

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

### **June 25, 2002 MEETING SUMMARY – DRAFT**

#### **Rock Creek Center, Stevenson, WA**

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

Other Commissioners Present: Walt Loehrke.

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

Others Present: Dawn Baird, Nathan Baker, Bruce Barnett, June Carlson, Mike Clark, Judy Davis, Norm Haight, Jurgen Hess, Casey Heuker, Mark Mazeski, David Sauter, Derrick Tokos, Eric Walker, Josh Warner, Karen Witherspoon.

The meeting began with Anne Squier suggesting one change in the Summary of the June 5, 2002, meeting and three changes to the “Recommendations to Date and Rationales” document. Anne suggested deleting the phrase “when the full Gorge Commission receives the Committee’s recommendation” from the first sentence of the third paragraph on Page 2 of the June 5 meeting summary. Changes to the “Recommendations to Date” document for the June 5 meeting were: replacing the phrase “has inadvertently” with “may have” in the first Rationale on Page 4; moving the sentence “Additional guideline language clarifying how visual subordination applies to these settings should be added to the plan” so that it becomes the last sentence for the third Recommendation on Page 4. Lastly, a change to the rationale language for the KVA highways decisions of the May 20 meeting was suggested. This change would clarify that projects on KVA highways and in KVA foregrounds subject to the “harmonious” standard would still have to meet visual subordination from other KVAs, unless those other KVAs are in a project’s immediate foreground, visual subordination could not be met and the other criteria for the “harmonious” standard (e.g. project need) were met. Brian Litt said he would revise the documents accordingly.

Casey Heuker addressed the Committee regarding removal of trees along I-84 by ODOT. She expressed concern that doing so could make private properties on nearby lands more visible, and harder to make development visually subordinate. She also said I-84 shouldn’t be a KVA because of high driving speeds, and that a definition of in-kind versus other types of replacements is needed. Joyce Reinig noted the Commission received several comments on the highway corridor tree clearing issue.

Brian then reviewed results of the Commission’s Monitoring Reports. He emphasized that in the 80 cases analyzed in the Monitoring Reports, the highest degree of improper implementation was for color requirements. Siting, landscaping and reflectivity ranked

second, third and fourth, respectively, in that regard. Also, retaining existing screening was found to be a very important tool in making a development visually subordinate, while new landscaping was never found to effectively contribute to visual subordination. Brian said the Monitoring Reports issued three major recommendations for Plan Review: 1) use siting and then prioritize other requirements, such as color, reflectivity, to reduce visibility; 2) develop more specific guidelines for developments that require new landscaping; and 3) fine-tune color and reflectivity guidelines.

Brian then presented an “Orientation to Scenic Issues Regarding Guidelines” that listed 19 issues, an estimate of complexity/workload for each issue (High, Medium, Low), and whether the Committee must address the issue or had some discretion (Yes, No). Brian noted that the last five of the issues listed reflect follow-up work from the Committee’s policy recommendations. After discussion among Committee and audience members, it was decided that two “no’s” on the “must-address” list – “Time frame to achieve visual subordination”, and “Outdoor lighting” – would be changed to “yes”. Joyce asked about prioritizing the list. Brian thought it might make sense to first tackle the guidelines to implement the Committee’s policy recommendations, and to work on “high” or “medium” issues first because the process could take longer than estimated. Dan noted the Committee may not get to all issues on the list, and needs to define how those items that aren’t dealt with by the Committee will be addressed.

Brian then summarized the staff report on the issue: “Should requirements regarding reflectivity of structures as seen from Key Viewing Areas be changed?” He said new structures on GMA lands visible from KVAs are required to have exteriors with low reflectivity, and that a similar SMA guidelines requires reflectivity be minimized. Brian said metal surfaces, even if considered “matte” finish or painted, are almost invariably highly reflective – as a result, implementing agencies have significantly limited metal exteriors on lands seen from KVAs. The staff report listed four options for the issue: 1) Maintain status quo; 2) Maintain status quo and add specifics regarding acceptable exterior materials and treatments (e.g. composite shingles, wood); 3) Provide more flexibility in the guideline, with stricter controls on roofs and allowing more reflective surfaces for siding in some cases (i.e. screened by vegetation; 4) Provide more flexibility in the guideline, allowing more reflective surfaces on sites that are fully screened year round by vegetation or vegetation and topography. Staff recommended Option 2, noting that while there were some advantages to metal buildings, there are acceptable alternative materials that meet reflectivity requirements, are cost-effective and safe. Because of reflectivity’s high scenic impact, it is important to regulate it, and Option 2 provides needed scenic protection and clarification needed to ease implementation and aid both applicants and planners, according to staff.

