

Right now the National Scenic Area Office is writing up the Land and Water Conservation Fund priorities. During the last 33 years, virtually all of the funding has gone to the NSA while the Wild and Scenic Rivers have suffered funding starvation. This is a stark fact: you cannot implement a river plan that is based on acquisition without requesting funding. Failure to do so over all of these years suggest that there was never any intention to implement the river management plan, and that raises some serious questions. The point is, the Forest Service needs to request funds for acquisitions - like the Weyerhaeuser 240 acres - right now, so that you can demonstrate that you are a serious buyer. If you miss this funding cycle - and I urge you to avoid that - you must then convince Weyerhaeuser that funding will definitely be prioritized for the next cycle.

Columbia Gorge Audubon Society is very concerned that the failure to implement the river management plan will eventually result in a collapse of the river corridor, something that would greatly please SDS and the developers, but which would also amount to a terrible subversion of the intent of Congress. Therefore, we intend to appeal to Congress for a review of what amounts to a refusal by the Forest Service to implement their own management plan for this river. We are also presently exploring a federal lawsuit over Forest Service failure to protect the values for which this river was designated. Since the failures of the past far outweigh the minor successes, we suggest that the Forest Service take action for significant future progress that will demonstrate your intent to finally implement your river management plan.

Sincerely,

Dave Thies  
Columbia Gorge Audubon Society

Copies to: Senator Murray, Senator Cantwell, Representative Herrera Butler, and the news media.