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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1453**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** House Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Pike, Wylie, Takko, and Vick)

AN ACT Relating to eliminating the backlog of land use applications in the Columbia River Gorge commission for the purpose of protecting and enhancing the natural scenery and regional economic development of the Columbia River Gorge national scenic area; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that congress established the Columbia River Gorge commission to protect and enhance both the natural scenery and the regional economic development of the Columbia River Gorge national scenic area in Washington and Oregon. The mission of the Columbia River Gorge commission is to establish policies that enhance the scenic, recreational, and cultural resources of the Columbia River Gorge, and to support the economy of the area by encouraging growth in existing urban areas and allowing economic development consistent with resource protection.

(2) Consistent with this mission, the legislature finds that the Columbia River Gorge national scenic area is experiencing significant economic growth in a number of areas. One example of this economic activity relates to the unmanned aerial vehicle industry that has created numerous jobs and partnerships and has the ability to attract many related industries in the future. The development of these unmanned aerial vehicles is designed for a wide variety of beneficial uses with the utmost respect for privacy concerns.

(3) The legislature further finds that although economic growth has occurred in the Columbia River Gorge national scenic area, the Columbia River Gorge commission has experienced budget reductions in recent years and has a backlog of unprocessed land use applications.

(4) The legislature intends to provide the Columbia River Gorge commission with one-half of one full-time equivalent employee who has experience and demonstrated expertise related to land use planning in Washington and Oregon, to be appointed by the governor, for the purpose of eliminating the backlog, improving the land use application process, and enabling the Columbia River Gorge commission to manage new projects that strengthen the economy within the Columbia River Gorge region. It is the intent of the legislature that the one-half of one full-time equivalent employee will begin January 1, 2017.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The Columbia River Gorge commission shall eliminate the backlog of complete and unprocessed land use applications by July 1, 2017. In complying with this subsection, the Columbia River Gorge commission must:

(a) Plan and implement improvements to the land use application review process that will reduce the amount of time needed to process applications;

(b) Reinstate processing timelines for land use applications;

(c) Provide technical assistance to the land use application programs of Clark, Klickitat, and Skamania counties; and

(d) Review proposed amendments to the scenic area management plan.

(2) In accordance with RCW 43.01.036, the Columbia River Gorge commission must submit two reports each year to the appropriate committees of the legislature describing progress on the following:

(a) The number of new staff members hired and trained by the Columbia River Gorge commission to process applications;

(b) The number of applications processed, the date each application was submitted to the Columbia River Gorge commission, the type of land use requested by each application, the date each application was processed by the Columbia River Gorge commission, and the number of applications that remain unprocessed; and

(c) Land use application process improvements intended to prevent future backlogs of unprocessed applications.

(3) The reports required by this section are due every six months, beginning January 1, 2016, and ending July 1, 2017.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act expires July 1, 2018.

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