

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4015

As Reported by House Committee On:
General Government Appropriations & Oversight

Brief Description: Requesting adequate funding for the Columbia river gorge commission.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, Van De Wege, Wylie, Blake, Moscoso, Ladenburg, Probst, Moeller, Stanford, Roberts, Hunt and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

General Government Appropriations & Oversight: 1/31/12 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prays the federal government provide adequate funding to the Columbia River Gorge Commission to fulfill its mission and goals.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS & OVERSIGHT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Moscoso, Vice Chair; McCune, Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Ladenburg, Pedersen and Van De Wege.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Taylor, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Armstrong and Wilcox.

Staff: Michael Bennion (786-7118).

Background:

In 1986 the United States Congress passed the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act and gave its advance consent to an interstate compact between the states of Oregon and Washington. The Washington and Oregon legislatures ratified the compact and declared the provisions of the compact to be the law of the respective states, thus establishing the Columbia River Gorge Commission (Commission) in 1987.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Commission is comprised of 12 voting members, with half of the members appointed by the Governors of Washington and Oregon, and one member appointed by each of the six respective scenic area counties. In addition, there is one ex-officio, non-voting member who is an employee of the U.S. Forest Service appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Commission is authorized to:

- disapprove a land use ordinance adopted by a county within the Gorge area if the ordinance is inconsistent with the management plan developed under the compact;
- enact a land use ordinance setting standards for the use of non-federal land in a county within the scenic area if a county fails to enact a land use ordinance consistent with the management plan (this currently applies to Klickitat County in Washington); and
- review all proposals for major development action and new residential development in each county within the Gorge area, except in urban areas, and to disapprove if the Commission finds the development inconsistent with the compact.

According to the compact, the states of Washington and Oregon are required to provide an equal level of funding to effectuate the Commission. Subject to appropriation by each state legislature, the Commission must be provided with such funds as are necessary to provide the means of establishing and maintaining facilities, a staff of personnel, and such activities as may be necessary to fulfill the powers and duties imposed upon and entrusted to the Commission.

Summary of Bill:

In recognition of the budget circumstances facing the state and the inability to adequately fund the Commission, the Joint Memorial formally asks the federal government to provide an adequate level of funding to allow the Commission to fulfill its mission and goals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Commission provides essential services and the bill is important because of the consultation that occurs between tribes and the agency.

(Commented) The Commission understands the budget circumstances facing Washington. There are unanswered questions regarding how federal control would impact agency staff and operations, and how it would impact the budget. A long-term solution is needed. In regards to the management of federal land, the U.S. Forest Service prepares consistency reviews for projects on federal lands and uses the same rules pursuant to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Dawn Vyvyan, Yakima Nation.

(Commented) Jill Arens and Jeff Litwak, Columbia River Gorge Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.