

Washington, DC – The U.S. House of Representatives today approved \$1 million for land acquisition in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area late last night. The funding, proposed by Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D – Ore.), will be used to purchase additional land in the Gorge from willing sellers in order to preserve the integrity of this national treasure.

“The Columbia River Gorge is one of the nation’s most spectacular landscapes,” Blumenauer said. “This money will have a tremendous impact on our ability to preserve the Gorge for generations to come.”

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area stretches east from the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan areas for 85 miles in both Washington and Oregon to the Deschutes River. More than 70,000 people live in the Gorge and more than 2 million people visit the National Scenic Area each year. Over the past seventeen years, public land acquisition has been a success story in the Gorge, as over 35,000 acres have been purchased from willing sellers.

“The Columbia River Gorge ranks as the most recognizable site along the Lewis and Clark trail,” Blumenauer continued, “and protecting the lands explored by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark is an appropriate way to commemorate the bicentennial of the Corps of Discovery’s journey as well as the 20th anniversary of the National Scenic Area Act.”

“We’re thrilled that Congress recognizes the Columbia Gorge is a national treasure worthy of federal funding in tight times,” said Kevin Gorman, executive director of Friends of the Columbia Gorge. “The appropriation of \$1 million for land acquisition in the Gorge means more parks, trails and open spaces for our children and future generations to enjoy.”

The funding was approved as part of the fiscal year 2007 Interior and the Environment Appropriations bill, legislation funding Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture programs. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area was one of only four U.S. Forest Service land acquisition projects funded in the legislation. The U.S. Forest Service manages public land in the National Scenic Area. The legislation must now be voted on by the United States Senate.