

GORGE COMMISSION – SCENIC RESOURCES PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

September 17, 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, Doug Crow.

Commission and Forest Service Staff Present: Keith Fredrickson, Brian Litt, Diana Ross, Kim Titus, Steve Grichel.

Others Present: Roger Allen, Dean Apostol, Bennett Burns, June Carlson, Todd Cornett, Curt Dreyer, Dan Ericksen, Dee Gonzales, Jurgen Hess, Patrick Johnson, Diana Karabut, Jeanette Kloos, Michael Lang, Nancy Lemons, Mark Mazeski, Susan Muir, Eileen Phelan, Bud Quinn, David Sauter, Derrick Tokos, Clint Wertz, Karen Witherspoon, Lori Zoller.

The Sept. 17 meeting started with Anne Squier suggesting clarification in the fourth paragraph on Page 3 of the August 20, 2002, meeting summary. She recommended that the first line of the paragraph be changed to read: “The Committee... recommended that the top of the trail continue to be recognized as part of the Rowena Plateau/Nature Conservancy Viewpoint KVA.” Anne also questioned one sentence in the July 30, 2002 meeting notes that said, “Retain pullouts on highways (SR 14, HCRH)”. Brian Litt replied the sentence was intended to clarify that pullouts/rest stops on SR-14 and the HCRH are part of those roads and thus part of the KVA. Brian agreed to change the sentence to clarify this point. Brian also reviewed the draft recommendations and rationales from the August 20 meeting. The Committee accepted the draft without change.

Brian then summarized the September 13, 2002 staff report regarding 10 proposed KVAs recommended by a landscape architects’ committee and Friends of the Columbia River Gorge. (One of these proposed KVAs, U.S. 197 within the Scenic Area, was included in the initial staff recommendations for new KVAs.) The 10 proposed KVAs were: 1) Corbett Hill Road; 2) Angel’s Rest Viewpoint; 3) Gorge Trail 400; 4) Highline Road; 5) Courtney Road; 6) State Road; 7) Dell Road; 8) Sevenmile Hill Road; 9) U.S. 197; and 10) Dalles Mountain Road. Brian noted that criteria used in evaluating the proposed KVAs included 1) significance of views; 2) current and, to the extent it can be determined, anticipated future use levels; and 3) the degree of scenic protection added by the proposed KVA. Additional documents were distributed to Committee members that included: 1) September 10 letter from Wasco County; 2) September 12 letter from Richard Shaffer; 3) September 13 letter from the American Society of Landscape Architects group; 4) September 16 E-mail from Dean Apostol. Committee members also received a packet of information from Friends of the Columbia Gorge, and a letter signed by three counties - Klickitat, Skamania and Hood River - opposing any additional KVAs in Scenic Area.

Diana Ross then presented maps on the proposed KVAs that showed what additional lands would be seen for the proposed KVAs. Tables were presented that summarized “value-added” information on the proposed KVAs, including acreage of seen areas, acres of new foreground, land use designation and ownership. The Committee then discussed the proposed KVAs individually, and reach consensus to eliminate the following KVAs from further consideration: Corbett Hill Road, Angel’s Rest, Gorge Trail 400, Highline Road, State Road, and Sevenmile Hill Road. A majority of the Committee recommended eliminating Dell Road from consideration as a KVA. The Committee (and a majority of the Committee, in the case of Dell Road) decided against KVA status for the seven proposed sites because they generally did not add many lands that were not already seen from other KVAs, or the new seen areas were adequately protected by land use designations. A majority of the Committee decided to tentatively delete Courtney Road from KVA consideration, but indicated it may revisit Courtney Road because of the sweeping views of the mid-Gorge areas offered from the road, and due to some questions about how much value it would add regarding new seen areas and new foreground.

The Committee reached consensus on recommending a KVA designation for the five-mile stretch of U.S. 197 within the Scenic Area. In approving the highway, Committee members noted U.S. 197 is the only state or federal highway in the Scenic Area that currently is not a KVA, and that the highway serves as an important “portal” into the National Scenic Area. The Committee, noting there were “good arguments” on both sides of the issue, split on including the U.S. 197 bridge as part of the U.S. 197 KVA. Committee members Dan Harkenrider and Anne supported the bridge’s inclusion, and Wayne Wooster and Joyce Reinig opposed it. Anne and Dan noted that a KVA designation would not affect maintenance, repair or operations of the bridge, and that views from the structure –especially of The Dalles Dam – offer views of the area’s cultural landscape as well. Wayne and Joyce said they were concerned the bridge could add regulatory burden to ODOT, which maintains the bridge; that views from the structure are compromised and also are covered by other KVAs in the area.

The Committee then discussed the final KVA proposal: Dalles Mountain Road. Supporting the road as a KVA were Dan, Joyce and Anne; opposing was Wayne. Committee members favoring the KVA designation noted Dalles Mountain Road offers important scenic vistas, and that added scenic protection could help maintain the landscapes in the future. Wayne, in dissenting, said he felt there were sufficient scenic guidelines and land use controls already in place to protect views from Dalles Mountain Road without a KVA designation.

