

Columbia River Gorge Commission  
**Assessment Committee Meeting Notes**  
**February 5, 2008 – 11:00am**  
White Salmon, Washington

Commissioners Present: Dan Harkenrider, chair, and Walt Loehrke (via conference call).

CRGC / USFS Staff: Jill Arens, Brian Litt, Diana Ross, Angie Kenney, and Jeff Tryens, Indicators Consultant to staff.

Other Attendees: North Cheatham (chair for the CAT), Susan Crowley (CAT), and Mary Repar (CAT) (via conference call).

---

While chair Harkenrider opened the meeting, Angie Kenney handed out the revised Goals and Objectives diagram that now contains the draft objectives developed by the advisory teams. An outline containing the draft indicators was also available, but not discussed. Because only two members of the six-member Assessment Committee were present for the meeting, the conversation focused on policy issues, and no decisions were made about the objectives.

Jeff Tryens provided a general overview of the work being conducted by the advisory teams and the current status of the Vital Signs project. He remarked that the process was moving along quite well and that the two advisory teams had been working together nicely. He noted that some sub-groups, particularly the recreation sub-group, had actually seen an increase in their level of enthusiasm for the project. He explained that the sub-group sees this as an opportunity to collaborate and work together to gain a better understanding of the issues, share data and create stronger relationships between agencies.

Jeff explained that there are too many draft indicators at this point and that the teams should be working on prioritizing their lists to identify the “vital signs” or those critical few that will provide the most important information. He advised that the advisory teams begin to rate the indicators soon for their level of importance in terms of monitoring or measuring Gorge health, the availability of existing data and how they relate to the National Scenic Area Act and the Commission itself.

Jeff noted that several of the sub-groups have struggled with defining key terms but that everyone has been very actively involved, attendance has been good, and that they had been very constructive so far. The groups should be heading towards a consensus very soon, but there are a couple higher level policy issues that the Assessment Committee will need to clarify first. They include:

1. Establishing a baseline – where (when) should we start measuring from?
2. Define the meaning of “diverse recreational opportunities”
3. Air quality – in or out?
4. Define the meaning of “public vantage point”
5. Number of indicators – how many do we want and how will we handle them?
6. Economic Objective 3.3 – how do we measure “allow”?

Chair Harkenrider discussed the air quality issue. He said that as far as he is concerned air quality should be addressed especially since the Commission will be hearing a proposed strategy from air quality agencies in the upcoming months. If the Commission adopts the proposed strategy, then it could be used as an indicator. He added that the strategy would consist of a large level of monitoring and analysis and that the air agencies would provide regular updates regarding the "state of the air quality" in the Gorge.

Some discussion followed Jeff's presentation of the list, but was focused primarily on the need to reduce the number of indicators we already have. Jeff discussed the possibility of having "lead indicators" that are then stratified by level of detail. He asked the Assessment Committee how many indicators they'd like to see, and what they would like us to do with them.

Objective 3.3 was then discussed. It reads: *"Allow economic development in rural centers and non urban areas consistent with the protection and enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge"*. Chair Harkenrider suggested changing the wording to read: *Allow economic development in non urban areas, including rural centers, consistent with the protection and enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge*. Meeting attendees agreed with this wording, but it was not changed due to low attendance by Assessment Committee members. Chair Harkenrider suggested discussing this again with the full Assessment Committee at their next meeting.

Jeff explained why objective 3.3 is so troublesome. He asked how to measure "allow" and whether more economic development was better or worse. There were different perspectives expressed among meeting attendees regarding what this objective should measure and the intent of the second purpose of the Act. Jeff summarized by stating that it is not clear as to whether or not the Act begrudgingly allows or enthusiastically allows new economic development outside the urban areas that is consistent with resource protection and enhancement guidelines. Chair Harkenrider agreed that this was a discussion that should be held again at the next Assessment Committee meeting.

Chair Harkenrider suggested prioritizing the list of indicators based on their relevance to what the Commission actually regulates, and possibly eliminating those that are beyond our control. Jeff suggested that we would be doing the community a great service if we kept it broad and looked at the indicators for measures of Gorge health – not only how the Management Plan is doing. He explained that we would use the larger Gorge health indicators to guide the Management Plan, not blame ourselves for issues that are beyond our control that are not improving. By not limiting the measurements to what we directly affect, we would be able to engage the entire community – not just our commissioners. Chair Harkenrider stated that he supports looking at all of Gorge health, but would like to see a statement explaining how the indicators will be used and how the Commission is involved with each one. Jeff explained that the Vital Signs project presents a golden opportunity to engage with our partner agencies, build new relationships, conduct public outreach and get people to pay greater attention to issues the community cares about.

