

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1954

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Agriculture & Natural Resources

**Title:** An act relating to creating a task force on the Columbia river gorge commission.

**Brief Description:** Creating a task force on the Columbia river gorge commission.

**Sponsors:** Representative Pike.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/10/15, 2/19/15 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates a legislative task force on the Columbia River Gorge Commission (Commission) for the purpose of working with the Commission and Oregon's corresponding task force and addressing various issues related to the federal National Scenic Area Act (Act), like the Commission's funding and potential changes to the Act.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Lytton, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Dunshee, Pettigrew, Stanford and Van De Wege.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Kretz, Orcutt and Schmick.

**Staff:** Peter Clodfelter (786-7127).

**Background:**

In 1986 the federal National Scenic Area Act (Act) became law. The Act's purpose is to protect and enhance the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge while protecting and supporting the Columbia River Gorge Area's economy by

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encouraging growth in existing urban areas and allowing for future economic development. The Scenic Area is about 83 miles long and consists of 292,500 total acres located in Washington and Oregon. In Washington, the Scenic Area includes parts of Skamania County, Klickitat County, and Clark County.

Pursuant to federal authority granted in the Act, in 1987 Washington and Oregon ratified an interstate compact that formed the Columbia River Gorge Commission (Commission), a regional planning agency. The Commission consists of 12 voting members who are appointed by the governors of Washington and Oregon and the governing bodies of the six counties within the national Scenic Area. Additionally, the United States Secretary of Agriculture appoints one non-voting member.

All new development and land uses in the National Scenic Area must be consistent with the Act and the local ordinances that implement the Act. Implementing ordinances must be consistent with the Scenic Area Management Plan, which was created pursuant to the Act, and may be disapproved by the Commission. The Commission may also adopt an ordinance for a county that sets standards for using nonfederal land in a county within the Scenic Area if the county fails to do so. The Commission reviews all proposals for major development in each county in the Scenic Area, except urban areas, and may disapprove development if the development is inconsistent with the purpose of the Act. Washington and Oregon fund the Commission separately through their own legislation.

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### **Summary of Bill:**

Contingent on Oregon passing a similar law, the legislative task force on the Columbia River Gorge Commission (Commission) is created. The legislative task force is required to meet with the Commission and the corresponding legislative task force created by Oregon for the purpose of addressing various issues related to the federal National Scenic Area Act (Act), which may include the Commission's funding, and changes to the Act and the Commission that could enhance the relationship between the Commission, Washington, and Oregon.

The legislative task force consists of five members. Two members are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; if possible, one member must be from each of the two largest caucuses in the House of Representatives. Two members are appointed by the President of the Senate; if possible, one member must be from each of the two largest caucuses in the Senate. Also if possible, those four appointed members must represent districts that are within or adjacent to the Scenic Area. The last member is the Governor or the Governor's designee.

A majority of members is a quorum for transacting business. A majority of members is necessary for official action. The five members must select one member to serve as chair. Vacancies are filled by the same appointing authority as for initial membership. The chair or a majority of members may call a meeting and specify the time and place. The legislative task force may adopt rules necessary for the legislative task force's operation. Expenses are paid jointly by the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members may be reimbursed for travel expenses.

All state agencies are required to assist the legislative task force as necessary and appropriate upon request of a legislative task force member. The legislative task force is required to submit a report to the Legislature by September 15, 2016, that includes recommendations for legislation.

The Governor is required to notify in writing the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives (Chief Clerk) and the Secretary of the Senate (Secretary) when Oregon approves the corresponding task force. Then, either the Chief Clerk or the Secretary are required to provide written notice to the Office of the Code Reviser that the Chief Clerk or Secretary received the Governor's notice about Oregon's corresponding task force.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill becomes effective if Oregon, on or before July 11, 2015, approves a corresponding five-member task force to work with the Commission and the legislative task force created in this bill and the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives or the Secretary of the Senate receives written notice of Oregon's approval of the corresponding task force.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This legislation would build on the work begun by a coalition of legislators from Washington and Oregon who met last summer. This bill is a companion bill to a bill currently before the Oregon Legislature that would establish a corresponding task force; together the bills would allow Washington and Oregon to better work together on issues related to the Columbia River Gorge Commission (Commission) and the federal National Scenic Area Act (Act). The Act was an exceptional piece of legislation intended to protect and preserve the Columbia River area while allowing for continued economic growth. The economy in the area is doing well, but the mandates in the federal legislation are considerable. The federal government has provided grants for development in both Washington and Oregon within the Scenic Area, but Washington and Oregon both have obligations to fund the Commission. Although Washington and Oregon appoint people to serve on the Commission, Washington and Oregon should have more involvement beyond that appointment process. The task force would provide a way for Washington and Oregon to be more engaged in making decisions together that affect the Commission, the Scenic Area, and both states.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Pike, prime sponsor; and Don Bonker, Columbia Gorge Commission.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.