Before moving on to the next agenda item – a discussion on revision of color guidelines – the Committee decided to set its next meeting for October 7, 2002, either from 3:30 to 8 with no dinner break at the White Salmon Valley Community Library, or from 3 to 8 p.m. (with a dinner break) at the Discovery Center. Staff would check availability of these facilities.

Brian then gave a presentation (held over from the Aug. 20, 2002, SRC meeting) on the issue of possible revisions to color guidelines. He said that the Commission’s monitoring reports recognized that color is one of the most important tools in achieving visual subordination, but that color standards were also the most frequently misapplied guidelines, sometimes resulting in developments that were not visually subordinate. Brian mentioned two related issues on this topic, the first involving whether more specificity is needed to improve implementation. A

second issue involves examining whether changes should be made to the various color standards in the Plan for more clarity, flexibility, or to improve scenic protection. Brian gave an overview of the Plan's color standards and in which settings they apply: 1) Dark and either natural or earth-tone colors – applied to most GMA landscape settings; 2) natural or earth-tone colors – GMA Conifer Woodland, GMA Oak Woodland (wooded portions); 3) dark earth-tone colors – SMA Conifer Woodland, GMA Gorge Walls; 4) earth-tone colors – SMA Pastoral, SMA Oak Woodland; and 5) earth-tone or water-tone colors – SMA River Bottomland. The overview was followed by a presentation on two issues with their options.

Under Issue 1 (“Is more specificity needed to improve implementation of color guidelines?”), there were four options: 1) Maintain status quo (no additional specificity regarding what colors would qualify under terms in Plan's standards (e.g. “natural” or “earth-tone colors”)); 2) Specify approvable colors in an implementation handbook cross-referenced in the Plan, and select colors that could be approved throughout the Scenic Area; 3) Specify approvable colors in an implementation handbook cross-referenced in Plan. Develop approvable colors for each landscape setting; and 4) Specify potentially approvable colors in an implementation handbook cross-referenced in the Plan. More specific approvable colors would be based on site-specific analysis, using appropriate colors found in the actual setting. Staff does not support the first option because it does not address the need to improve implementation of an importation scenic protection tool that has not been implemented well on a consistent basis. He noted that Options 2, 3 and 4 all could improve implementation; some combination of Options 2 or 3 could be developed; and that Option 4 may be the best over time, but the most challenging to initially implement, due to training (and possibly software) requirements.

Brian then listed four options for Issue 2, “Should changes to the color standards themselves be made for more clarity, flexibility, or to improve scenic resources protection?” The issue's options were: 1) Maintain status quo; provide more specificity regarding standards through Options 2, 3 or 4 for the first issue; 2) Fine-tune current standards; combine when possible; 3) Create one color standard for whole Gorge (e.g. “dark earth-tone colors”; or “dark natural or earth-tone colors”; and 4) Create one color standard for the Gorge, qualified by colors found in specific setting (e.g. “dark earth-tone color found in the project's setting or surroundings.”) He said staff did not recommend Option 1 because it does not address needed improvements to the standards. He said Options 2,3 and 4 could all provide improvements, especially if made in concert with Options 2 through 4 for Issue 1.

County Planners then gave presentations on how they deal with color issues. Todd Cornett, Wasco County Planning Department Director, told the Committee that being too specific on colors could present problems because colors change over time. He said his planners use a loose-leaf type booklet that's been a “work in progress” for the past four years that comes with crossed-out colors that don't meet Scenic Area guidelines. Todd said Wasco County planners would like to have a “consistent, uniform catalog” to use when working with customers. The materials Wasco planners use have worked fairly well. He added that planners need a standardized catalog that should be referenced in the Management Plan but kept as a separate document so it could be updated in a timelier manner.

Next, Susan Muir and Derrick Tokos, representing Multnomah County Planning, showed how they use landscape photos with cutouts that various photos can be inserted into to show customers what colors would fit into a particular landscape setting. Derrick said his department's customers want assurances the colors they select will meet Scenic Area guidelines, and that it would be helpful to have a color palette acceptable to the Gorge Commission that could be updated more frequently than through plan review.

Karen Witherspoon, Skamania County's Planning Director distributed a new pamphlet the county designed to help landowners understand Scenic Area guidelines, with a section on color palettes. She said reaction to the booklet has been very positive. Skamania planner Mark Mazeski commented that it would be beneficial for planners to receive direction from the Gorge Commission so there would be a standardization of color requirements throughout the Gorge. Michael Lang, representing Friends of the Columbia Gorge, said his organization would support changes making specific colors a condition of approval for a building permit. Joyce raised concerns about costs of implementing option 4 for issue 1. Diana responded that there are "low tech" ways to be responsive to the site. Anne felt that being responsive to colors on site was important. She also didn't recommend further work on option 2 of issue 1, as it didn't recognize differences in settings or sites. There was also general agreement that the "status quo" options weren't viable for either issue.

Further discussion on the color issues was continued until the Committee's October 7 meeting. Staff agreed to do further work on options 3 and 4 for issue 1, and options 2, 3 and 4 for issue 2 at the next meeting. The group also agreed to discuss policies for replacement structures at that meeting. Wayne then adjourned the meeting.

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