In the discussion that followed, Brian noted that reflectivity from metal roofs is not mitigated by distance, that metal roofs are not necessarily cheaper than composite roofs, and that fire risks have been reduced for composite roofs. After a general discussion on materials currently available, Martha Bennett suggested the Committee could compile a list of acceptable materials could be compiled outside of the Management Plan. Mark Mazeski said planners need backup in dealing with applicants, and more specific

guidelines generate greater compliance. Walt Loehrke said the Plan needs to have a rigid reflectivity standard. Anne asked if there was a “reflectometer” or other objective measurement to get what we’re after. Dan felt that a revision needs to focus on what standard to apply rather than materials. Jurgen Hess said the Management Plan needs to deal with a performance standard, and that other factors such as angle of sun should also be considered. Nathan Baker also agreed that objective criteria are needed. Dawn Baird said she polled Wasco County planners before the meeting, and that half said metal buildings shouldn’t be allowed, and half thought metal building should be limited when seen from KVAs. David Sauter said he liked the idea of quantifying reflectivity, and agreed that metal buildings present a big problem.

Wayne asked if there are current standards for reflectivity. Brian said there were no measurable standards being used by the planners. He noted that, in implementing reflectivity requirements, planners have found that some materials work well, and that trying to find a measurable standard to apply could be complicated and perhaps beyond the resources of the Commission. Joyce Reinig said she supported the staff recommendation, and that the Commission lacks the money or staff time to spend on the issue of an industry standard. Jane Jacobsen also supported Option 2. Martha asked the Committee to defer making a recommendation on the reflectivity issue, stating more staff work was needed on the question of standards. The Committee agreed to defer the question, and look further into whether standards exist for reflectivity.

Brian then summarized options in the staff report on the issue: “Should changes be made to the compatibility standard and/or guidelines that implement it?” He explained that current policy requires all new development to be compatible with its landscape setting, setting a “baseline” of scenic protection for all NSA lands, including those not seen from KVAs. The compatibility standard is implemented through density controls for each landscape setting and guidelines requiring the scale of development to be compatible with surrounding development. Besides these guidelines, lands not seen from KVAs are generally not subject to additional scenic regulations. Options that Brian outlined included: 1) Maintain status quo; 2) Add guidelines regarding color and reflectivity throughout the Scenic Area (unless expressly exempt by other guidelines); 3) Add guidelines regarding color only through the Scenic Area (unless exempted by other guidelines); 4) Add guidelines regarding color and reflectivity for new development seen from any public road or viewpoint; keep status quo for areas not seen from KVAs; 5) Replace compatibility standard with harmonious standard for new development seen from any public road or viewpoint; keep status quo for areas not seen from KVAs. He said staff had no preliminary recommendation on this issue, and that all the options could be made workable and found consistent with the Scenic Area Act.

In the discussion that followed, Joyce said she liked the simplicity of Option 2. She asked county representatives about their opinions on the issue. Dawn Baird said in Wasco County landowners are often unhappy about complying with color requirements in areas not visible from KVAs but that they do comply. Derrick Tokos asked what the Committee would be trying to accomplish by changing the guidelines. Eric Walker said color can become an emotional issue with applicants, adding he could see how adding

color guidelines could make implementation easier. Joyce noted that fires and construction of new roads can change scenery in the NSA, and those are good reasons to make guidelines consistent throughout the Gorge. Mark Mazeski said a color requirement for all areas in the NSA is a matter of “fairness.” He supported option 2. Jurgen Hess said he supported Option 3, noting that color is the “biggest issue and doesn’t cost a lot.” He also mentioned “fairness” as a basis for adding color guidelines. Josh Warner said he liked the “consistency” argument for adding color guidelines, noting that Clark County applicants have expectations that they must meet certain requirements when building in the NSA. David Sauter stressed the importance of clearly articulating the public benefit of requiring color and/or reflectivity guidelines everywhere, noting that option 2 would effectively prohibit metal buildings in the whole Scenic Area. Anne said she supported Option 3, adding it would better protect the Scenic Area in a consistent way. The rest of the Committee then voiced support for Option 3.

It was then clarified that the hours for the next Scenic Committee meeting on June 30 at the White Salmon Valley Community Library will be from 2 to 6 p.m. Topics would be refining the list of Key Viewing Areas and standards for replacement buildings.

The Committee began discussing the topic of Key Viewing Areas list, and a memo from Diana Ross on the subject. After some initial discussion about the topic, it was agreed it would be picked up at the next meeting, including reviewing the existing list of KVAs and whether new KVAs should be added.

As a final item of business, the Committee followed up on an issue introduced at the June 5 meeting. The issue was whether to eliminate an SMA guideline allowing new buildings in some SMA pastoral settings to be white. The Committee decided to recommend eliminating this guideline, recognizing that, without accompanying design guidelines relating to consistency of new buildings with the historic character of existing white buildings, it did not carry out its intent well. Instead, the Committee recommended staff review existing plan language regarding color exceptions for historic structures to ensure new buildings within an historic complex can vary from color guidelines if necessary to protect the integrity of historic properties.

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