

**Gorge Commission
Vital Indicators Development**

**Technical Advisory Team Summary Report
April 25, 2008**

The Vital Sign Indicators Project began with Commission staff working with Jeff Tryens to develop indicator goals and objectives for each of the five categories identified in the National Act legislation to protect the Columbia River Gorge. The indicators will guide future decisions and guide the Management Plan.

The work of the Technical Advisory Team for the Vital Indicators Project began in October 2007 with the chairs and sub-group members of each of the five categories of indicators (Scenic, Natural, Cultural, Economic, and Recreation) meeting with Gorge Commission staff. The chairs and sub-group members were chosen for their knowledge of the region, expertise in their fields, technical knowledge and understanding of data and its use, and understanding of the National Scenic Act and its framework for the Commission's mission.

This first meeting set the stage for the work to be done with a suggested timeline and the understanding that the drafted goals and objectives were open for review and change. Three types of indicators were to be produced. Those types are 1) readily available indicators, 2) moderately available indicators, and 3) developmental indicators.

To assist the work of and communication among and between members of the Team, a website and Wiki were provided by Columbia Gorge Community College. This technical tool allowed the sharing of vast amounts of data and work to be reviewed by the sub-group members in each area, across all five areas, and by the Community Advisory Team. Commission staff provided excellent support for each of the sub-groups by coordinating meetings and providing technical assistance.

The work was not without some difficulty in that the task felt over-whelming to the sub-group members and chairs who already have full-time positions. Broad questions such as, "What is meant by the health of the Gorge," "Is the suggested indicator something the Gorge Commission has control of," "How often will data be collected and analyzed," and "What can reasonably be done with current resources" were often discussed as part of the decision-making process. Each of the sub-groups could and sometimes did look at these broad questions from different perspectives. However, each sub-group took ownership very quickly of their assigned task and the identified outcomes. The sub-groups also addressed common elements that could be addressed in more than one of the categories of indicators.

With the implementation of the Community Advisory Team in December, the sub-groups were offered suggestions and questions related to the work they had completed to date. From this feedback and involvement, the quality of the vital indicators became richer. As the facilitator for the Technical Advisory Committee and of the joint Technical and Community Teams, it is clear that there is high energy in protecting the assets of the Gorge as well as the recognition of the difficulty in balancing development with protection.

The completed work for each of the sub-groups will be presented Friday, April 25th to the Assessment Committee for their review. The legacy of our work lies in the criteria for the identified indicators. Those criteria ask the following for each indicator: is it valid, relevant, consistent, clear, obtainable, repeatable, policy-oriented, and comprehensive? It has been my pleasure to work with all members of the two Advisory Teams, Jeff Tryens, Sally Duncan, and Commission Staff.

Submitted by:

Dr. Susan J. Wolff, TAT Chair