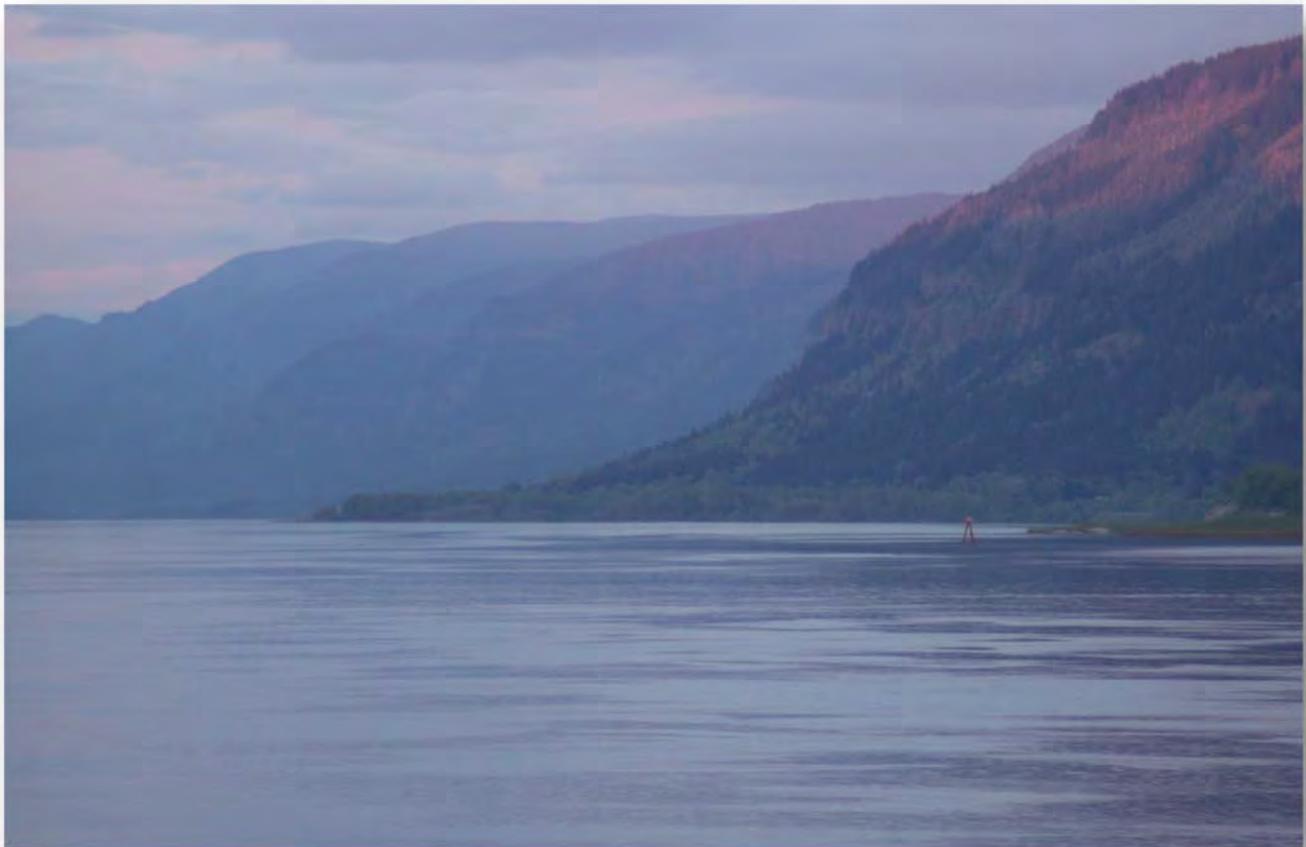


COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA INTERAGENCY RECREATION TEAM

Recreation Report and Recommended Interim Strategies



Tom Iraci

November 2014

Prepared by the
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
Interagency Recreation Strategy Team

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Preface

The Gorge is a regional, national and international destination for tourism and recreation. Recreation opportunities are dispersed over multiple landscapes and management jurisdictions.

The following report was prepared to assist public agencies in understanding the current state of recreation demand and land management capacity in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Additionally, this report identifies several management strategies recommended as an interim solution until a more involved regional public planning effort is completed. The strategies contained in this report are working strategies, developed specifically to address the current needs and concerns of resource and recreation managers. The team recognizes the need to engage with stakeholders to successfully implement several of the interim strategies.

The approach used for this report was a generalized internal monitoring and evaluation of cross-agency practices and recreation concerns. The Interagency Team examined recreation conditions and concerns in the Gorge and how they were changing over time. Each agency discussed their planning, existing delivery services, standard operating procedures and resource conditions. Strategies were developed to address the concerns taking into account the existing the resources of each agency.