The recreation objectives were then discussed. Proposed objective 5.1 reads: *Protect and enhance the diversity of recreation opportunities*. Jeff asked whether or not the Assessment Committee would be able to define “diversity of recreation opportunities. Do we want to see more recreation sites throughout the Gorge or do we want to see more kinds of recreation sites throughout the Gorge?

Proposed objective 5.2 reads: *Protect and enhance the quality of recreation experiences*. Chair Harkenrider commented that “quality” is very difficult to measure. He noted that recreationists that have come back to the same site year after year might notice degradation but that a first time visitor might see pristine conditions. Commissioner Walt Loehrke asked how we could define “recreation”. He added that the definition changes from year to year and from user to user. He asked how we can measure something that changes so often.

Mary Repar noted that quality of recreation sites would be protected through the other resource protection goals. She suggested that as long as the natural, scenic and cultural resources of the sites were protected, recreation users could decide for themselves how they would like to recreate. Susan Crowley asked whether or not it was appropriate to measure the quality of natural resources as a part of the recreation experience. Angie stated that there will be overlap amongst all of the resources, not just here. Jeff agreed and suggested that looking for all of the overlap between resources would take a large amount of work, would get overly complicated and that it might not add anything to the overall project. The overlap will become obvious as the indicators are defined and prioritized.

Brian Litt explained that through his many years of Gorge Commission planning, that recreation really is all about access and the quality of the site. He added that providing recreation opportunities requires access, so these are closely related. He said that although challenging, he thought the two objectives captured the key areas that should be evaluated for recreation.

North Cheatham, chair for the Community Advisory Team (CAT), asked whether recreation occurring inside the urban areas would be evaluated. He asked how events such as first Fridays in Hood River would be viewed or accounted for in the data. Jeff suggested allowing the recreation resources sub-group to prepare a definition for recreation diversity.

North also asked how the “orphan indicators” would be addressed. He explained that the CAT had been discussing quality of life indicators that aren’t being addressed by the sub-groups. The CAT’s list includes the feeling of security, night time light pollution, litter and graffiti and other similar quality of life issues.

Chair Harkenrider said that he would not like to suggest that Commission staff will be doing all of the data collection needed for the Vital Signs project. Jeff explained that the next step in the project will be to sit down and conduct a reality test. Figure out what is possible and determine who will be conducting the data collection and analysis. He added that we might be able to influence others (most likely our partner agencies) to collect data that would feed into our research needs.

Susan stated that she hadn't yet heard how cumulative effects of economic development would be measured. Brian suggested that by measuring the condition of natural and scenic resources we would be able to see the cumulative impacts of economic development on the Gorge, outside the urban areas. He explained that all new economic developments occurring outside of the urban areas currently require Scenic Area permits and are reviewed for their impacts on Gorge resources. Susan asked whether several "no adverse affect" developments could together cause an adverse affect. She believes that this should be monitored, and suggested monitoring whether these developments met conditions of approval. Brian agreed with Susan but thought that the latter (monitoring compliance with conditions) is related more to the performance measures than Gorge health measures. Susan added that it should be an indicator because a directive will be needed to conduct the performance measure. She also said that she feels as though the CAT would be upset if objective 3.3 was removed as a result of this discussion.

Chair Harkenrider said the Susan has a legitimate question, but that he believes it is addressed through interconnections between resources. He suggested that what we are really concerned with is the cumulative affects of new development outside the urban areas. He added that these impacts would be seen and measured by assessing the health of the scenic, natural, cultural and recreation resources (covered by the other goals statements). He did not feel as though a separate indicator should be added to quantify all known affects of economic development under Goal 3. Susan suggested that we add a statement to link economic development back to its impacts on other gorge resources and explain the connections that exist; chair Harkenrider agreed.

