

Vital Signs Indicators Project: Recreation Subgroup Meeting Notes

Tuesday, 22 January 2008

Gorge Commission office, White Salmon, WA

Attendees:

Rich Davis, Washington State Parks and Recreation Department, Subgroup Chair

Stan Hinatsu, US Forest Service

Diana Ross, US Forest Service

Jessica Metta, Columbia River Gorge Commission

Brian Litt, Columbia River Gorge Commission

Cheri Anderson, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Katie Crafts, Columbia Gorge Windsurfing Association

Jeff Tryens, consultant for the Indicators Project

Kevin Gorman, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, via phone

Robert Burns, West Virginia University, via phone

Alan Graefe, Penn State, via phone

Phyllis Thiemann, member of the Community Advisory Team, via phone

Jimmy Kagan, Oregon State Univ. Institute of Natural Resources, via phone

After introductions, Chair Davis focused the group on the task, first by looking over the draft indicators for Objective 5.1 (see the meeting agenda). Jeff Tryens said that #1 is not a clear measure since you can't tell from looking at it whether more or less sites is the goal. The group decided that this inventory was necessary and that from this inventory, an actual measure would be derived. So #1 would lead to an indicator but isn't one itself. The group again discussed how to define diversity (see previous meeting notes). Ultimately it was decided that defining diversity requires some judgment about how we want the future of Gorge recreation to be, and since it wasn't the place of this group to make that judgment, the

issue was punted to the Gorge Commission itself. Ultimately the inventory will help answer what diversity we want to offer. Doing an inventory as suggested could also help identify additional useful information, i.e. how many multi-use sites exist.

Jessica Metta did a brief run-through of why the draft indicators for Objective 5.1 were chosen. Alan noted that #5 through #8 would be difficult to measure and maybe aren't measurable now. Jessica pointed out that the group is allowed to have "developmental" indicators for which data is not currently available.

#7 is hard to measure, but maybe you could measure it by tracking hits on recreation information websites. Should #7 actually be under Objective 5.2? Maybe it would be measured by a survey question like "name three recreation activities in the Gorge." The group wanted to change the wording of #7 to "Change in public awareness of the diversity of existing recreation opportunities." This would be asking whether the public has information about recreation diversity. There was a discussion whether public awareness is a diversity or quality indicator. A suggestion was that public awareness was necessary to maintain diversity, with a counter-suggestion that measuring participation rates would identify sites that people don't know enough about. Ultimately, the group decided that #7 was not a diversity indicator and that it was already represented in the quality indicators, so it was removed entirely from the list.

Diana suggested changing the wording of #8 to be "change in the distribution of acres and location of dispersed..." and asked whether this is actually a subset of #1. She asked if "acreage" might even need to be added to #1. There was a question about acreage being necessary and how it could be difficult to measure for certain recreation types (i.e. trails). There was a suggestion to change the wording of #8 to the "percent of recreation occurring – or number of users recreating- not tied to a developed site." Jeff Tryens pointed out that it sounded like agency-speak while a recreationalist doesn't care if the site is a developed site or "dispersed" recreation – he questioned whether it mattered to separate the two. The group discussed that it was important to know about dispersed recreation so that it can be brought into management. A suggestion was that #1, #4 and #5 would just include dispersed and developed recreation in the same indicator. Ultimately, the group decided to change the language of #8 to "Percent of recreation occurring not tied to a developed site." The language of #1, #4 and #5 was not changed. The words "by type" was added to the end of #2. The group decided they were comfortable with the indicators under Objective 5.1 for now and to move on.

The group began discussion of the indicators under Objective 5.2 by Jessica Metta again briefly running through them to explain why they were chosen. It was noted that some of the bullets under #2 were not tied to a site but were rather Gorge-wide. Ultimately #2 would lead to a survey and the survey could specify experience with a site and with the Gorge overall. Maybe some of the bullets under #2 need to be measured beyond the user perspective, such as an objective measure of whether the recreation resource has been degraded. Would this be obtained by surveying displaced users? The group wanted to make sure that displaced users show up in the indicators.

Brian Litt asked whether we want to focus on the user's experience or on the recreation resources themselves. The group discussed changing the language of the objective to "recreation resources and experiences." With this we could add an indicator to measure the impact of recreation on natural resources. The group liked adding an indicator called "percentage of recreation sites that are environmentally degraded." Were there other bullets that needed to be pulled out into their own indicator to measure the Gorge-wide resource (not site based) – such as quality of scenery and signage/information? Perhaps for each bullet under #2, we would decide whether we meant for a site or Gorge-wide. The group decided to address this by adding "site user and gorge visitor" to the overarching language of #2. This would make #2 applicable in a survey of recreation site users and Gorge-wide residents/visitors not at a specific site. Ultimately the group decided it was not necessary to change the wording of Objective 5.2.

How do we get information from displaced users? It is important to ask them why they aren't recreating somewhere. Some of this we can get from SCORP, but we could also do a survey of the general population. We could ask why they recreate in the Gorge, if it's their first time or if they are repeat visitors, will they come back, overall experience. Knowing why someone isn't coming is not to improve marketing but to learn where there is poor quality in Gorge recreation. The group was struggling with what the bullets under #2 should be exactly and decided to look at surveys that have been done before and use that language. Robert Burns agreed to send some data about this to Jessica Metta and Jessica would update the bullets. The group decided to delete the bullet "quality of scenery" because this would be covered by the Scenic indicators.

The group discussed #3 and decided to change the wording to "number and type of reported conflicts relating to recreation users." This is meant to capture car break-ins as well as reports of bike crashes or dog bites, etc. It would be any conflict happening to a recreationalist since these would degrade the quality of their recreation experience. The group decided they were comfortable with the indicators under Objective 5.2 for now and to conclude the meeting.

Jessica Metta told the group what would happen next. On Jan. 23rd, the consultants would tweak the indicators as finished at this meeting to ensure they were actual measures and not just topics. They would send this out for Rich to take a look at before sending it to the Community Advisory Team (CAT) in preparation for their meeting on Jan. 28th. The CAT and Technical Advisory Team meet on the 28th. The group decided to meet on Feb. 12th to review the feedback from the 28th meeting.

The next Recreation Subgroup meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 12, 2008, 3:15pm, Gorge Commission office in White Salmon.