The goal was to improve efficiency and responsiveness across the Interagency Team for existing recreation planning and services. It simply leverages each public agency's capacity and resources to create more efficiency and effectiveness in recreation planning and service delivery to manage these concerns. This document does not change existing public policy or direction. It does not require formal review or adoption by any of the partner agencies.

For example, one of the concerns each agency had experienced was growth in unmanaged recreation and its negative impacts on sensitive resources in the Gorge. Every agency has existing citizen stewardship and education approaches as they help to build public understanding about this issue. Each agency handles it differently and the messaging isn't consistent. One strategy is to unify that messaging to give it more impact, make it clearer and deliver it more consistently for better results, using existing mechanisms and resources of each public agency partner.

This work was prepared by an inter-agency team of resource protection and public recreation managers who manage publicly owned land, outside of designated urban areas, within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. This team has met collectively since 2007 to discuss resource conditions and monitor trends in use and demand.

The Interagency Team welcomes public input and invites public inquiries and comment on an ongoing basis.

Executive Summary

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is a world renowned recreation destination for a multitude of outdoor activities. The popularity and diversity of recreation activities continues to grow through the promotion of tourism and a general increase in awareness. Recreation has a unique and interdependent relationship with many other resources, including scenic, natural, and cultural resources, the regional economy and the quality of life for local residents.

The success of tourism promotion demonstrates how special the National Scenic Area is: visitors and residents would like more access and opportunities to enjoy Gorge landscapes. However, many fear there is already too much use occurring at the cost of sensitive resources and the user's experience. The demand for access to Gorge landscapes has increased, while the funding available for recreation planning, management, maintenance, and staff support has decreased. On average, resource and public recreation management agencies in the Gorge have lost 20 – 40% of their staff over the last 10 years. During this same time land base and recreation facility development, and recreation uses and demand, have significantly increased, resulting in impacts to adjacent private lands, and cumulative impacts to sensitive natural and cultural resources. In some areas, significant safety concerns related to traffic congestion and user conflicts have also increased.

Recognizing worsening trends in resource impacts, unmet recreation demand, and the budgetary constraints of the current situation to resolve these concerns individually, a team of public recreation managers have proactively joined together to meet the challenges of balancing recreation opportunities and resource management. The team grew from a technical advisory team for a regional resource monitoring effort to what is now known as the Columbia River Gorge Interagency Recreation Strategy Team, and has expanded the focus of its work to inform regional policy, search for opportunities to align existing efforts and develop strategies to address issues of concern to the extent possible within the framework of the existing regional management plan. The team includes representatives from the U.S. Forest Service Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Office; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. National Park Service Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Oregon Parks and Recreation Department; Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; Washington Department of Natural Resources; Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation and Fish and Wildlife; Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation; and Columbia River Gorge Commission.

This report highlights the collective concerns of resource and public recreation managers, and the need to update the regional recreation plan while focusing on strategies that can be implemented now. This report also contains an overview of resource conditions, recreation experience, trends

in use and access, and a discussion of growing concerns, as well as a list of goals, strategies and action items developed by the team and recommended for implementation.

Briefly summarized here, the goals and strategies recommended by the team are:

- Create a common vision for recreation in the Columbia River Gorge.
 - Strategy: ensure the existing regional plan is clearly understood and develop an interagency vision for regional recreation.
- Clarify roles and identify the strengths and focus areas of each agency.
 - Strategy: meet with agencies to clearly define roles, strengths, and opportunities to leverage collective strengths through enhanced partnerships.
- Practice working collaboratively toward recreation sustainability.
 - Strategy: improve communication and interagency collaboration through regular meetings, explore agreements and grant opportunities, and consider an annual recreation summit to address recreation demand and resource impacts.
- Develop management strategies to address increasing demand, unmanaged recreation, and the capacity needs to meet current and future demand.
 - Strategies: address demand and unmanaged recreation through early engagement; map critical resources, existing and proposed recreation, and unmanaged recreation areas to provide context for management and planning efforts; formalize a stakeholder engagement process for added collaboration; and explore a trail master plan to address demand, management and unauthorized use. Strategies to build capacity include partnership and grant opportunities and developing a clearing house of volunteers.
- Increase citizen stewardship.
 - Strategies: Foster existing partnerships and volunteers while growing new relationships; develop a communications strategy to actively educate recreation users and improve stewardship.

