

## **GORGE COMMISSION – SCENIC RESOURCES PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Aug. 20, 2002 MEETING SUMMARY**

#### **White Salmon Valley Community Library, White Salmon, WA**

Committee Members Present: Dan Harkenrider, Jane Jacobsen, Joyce Reinig, Anne Squier, Wayne Wooster.

Other Commissioners Present: Kenn Adcock, Doug Crow.

Commission and Forest Service Staff Present: Keith Fredrickson, Brian Litt, Diana Ross.

Others Present: Dawn Baird, Stacey Borland, Kate Bowie, June Carlson, Todd Cornett, Judy Davis, Norm Haight, David Harlan, Jergen Hess, Patrick Johnson, Diana Karabut, Michael Lang, Nancy Lemons, Tom McCallister, Susan Muir, Bud Quinn, David Sauter, Phyllis Thiemann, Josh Warner, Karen Witherspoon, Lori Zoller.

The Aug. 20 meeting of the Scenic Resources Committee began with Anne Squier suggesting one change in the June 25, 2002, meeting summary. On Page 2 of the June 25 summary, she suggested the last sentence be changed to read “Martha Bennett said the Committee could compile a list of acceptable materials outside of the Management Plan. Anne also suggested one change to the Review of Recommendations to Date and Rationales document to clarify the Committee recommended deleting Larch Mountain as a Key Viewing Area (KVA) “except for the peak at Larch Mountain, which will still be a KVA.”

The Committee then continued its discussion about deferred KVA decisions from the July 30 meeting. Brian Litt presented a matrix on five viewpoints (U.S. 97 and bridge, the Hood River Bridge, the Gorge Rim at Cape Horn, Tom McCall Point and The Dalles Mt. Road) that listed new information in response to questions raised during the last SRC meeting. In the discussion that followed, Committee and audience members looked at the criteria used to recommend viewpoints as KVAs: 1) high level of current use and 2) significance of views offered. Anne suggested the Committee should also consider a viewpoint’s potential to provide important views in the future. Wayne Wooster then asked county planners in attendance about their opinions on the review of the KVA system. Todd Cornett of Wasco County said he would like to see additional analysis on reasons for designating a viewpoint as a KVA; Karen Witherspoon of Skamania County agreed. Susan Muir of Multnomah County said the KVA system helps explain National Scenic Area requirements to customers; and Josh Warner of Clark County said it is sometimes difficult to work with KVAs, but he was not sure that policy decisions should be based on ease of implementation.

Dan Harkenrider said if there are problems with the KVA process, then the Committee should look at dealing with the procedural problems to fix the process so we don’t burden

counties. Anne noted that without the KVA system currently in place, planners would not have the primary tool used in siting new development and using natural topography in achieving visual subordination. She also said it was important to look at the future because the KVA system is a function that can shape development over the next 50 years. Brian said he appreciated the concern about looking at future growth, yet noted that there is not a lot of objective information available, and what information there is may be speculative or anecdotal in nature. Dan said that it would be helpful to the Committee to know what the difference would be, in terms of added acreage of scenic protection, when it considered adding KVAs. Wayne asked what other avenues were open to the Gorge Commission to add KVAs, other than by recommendations made to the full Commission from the Committee during Plan Review. Brian said another possible way to add KVAs would be through Plan Amendments, which could be made at any time, subject to applicable criteria.

Diana Ross then reviewed the deferred KVA decisions individually, starting with US 197 and its bridge. She followed with a map presentation showing which lands would be seen from US 197 if it received a KVA designation. June Carlson said the Oregon Department of Transportation had reviewed the proposed KVA status for US 197, and preferred that it not be made a KVA because it would make ODOT's work more difficult. She acknowledged making it a KVA would be consistent with other state highways being KVAs and it is something ODOT would accept.

Joyce asked how much private property would be affected on US 197. Brian answered that certain properties (especially in the foreground of US 197, between the Scenic Area boundary and The Dalles) would come under new regulations. Most of that area is currently designated as GMA-Large Scale Agriculture. Todd said Wasco County opposes the KVA designation for US 197. He said a KVA listing would adversely impact private property owners, and that most of the land that would be affected involves agricultural uses. He said most of the area is currently not visible, which allows agriculturalists to erect more cost-effective metal buildings, and that a KVA listing would impose added financial burden.

Diana followed the US 197 discussion with a map presentation on lands seen from Tom McCall Point and Dalles Mt. Road. She said the proposed action regarding McCall Point was a clarification to the Management Plan that always intended this location to be part of the Rowena Plateau and Nature Conservancy Viewpoint KVA. Dan asked if large areas of land would be added if Dalles Mt. Road, Cape Horn, and Hood River Bridge were made KVAs. Diana answered that no new areas would be added for the Gorge Rim at Cape Horn because the foreground of the trail is basically the same view as from Washington State Route 14, and that few additional lands would be visible from the Hood River Bridge, although Underwood would be seen directly. Anne asked what would be the extent of areas seen from The Dalles Mt. Road. Brian answered that some foreground areas would be picked up, but not much middle ground, and that most of the land is seen from a distance from SR 14.

Tom McAllister gave comments supporting the designation of McCall Point as part of the Rowena Plateau. He said the 1,722 foot elevation viewpoint offers a commanding view to the west not gained from Rowena Crest Viewpoint.

McCallister's presentation was followed by testimony by David Harlan, Executive Director for the Port of Hood River, who said his agency was opposed to the Hood River Bridge being recommended for KVA designation. He noted the bridge offers "brief, fragmentary views" to motorists, that most vehicles traveling on the bridge do not carry passengers, and that the bridge is not open to the public, pedestrians or bikers because it is a private toll bridge.

Jurgen Hess and Michael Lang said the Committee should considering KVA status for all Columbia River bridges, Dell Road 7 Mile Road, High Line Road, State Line Road, Courtney Road, Corbett Hill Road, Angels Rest Viewpoint, and Trail 400. Nancy Russell also said she supported The Dalles Mt. Road and Cape Horn as KVAs, adding she was disappointed that Corbett Hill Road was not being considered because it is "visually important" and is a main route to Vista House. David Sauter said Klickitat County would not support any additional KVAs. Skamania County Commissioner Bud Quinn said he wanted to "go on record" opposing any more KVAs in Skamania County.

The Committee returned to specific discussion on Tom McCall Point and recommended that the viewpoint at the top of the trail continue to be recognized as part of the Rowena Plateau/Nature Conservancy Viewpoint KVA. The Committee's discussion then focused on the Hood River Bridge. Dan said he saw no additional value in adding the bridge as a KVA, that few additional landscapes would be protected, and that the value added by a KVA designation would not be worth the additional process work involved. Joyce said she was not supportive of adding bridges as KVAs, voicing concern about problems that could result; Wayne agreed, noting he did not see any additional values gained from making bridges KVAs. The Committee then decided to not recommend the Hood River Bridge as a KVA.

A discussion followed about criteria used to recommend new viewpoints. Committee members decided to utilize a criterion of "what value would be added" with a KVA designation, along with 1) current/anticipated future high use and 2) the significance of the view. The Committee then tabled action on the remaining proposed KVAs until the Committee's next meeting. The Committee asked staff to analyze the "value added" criterion for the remaining KVA proposals as time permitted, looking at: 1) number of acres added to KVA-protected viewsheds; and 2) the land use designation of the affected areas. As available, information on what areas would be background versus middle or foreground was also requested. Additional information regarding the other two criteria as available will also be provided.

The next meeting was set for 3 p.m., Tuesday, September 17, at a location to be determined. The topics include finishing the KVA discussion, and color guidelines.