



PO Box 730 • #1 Town & Country Square • White Salmon, Washington 98672 • 509-493-3323 • fax 509-493-2229
www.gorgecommission.org

TO: Gorge Commissioners
FROM: Jill Arens, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Columbia River Gorge Air Study and Strategy Report
DATE: August 31, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Enclosed please find: 1) SMA Policies of the Management Plan (I-3-31 through I-3-34); 2) Scenic Resources Enhancement Strategies of the Management Plan (III-3-2 through III-3-4); and 3) Columbia River Gorge Air Quality Project Work Plan of July 30, 2001; 4) Columbia River Gorge Air Quality Project Work Plan Addendum of July 25, 2003; 5) Gorge Strategy Fact Sheet and 6) the Columbia Gorge Air Study and Strategy Report.

The Gorge Commission (CRGC) is scheduled to consider approval of the Strategy Report at the September 13, 2011 Commission meeting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Columbia River Gorge Commission thanks Southwest Clean Air Agency, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and Washington Department of Ecology for their efforts since 2000 in developing an air quality workplan, analyzing information collected for the air quality study and modeling air quality forecasts. This monumental work has increased awareness of air quality issues in the Gorge. It has resulted in the creation of an inventory of studies to measure and track emissions and their impacts on resources in the region. The Gorge Commission also thanks the US Forest Service, the four treaty tribes, and stakeholders for their efforts and comments during this process.

HISTORY

On May 9, 2000, the Gorge Commission adopted an amendment to the Management Plan regarding Gorge air quality, which eliminated two plan provisions for studying the Scenic Area as a Class I airshed. The Secretary of Agriculture concurred with that amendment on August 1, 2000. It directs the states of Oregon and Washington, with the Southwest Clean Air Agency and the Forest Service, and in consultation with affected stakeholders, to develop and implement a regional air quality strategy. The amendment further states that the strategy is to be based on an analysis of monitoring and emissions data to identify sources of air pollution, both inside and outside the Scenic Area. See attached Management Plan pages I-3-31 through I-3-33 and pages III-3-2 through III-3-4.

In 2001 the Gorge Commission approved a workplan for the plan amendment, which was amended in 2003 (superseding the 2001 workplan). The Commission also approved the amended workplan. The technical study began in 2004, with collection and analysis of monitoring data, chemical analysis of haze and computer model simulations. In 2007 the air agencies hosted a Gorge Science Day for the Gorge Commission and stakeholders. The next year the same agencies presented a draft air quality strategy for public review.

The PGE Boardman coal-fired plant is the largest single point source for emissions in the Gorge area. Due to the significance of this one source, and because the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) was considering emission reductions at the Boardman facility, the air quality strategy was delayed until a decision was made by EQC. Emission control requirements for PGE Boardman were adopted by EQC in June 2009 and December 2010. The Columbia River Gorge Air Study and Strategy Report outlines the measures for compliance by PGE, and the DEQ web site has more detailed information: <http://www.deq.state.or.us/aq/pge.htm>

DECISION BY THE GORGE COMMISSION

Chapter 3 – Natural Resources of the Management Plan, SMA Policies pages I-3-31 through I-3-33 contain the language of the 2000 amendment dealing with air quality. Policy 15 within this section states:

Air quality shall be protected and enhanced, consistent with the purposes of the Scenic Area Act. The States of Oregon and Washington and the U.S. Forest Service shall:

- (1) Continue to monitor air pollution and visibility levels in the Gorge;*
- (2) Conduct an analysis of monitoring and emissions data to identify all sources, both inside and outside the Scenic Area, that significantly contribute to air pollution. Based on this analysis, the States shall develop and implement a regional air quality strategy to carry out the purposes of the Scenic Area Act, with the U.S. Forest Service, the Southwest Air Pollution Control Authority and in consultation with affected stakeholders.*

The States and the Forest Service shall together provide annual reports to the Commission on progress made regarding implementation of this policy. The first report shall include a workplan and timeline for gathering/analyzing data and developing and implementing the strategy. The workplan and strategy shall be submitted to the Commission for approval.

The Gorge Commission must decide whether the above language in the Management Plan has been carried out by the air agencies. The workplan has already been approved by the CRGC in 2003 with the amended workplan. The strategy is being considered for approval by the Gorge Commission at its meeting on September 13, 2011.

Approval of the strategy means that the air agencies have completed what was included in the amended workplan of 2003. Approval does not mean that the Gorge Commission attests to the efficacy or accuracy of the report, as the technical experts were asked to provide that information to the Gorge Commission.

Gorge Commission staff have spoken with staff at DEQ about the report and DEQ's presentation to CRGC on September 13, 2011. They will be providing a summary of their study that meets the workplan of 2003.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Gorge Commission approve the air quality strategy submitted in the Columbia River Gorge Air Study and Strategy Report as consistent with the workplan (as amended), which the Commission previously concluded was consistent with the Management Plan.