Jeff asked how the Commission might react to changes caused by economic necessity. For example, Pinot Noir grape growers, anticipating a warming climate, are moving northward including into the Gorge. Out of economic necessity, the crops have changed from pears to grapes. Would the Commission view these kinds of changes as good or bad?

Jeff then asked the Assessment Committee members that were present if they were happy with the Vital Signs project so far. Commissioner Loehrke said that any progress is good progress and that he was happy just to see the project moving forward. Chair Harkenrider echoed Commissioner Loehrke's comment but added that there were still too many indicators. He had anticipated a large list, but feels that it is crucial to the success of the project that we have something that is doable. Everyone agreed that the sub-groups should try to narrow down the list and identify the "critical few" in time for the next joint advisory team meeting on February 25, 2008.

North commented about the CAT. He said that he was pleased with the high attendance rates and the level of involvement he has received from his team members. He added that although there has been some confusion, it has not resulted in very much fall out amongst the members.

Jeff and Chair Harkenrider suggested allocating at least 2 hours to the next Assessment Committee meeting to ensure that adequate discussions occur and decisions can be made.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12.30 pm.

**The next meeting has been scheduled for February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008 from 2:00pm to 4:00pm at the Commission office in White Salmon, Washington.**

Attachments:

- Agenda for February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Assessment Committee Meeting
- Diagram of goals and proposed objectives as created by the Technical Advisory Team resource sub-groups and discussed at the January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008 joint advisory team meeting.
- Outline of goals, proposed objectives and draft indicators as created by the Technical Advisory Team resource sub-groups and discussed at the January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008 joint advisory team meeting.

AK

**Columbia River Gorge Commission**  
**Assessment Committee Meeting**  
11:00 am to 12:00 pm – February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
White Salmon, Washington

11:00 – 11:05 (5 minutes)	Call to order <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handout: notes from the December 10<sup>th</sup> Assessment Committee meeting</li></ul>
11:05 – 11:20 (15 minutes)	Update from the advisory team chairs.
11:20 – 11:45: (25 minutes)	Review and approve the proposed objectives as prepared by the advisory teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handout: goals and objectives diagram</li></ul> Review the draft indicators prepared by the advisory team sub-groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handout: revised outline containing goals, draft objectives and draft indicators</li></ul>
11:45 – 11:55: (10 minutes)	Discuss the next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handout: advisory team timeline</li></ul>
11:55 – 12:00: (5 minutes)	Schedule March meeting.
12:00:	Meeting adjourned.

# Goals and DRAFT Objectives for the Vital Signs Indicators Project Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

**Created by the Technical Advisory Team Resource Sub-Groups  
January 28, 2008 Joint Advisory Team Meeting**

**Purposes of the Act:**

- (1) to establish a national scenic area to protect and provide for the enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge; and
- (2) to protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development in a manner that is consistent with paragraph (1)

<b>Goal 1:</b> Protect and enhance scenic resources.	<b>Goal 2:</b> Protect and enhance natural resources.	<b>Goal 3:</b> Protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge region	<b>Goal 4:</b> Protect and enhance cultural resources.	<b>Goal 5:</b> Protect and enhance recreation resources.
<b>Objective 1.1:</b> Protect and enhance the scenic quality of the Columbia River Gorge visible from public vantage points	<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Protect natural plant and animal communities of the Columbia River Gorge by protecting and enhancing the habitats which support them.	<b>Objective 3.1:</b> Enhance and sustain the economic vitality of the urban areas.	<b>Objective 4.1:</b> Protect and enhance significant archeological resources.	<b>Objective 5.1:</b> Protect and enhance the diversity of recreation opportunities
<b>Objective 1.2:</b> Protect the visual character of the diverse landscapes of the Columbia River Gorge	<b>Objective 2.2:</b> Protect and enhance quality of water and aquatic habitat in the Columbia River Gorge.	<b>Objective 3.2:</b> Protect and enhance agriculture and forestry.	<b>Objective 4.2:</b> Protect and enhance significant historic resources.	<b>Objective 5.2:</b> Protect and enhance the quality of recreation experiences.
	<b>Objective 2.3:</b> Protect and enhance air quality of the Columbia River Gorge	<b>Objective 3.3:</b> Allow economic development in rural centers and non urban areas consistent with the protection and enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge	<b>Objective 4.3:</b> Protect and enhance significant traditional cultural properties.	