind)



As of June 2017, action teams that received grant funding from Travel Oregon had successfully completed their first round of projects. All action teams (inclusive of transportation and agritourism teams which did not receive a matching grant during the first year) have started planning for a second round of priority projects. With the formation of the alliance and the momentum that has been generated in the first year, the action teams are well-poised for continued success.

3.5.3 ASSOCIATED ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE GORGE

An important outcome of the Gorge Tourism Studio collaboration is greater understanding among participants of efforts underway in the Gorge. This understanding expands the potential for partnership among collaborators and their networks. In addition, the 15-year vision offers critical direction for independent efforts to align.

As a result of this unifying vision, a number of existing local efforts are now aligned. Distinct from efforts of the alliance or the action teams, this work demonstrates how coordination with a vision can translate into exceptional accomplishments. In this way, participants have leveraged studio outcomes to advance their regular work and the vision.

A sample of partner accomplishments in line with the vision follows:

- *Ready Set, Gorge!* A communications strategy to better prepare visitors to the Gorge with information on how to enjoy the area in a respectful and responsible way and to help address congestion issues (Travel Oregon, U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Department of Transportation, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Weinstein PR)
- Publishing of car-free Gorge itineraries on TravelOregon.com (Travel Oregon)
- Launch of the Oregon Visitor Transportation Initiative (Travel Oregon)
- Launch of the pilot Columbia Gorge Express shuttle (Oregon Department of Transportation)
- \$36.5M in grant funding awarded from the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) for the following project proposals in the Gorge:



- \$33M to finish the Mitchell Tunnel segment of the Historic Columbia River Highway
 - \$2.2M to expand transit from Gateway to Hood River
 - \$400K for a congestion mitigation study from Troutdale to Ainsworth State Park
 - \$928K for transit from Hood River to Government Camp and continued funding of the Mt. Hood Express (Oregon) and West End Transit bus (Washington)
- (Oregon Department of Transportation, Washington State Department of Transportation and partners)

“I think the tourism studio has given a lot of organizations and individuals, including myself, a breath of fresh air. It’s moving a lot of things forward that I believe to have been on people’s minds for a long time, but now that a group has formed, it seems possible, which has given everyone momentum to continue forward. My organization is starting to see the potential for our rural town and have taken key elements (like a 15 year vision) and are currently working on them to be developed.”

Sofia Urrita-Lopez,
Cascade Locks Tourism

- Dedication of Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail segment on Sept. 24, 2016 (Oregon Department of Transportation)
- Dedication of Waterfront Park on Sept. 23, 2016 (Port of Camas-Washougal)
- Creation of the Gorge Food Security Coalition (Oregon Solutions)
- 2016 Senate bills to improve tribal housing and fishing access sites in the Gorge
- Historic Columbia River Highway Bingo campaign (Friends of the Columbia Gorge)
- Development of Cascade Locks Tourism vision and strategic plan (Cascade Locks Tourism Committee)

3.6 COLLABORATION AND VISION DRIVES SUCCESS (2015–17)

A key element in the success of developing a new and broader collaboration around tourism rested on convening a robust and committed steering committee from the entire region. Even before the studio program started, the design team facilitated intensive work with the steering committee to help them coalesce. The appreciation that committee members expressed at every engagement demonstrated the importance of the need being met through building trust, combining efforts and elevating collective knowledge. This early team building provided a foundation for the steering committee to realize the importance of their work and how their commitment to each other and to the region would be vital to advance the vision.

Investment of the steering committee in program workshops demonstrated to participants the commitment being made by key stakeholders in developing the Gorge as a sustainable tourism destination. The momentum and spirit of working together – strengthened by networking activities during the workshops – made it easy for participants to join forces and extend the group’s reach. Participants were interested in how their individual efforts touched others and what they could do to help each other.

Current work continues to maintain the collaborative momentum. Additional program assessments provide the alliance with benchmarks to demonstrate the impact of the Studio on advancing the group toward the collective vision. These evaluations provide opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of local efforts.

Collaboration stands as the most important benefit of the Gorge Tourism Studio. With better working relationships across industry sectors in the Gorge, a sense of alignment now exists with improved projects underway, where before the efforts felt disjointed and isolated.

“Collaboration is really important. Through that collaboration we’ve come up with some really great ideas. Having a unified voice is a benefit.”

Stan Hinatsu,
U.S. Forest Service

4.0 NEXT STEPS 2017 AND BEYOND

The early outcomes and successes that occurred following the studio demonstrate the effectiveness of the program for bringing people together, aligning actions, generating momentum and producing results.

The substantial investment people have made to support sustainable tourism development in the Columbia River Gorge speaks to the many common goals and shared values present within the region. Maintaining this level of enthusiasm for the collaborative work in the Gorge will be key to ensure a motivating force in the years to come. Without it, the work could slide back to groups working in isolation, resulting in slower progress toward achieving the vision. To help ensure momentum, a new governance structure for the alliance has been put into place. A full-time network manager has been hired through the University of Oregon's RARE program, and matching grant funds are available to support project implementation. In addition to these resources and existing research and reports, further evaluation of the program will provide the group with an opportunity to track their work and successes.

Travel Oregon conducted a six-month assessment in November 2016. A 12-month progress report will consider progress to the overall program goals, and how people see cause and effect. At 18 months (fall 2017), a short documentary film will be made as part of Travel Oregon's *Communities Powered by Travel* series to capture and disseminate the early wins from the region in order to inspire others and perpetuate success. These materials can be found online at Industry.TravelOregon.com when available.

