

GORGE COMMISSION – SCENIC RESOURCES PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 29, 2002, MEETING SUMMARY

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, The Dalles, OR

Committee members present: Dan Harkenrider, Joyce Reinig, Anne Squier, Wayne Wooster.

Other Commissioners present: Kenn Adcock.

Commission and Forest Service staff present: Keith Fredrickson, Brian Litt, Diana Ross.

Others present: Roger Allen, Dawn Baird, Nathan Baker, Kate Bowie, June Carlson, North Cheatham, Todd Cornett, Dan Ericksen, Jurgen Hess, Jeanette Kbos, Nancy Lemons, Mark Mazeski, Bobbie Miller, Eileen Phelan, Rod Runyon, David Sauter, Phyllis Thiemann, Derrick Tokos, Eric Walker, Josh Warner.

The Committee opened the meeting with a review of the draft October 7 meeting summary and Recommendations/Rationale document. Anne Squier recommended adding a sentence (after the fifth sentence in the second paragraph) on Page 2 of the meeting summary that noted a comment by audience member Roger Allen, regarding color requirements in the Scenic Area not being applied for repainting pre-Scenic Act structures. She then suggested changing the next sentence to read: “Anne then noted the Committee has not addressed three other color related issues: 1) Color requirements for new buildings are assumed to be in force when those buildings are repainted; 2) Buildings constructed under Scenic Area guidelines are assumed to have the same color requirements when repainted; 3) Should there be some review for pre-NSA homes when they are repainted?” She also suggested adding the following sentence: “Anne said she wished the counties would address the first two issues she raised, and asked if it would be helpful to include a provision in building permits that more clearly informs landowners they need to use an approved color if they repaint their homes.” There were no suggested changes to the Recommendations/Rationale document.

Diana Ross then gave a presentation on the issue regarding revisions to guidelines for reflectivity of structures seen from Key Viewing Areas. She outlined what the Committee learned from a previous meeting on reflectivity, and what staff learned from research on the reflectivity issue. Diana then presented two issues and options. Issue 1 asked, “Should changes to the reflectivity guidelines be made for more clarity or to improve scenic resources protection?” Options included: a) Performance Standard Option – status quo (low reflectivity requirement, plus cross-referenced method of implementation; b) Measurable Standard Option – low reflectivity requirement with a threshold of reflectivity measured by a glossmeter with a cross-referenced list of materials and their respective measurements developed by a working group, with glass reflectivity having a separate threshold based on existing reflectivity ratings; c) Design Standard Option – require low reflectivity plus add guidelines to prohibit or allow the use of metal materials

for walls and roofs depending on degree of visibility; d) Design Standard Option – require low reflectivity plus add guideline to prohibit the use of metal materials for roofs and to limit the square footage of un-shaded glass visible from KVAs. Issue 2 asked, “Is more specificity needed to improve the implementation guidelines?” and had four options: a) Acceptable low-reflectivity materials list plus acceptable square footage for visible shaded glass; b) List of materials and their glossmeter measurement; c) visibility and reflectivity matrices; d) Status quo. Staff said all the recommendations could be made to work and would be an improvement over the status quo.

Diana then explained a how matrices for measuring reflectivity and visibility could work, noting that the matrices provided were examples to illustrate the concept. In the discussion that followed, Brian Litt said that glass surfaces are highly reflective, even glass with a low reflectivity rating if it covers a large expanse. Jurgen Hess said he researched glass reflectivity, and said reflectivity is caused by the amount of metal in glass, and that windows with a reflectivity range of 7 to 9 percent are most effective. He also said that from observations he made around the Scenic Area that “shading” of glass surfaces actually made reflectivity worse. Bobbie Miller addressed the group and, after asking how many present had used non-reflective glass in their own homes, said it was not readily available commercially. She then mentioned results of a survey by three groups (Gorge Reality, Oregonians in Action and Columbia River United) that said NSA landowners wanted more choices, and that counties should be given more flexibility in administering Scenic Area ordinances.

Derrick Tokos said the matrix approach would be difficult to explain, and that the committee needs to address the most egregious problem -- building materials that don't meet guidelines – and spell those out. Dan Ericksen added that counties want more specificity, but questioned if a matrix system would be too prescriptive. He also asked that metal building materials not be prohibited outright, especially since the Committee recommended adding two KVAs from which metal buildings are visible. Mark Mazeski commented that counties have been asking for more specificity and that more clear, objective guidelines will work better and save money in the long run by reducing litigation. Joyce said if a matrix system could work, and planners felt they could explain it to applicants, she wouldn't oppose it. Anne asked what is the purpose of the matrix, and Brian answered that a matrix could be used to determine how materials that aren't automatically approvable might meet the Plan's low reflectivity guidelines. Diana noted that planners currently evaluate such matrix elements as surface textures, visible roof planes on a case-by-case basis. Josh Warner added that a matrix would provide planners with more specificity, but that the upfront work in developing one would be hard. Wayne said he was hesitant about a matrix system, noting it would be a challenge to design one that would be user-friendly. Todd felt an objective matrix system would be better in the long run.

