

25 years later, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area marks its creation

Managed by the US Forest Service, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area encompasses federal, state and private lands and surrounds many urban areas.

In 1986 [an Act creating the 292,500-acre Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area](#) was signed into law. November 17 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing, but this August 13, elected officials and community leaders instrumental in its passage will be recognized.



The August 13 event will take place in Stevenson, Wash. The gathering includes the dedication of [Cape Horn Overlook](#) by the Forest Service and Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

“The Columbia River Gorge is more than just scenery; it’s a place where thousands of people make their homes, work and play,” explained U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell.

“Nearly half of the lands in the Scenic Area are in private ownership which provides the Forest Service with a valuable opportunity to demonstrate our ability to work effectively with private sector groups such as [Friends of the Columbia Gorge](#) for the benefit of all Americans,” Tidwell said.

The [Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area](#) extends eighty-five miles along both sides of the Columbia River and spans portions of the states of Oregon and Washington. It is a critical transportation corridor and is home to 75,000 people, resource dependent communities, farms and schools.

The landmark legislation strives to protect the scenic landscapes, natural habitat, cultural resources and recreation opportunities of the Gorge, while at the same time supporting the economic development of Gorge communities.

The Act created a new partnership of land management between the U.S. Forest Service, a bi-state regional planning agency called the [Columbia River Gorge Commission](#), the states of Oregon and Washington, and the six counties with land in the Scenic Area. It also called for interagency and tribal cooperation and coordination.

Since 1986, the Act has had clear successes: over 40,000 acres of land acquired for the public by the U.S. Forest Service, the restoration of the [Historic Columbia River Highway](#), a [management plan](#) that has helped limit the impacts of new development and \$11 million in grants and loans to Gorge businesses.



In addition to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, the U.S. Forest Service also manages five other national scenic areas, four national monuments, 20 national recreation areas, two national volcanic monuments, over 9,000 miles of scenic byways as well as 155 national forests, 20 grasslands and one grassland preserve.

The 193 million acres the Forest Service manages comprise about nine percent of the total land area in the United States. Over 170 million people visit Forest Service lands each year spending an estimated \$14.5 billion a year in communities surrounding the national forests, supporting more than 224,000 jobs.

[Columbia River Gorge live image](#)

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.