

Urban Area Boundary Revisions  
Gorge Commission Rulemaking Concepts  
from  
June 10, 2008 work session

At its June 10, 2008 meeting, the Columbia River Gorge Commission decided to begin consideration of three key policy questions relating to urban area boundary revisions. The Commission intends to codify its work into its Revision of Urban Area Boundaries rules (Commission Rule 350-40). The Commission plans to consider these issues again at a work session on September 9, 2008.

- 1. Minor:** Reference: The NSA Act authorizes the Commission to make “minor” revisions to urban area boundaries. The Commission will be defining what constitutes a “minor revision” in more detail. The current interpretation used in the Urban Areas Boundary Revisions Handbook (UA Handbook) is as follows:

*“Minor revisions” are those boundary changes which do not have a significant effect on surrounding lands outside the Urban Area and beyond the immediate area subject to the boundary change or those boundary changes which do not result in a substantial expansion of an Urban Area.”*

The UA Handbook interpretation of this term is that a boundary revision may be considered minor if it meets one of the two parts of the definition – either that it does not have a significant effect on surrounding lands or that it is small in size. With this interpretation, the determination of whether a boundary revision is minor is made on a case-by-case basis.

- 2.a. Prioritization of Lands:** The Commission wants to establish guidance about the priority of lands that cities and counties can consider for urbanization. Except for Criterion D in the Act (a boundary revision should not result in the significant reduction of agricultural lands, forest lands, or open spaces), the Act, Commission Rule 350-40, and the Handbook do not address what lands should first be considered for urbanization. The Commission will be working to establish a prioritization framework that could identify NSA lands more suitable for potential urbanization than other NSA lands. At the June 10, 2008 work session, the Commission expressed a desire for this priority scale to include some flexibility. Several Commissioners suggested cities and counties first should look outside the NSA to expand urban area boundaries and then to lands identified as “developed settings that are not visually sensitive” in the Management Plan.

- 2.b. Regional Analysis:** The Commission will consider requiring a city to look beyond its immediate boundaries when making the case to expand its urban area (i.e. consideration of growth trends and land availability in nearby urban areas). The Commission expressed this regional analysis as a function of the efficiency of land use; however it also could be a function of demonstrating the need for additional lands for urbanization, or a factor to be considered as part of a priority of lands framework.