5.0 REFERENCES

Gorge Tourism Studio Baseline Assessment, Write to Know Consulting, January 2016

Columbia River Gorge Visitor Opportunities Study, ECONorthwest and Travel Oregon, 2016

Gorge Tourism Studio Stakeholder Survey, Travel Oregon and Future iQ Partners, 2015

Gorge Tourism Studio Program Overview, Travel Oregon, 2016

Gorge Tourism Studio Workshop Notes, Travel Oregon, 2016

Gorge Tourism Studio Steering Committee Meeting Notes, Travel Oregon, 2015–2016

Gorge Tourism Studio Registration and Attendance roster

Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association Matching Grant Idea Worksheet submitted to Travel Oregon, August 31, 2016

Direct stakeholder interviews:

- Casey Roeder, Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association
- Kevin Gorman, Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Stan Hinatsu, U.S. Forest Service
- Colin Fogarty, Confluence
- Sofia Urrita-Lopez, Cascade Locks Tourism
- Sarah Sullivan, Gorge Grown
- Buck Jones, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Kristin Dahl, Travel Oregon

Notes from Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance meeting, September 27, 2016

Key reports are available for download on Travel Oregon's industry website for the Gorge Tourism Studio: Industry.TravelOregon.com/Gorge

2015–2016
GORGE TOURISM STUDIO
STEERING COMMITTEE

City of Cascade Locks

Sofia Urrutia-Lopez
Tourism Committee Chair

City of Mosier

Kathy Fitzpatrick
City Manager

City of Mosier

Arlene Burns
Mayor

City of Washougal

Rene' Carroll
Tourism Contractor

**Hood-Gorge Regional Destination
Management Organization**

(Clackamas County Tourism
& Cultural Affairs)
Heidi Beierle
Program Coordinator

**Clackamas County Tourism
& Cultural Affairs**

Jeannine Breshears
Marketing and Programs Manager

**Columbia Gorge Winegrowers
Association**

Kate Hart
Executive Coordinator

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Krystyna Wolniakowski
Executive Director

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Raymond Joseph
Planner

**Columbia River Gorge Visitor
Association / Skamania County
Chamber of Commerce**

Casey Roeder
President

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Kevin Gorman
Executive Director

Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Renee Tkach
Gorge Towns to Trails Project Manager

Hood River Chamber of Commerce

Mike Glover
Executive Director

**Hood River County / Rural
Development Initiatives**

Maui Meyer
Commissioner / Board Member

Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail

Neal Bedlan
Chief of Interpretation

**Mid-Columbia Economic
Development District**

Amanda Hoey
Executive Director

Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce

Maria Foley
Executive Director

**Oregon Department of
Transportation Region 1**

Kristen Stallman
*Columbia River Gorge National Scenic
Area Coordinator*

Oregon State Parks and Recreation

Steve Kruger
Park Manager, East Gorge

Port of Cascade Locks

Holly Howell
Marketing & Development Manager

Regional Solutions Coordinator

Kate Sinner
Office of the Governor

**The Dalles Area Chamber of
Commerce**

Lisa Farquharson
President/CEO

U.S. Forest Service

Stan Hinatsu
*Recreation Program Manager, Columbia
River Gorge National Scenic Area*

**Weinstein PR / Gorge Owned / Hood
River City Council / Hood River
County Visitors Council**

Becky Brun
PR Consultant / Board Member

**West Columbia Gorge
Chamber of Commerce**

Karen Schaaf
Board Member

2017 COLUMBIA GORGE TOURISM ALLIANCE

ArtNova

Melody Johnson
Vice-President Business Development

City of Mosier*

Kathy Fitzpatrick
City Manager

City of Washougal*

Rene' Carroll
Tourism Contractor

Clackamas County Tourism & Cultural Affairs*

Jeannine Breshears
Marketing & Programs Manager

Columbia River Gorge Commission*

Jessica Gist
Planner

Columbia River Gorge Commission*

Lorrie DeKay
Commissioner

Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Buck Jones
Salmon Marketing

Destination Sustainability

Brian Mullis
Founder

Enroute Transport

Heidi Beierle
Principal

Friends of the Columbia Gorge*

Kevin Gorman
Executive Director

Friends of the Columbia Gorge*

Renee Tkach
Towns to Trails Project Manager

Gorge Owned

Amanda Lawrence
Program Director

Grayline Tours

David Duncan

Hood River County Chamber of Commerce*

Mike Glover
CEO

Hood-Gorge Regional Destination Management Organization

(Clackamas County Tourism & Cultural Affairs)*
Lizzie Keenan
Program Specialist

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District*

Dan Hoyt
Project/Mobility Manager

Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce*

Tammara Toppel
Executive Director

Oregon Department of Transportation*

Kristen Stallman
Region 1 Strategic Initiative Advisor

Port of Camas-Washougal

Angelina Anderson
Community Relations Specialist

Port of Cascade Locks*

Jan McCartan
Event Coordinator

Skamania County Chamber of Commerce*

Casey Roeder
Executive Director

The Balch Hotel

Josiah Dean
Owner

The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce*

Lisa Farquharson
CEO

Travel Oregon

Kristin Dahl
Vice President, Destination Development

Troutdale Lodging

Loree Harrell
Regional Marketing Director

US Forest Service*

Stan Hinatsu
*Recreation Program Manager, Columbia
River Gorge National Scenic Area*

West Columbia Gorge Chamber of Commerce*

Karen Young
Executive Director

*Organization was represented on the Gorge Tourism Studio Steering Committee (2015-2016)



For more information about the Gorge Tourism Studio contact:

Kristin Dahl, *Vice President, Destination Development*, Kristin@TravelOregon.com, 971.717.6201

TRAVEL



OREGON

319 SW Washington St. Suite 700 Portland, Oregon 97204

TravelOregon.com Industry.TravelOregon.com