Joyce and Anne said they supported Option 1 (a). Anne added she was concerned about leaving the amount of unscreened glass to be determined in a matrix, and suggested defining the limit of square foot of continuous areas of unscreened glass in Option 1 (a.). Joyce said it sounded like there was consensus with Option 1 (a.) but the Committee was

split on defining the limit of square footage for unscreened glass. Wayne supported the same option, but felt more comfortable leaving the question of glass square footage in the implementation Options (2 a.) and 2 (c.). Anne responded by agreeing on Option 1(a.), and recommended both Options 2(a) and (c) for implementation, putting the highest priority on 2 (a.), including setting a square foot limit on any continuous plane of unscreened glass visible from KVAs. Consensus was then reached on Option 1 (a.) for Issue 1, and Options 2(a.) (as qualified by Anne) and (c.) for implementation.

The next agenda item dealt with the Issue, “What, if any, revisions should be made to address the cumulative scenic impacts of accessory buildings.” Brian emphasized that the Land Use track of Plan Review is addressing accessory buildings, noting that any Committee recommendations would be forwarded to the Land Use Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). He said the options listed for accessory buildings thus mirror those discussed with the TAC. Those options were: 1) Take no action (implementing agencies could decide whether to regulate number of accessory buildings; 2) Limit the number of accessory buildings per parcel; 3) Allow any number of accessory buildings, provided that combined footprints of the buildings do not exceed a specified square footage. He said staff recommended Option 3, which could provide a workable means of addressing cumulative scenic effects from proliferation of accessory buildings, adding that if the land use track recommends this approach to the Gorge Commission, they would develop recommended square footage limits.

Joyce noted that when the Management Plan was written, it was never considered that several additional buildings could be erected on an individual parcel, and how that could impact a landscape’s setting. Eric Walker said there needs to be a rationale why the Committee is recommending a limit, and asked if the limit would be different for different landscapes. Derrick noted that current cumulative impacts language doesn’t work well, and the bigger issue is the amount of building coverage per parcel. Anne agreed with Derrick, but thought the Committee should stick to the scope focusing on accessory structures. She noted the issue is how many accessory building can be erected before cumulative effects occur. After additional discussion, the Committee concurred with staff recommendation 3, noting the importance of the “incidental and subordinate to the main use” language should be conveyed in the Committee’s recommendation.

The Committee then addressed the issue of what color standards should be applied to areas of the NSA not covered by KVA color guidelines, and how such a standard should be implemented. Staff reviewed the Committee’s prior recommendation to require areas not seen from KVAs and developed settings exempt from visual subordination to be subject to a color compatibility requirement. Staff listed three options: 1.a) Create one color standard for whole Gorge requiring “dark earth-tone colors” and use the same approvable colors chart to be created for KVAs; 1.b) Create one color standard for Gorge requiring “earth-tone colors,” with color choices at the discretion of planners working on applications; 1.c) Require “earth-tone colors” specified in an implementation handbook cross-referenced in the Plan and develop specific approvable colors for the whole Gorge. Handbook colors would be developed by a working group, approved by Gorge Commission Executive Director and Scenic Area Manager, and be part of the process

already recommended for KVAs. Staff recommended Option 1.c, noting the logic in requiring a less stringent standard for areas not seen from KVAs and for developed settings already determined to not be visually sensitive, while still providing a greater degree of scenic protection than the current Plan provides.

Jurgen thought requiring dark earth-tone colors throughout the NSA would provide the greatest fairness and simplicity. Derrick said he was comfortable with the staff recommendation, with a caveat about its application to historic buildings. Todd noted that Wasco County already applies earth-tone colors throughout the NSA. Eileen Phelan expressed the need for highway features to have sufficient contrast for visibility of highway features for safety. Nathan felt all developed settings should have a dark earth-tone color requirement. Joyce supported the staff recommendation, saying it was a logical approach for those areas not seen from KVAs or in developed settings. Anne suggested two additions to Option 1.c: that the earth-tone colors blend with the landscape of the particular site, and that specified color(s) be part of the decision approving a development. The Committee then reached consensus on Option 1.c. with those additions.

The next meeting date was set for Nov. 18, from 4 to 8 p.m. at the White Salmon Library, if available. Agenda items for the meeting were then discussed, and it was decided to focus on landscaping guidelines, and possibly (time permitting) development of criteria for the “harmonious” guideline the Committee previously recommended. The meeting was then adjourned.