

Washington, DC – Today Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore), a member of the Ways and Means Committee and Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, secured funding to protect land in the Columbia River Gorge in this year's Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill, H.R. 2643. The bill that passed earlier today provides funding for environmental and conservation programs, safe drinking water, climate change research, and funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. It includes \$1 million specifically for the U.S. Forest Service to purchase lands from willing sellers in the Columbia Gorge.

"I am pleased to see this year's Interior and Environment bill reversing a decade of neglect and broken promises for important environmental and conservation programs," said Congressman Blumenauer. "Protecting the Columbia Gorge and other pristine lands across the country is vital to preserving habitat, open space and recreational areas. As the world warms and our global population increases, we must continue to set aside land so that future generations can enjoy our remaining open spaces."

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is one of the nation's most spectacular landscapes, stretching 85 miles east from the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan areas to the Deschutes River. More than 70,000 people live in the Gorge and more than 2 million people visit the Scenic Area each year. The National Scenic Area Act (PL 99-663) gave the Forest Service authority to acquire lands in order to preserve properties with important resources. This funding will be used to purchase some of the most ecologically sensitive lands being offered by willing sellers.

"This funding for land acquisition will not only preserve Gorge landscapes for generations to come, but it will also help open new hiking trails on spectacular properties," said Kevin Gorman, executive director of Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

Since 2001, funding for the EPA has fallen by 29 percent in real terms and funding for the Interior Department has fallen by 16 percent. H.R.2643 reverses the decline, providing a 4.3 percent increase over FY 2007. It also makes climate change research a key priority by boosting federal investment in research at the EPA and Interior Department by 53 percent and, in response to the Supreme Court's landmark decision in April, compels the EPA to begin developing a process for regulating greenhouse gases.