Products and deliverables for this work so far, include:

- Initial Strategy Document containing a summary of existing regional recreation visions in the Gorge, agreed upon interagency goals and initial strategies (this report)
- Interagency Inventory/Base Map (inventory of existing recreation and unmanaged recreation)
- Meta-Analysis Report (executive summary attached)
- Maps of existing recreation, “hot spots”, and meta-analysis information (attached)
- Inter-active online map tool to educated recreation users (in progress)
- Communications Strategy (in progress)

To achieve these goals, the team has invested in a multi-phase effort. This initial phase assessed natural resource based recreation in the Gorge and developed the management strategies and deliverables summarized above, within the framework of the existing regional plan provided by the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. This work is a necessary, foundational component for any future regional recreation planning process and management efforts.

Potential next steps for this work could include convening a larger audience of stakeholders to implement communication strategies, building support for improved resource protection and recreation experience, and providing better information to foster stewardship and responsible use of Gorge landscapes. The responsibility falls on all of us as managers and recreation users to be good stewards of the Gorge. The team hopes that this report and the implementation of the strategies it contains, will help to ensure the Gorge remains the world-class recreation destination it is today.

Background

The expansive Columbia River flows through the Cascade Mountains leaving in its wake steep gorge walls, cascading waterfalls, sheer bluffs, oak woodlands, and grasslands – the Columbia River Gorge. This unique landscape and river connects two states and several land management agencies that are linked to over 7.4 million people in Oregon and Washington.

The Columbia River Gorge is a spectacular landscape that stretches 80 miles from the Sandy River to the Deschutes River. The Gorge is also home to 55,000 people and contains 13 urban areas. This natural wonder is the only sea level pass through the Cascade Mountains and is a land of contrasts. The western Gorge, with an average annual rainfall of 75 inches, is a place of misty mountains, rich forestlands and more waterfalls than any area in the country. The eastern Gorge, with an annual rainfall of less than 15 inches, is a scenic place of rim-rock bluffs, rolling hills, farm and ranchlands. The Gorge is rich in cultural



Mike Ferris

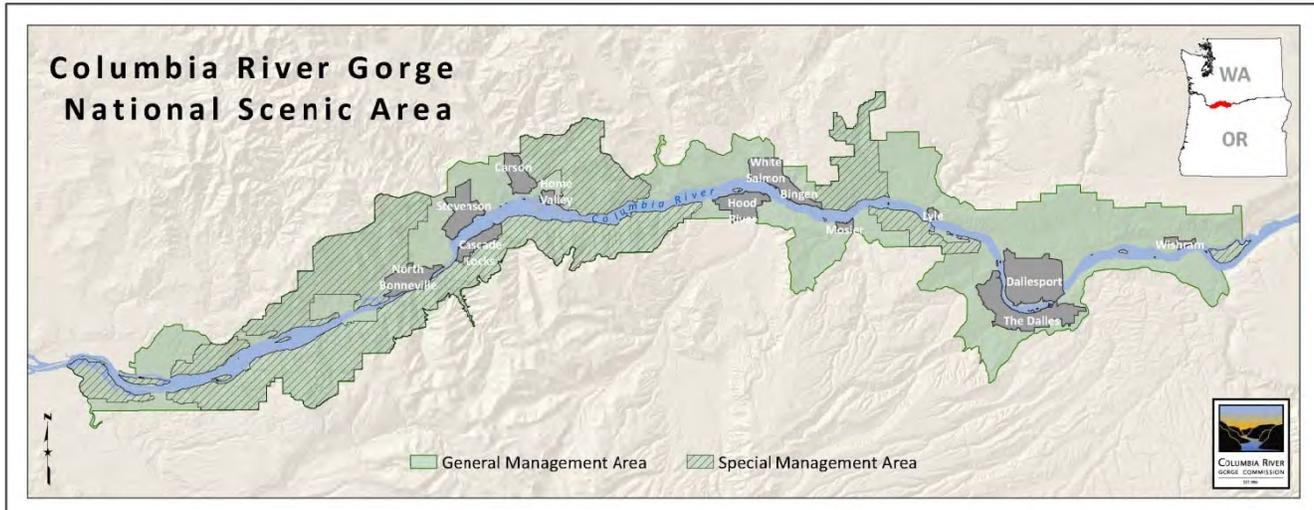
history and has been used as a major transportation corridor for Native Americans. The Historic Columbia River Highway, State Route 14 (the Lewis & Clark State Highway) and railroads were early passages for recreation and commerce, and remain unique ways to experience the ancient Gorge today. The Historic Columbia River Highway National Landmark, Multnomah Falls Lodge and other Civilian Conservation Corp structures constructed in the 1930's showcase the stunning natural features of the gorge. The more recent addition of Interstate 84 brings even more travelers – further expanding access for commerce, travel, recreation and more.

Population growth in the Portland-Vancouver metro area created opposing pressures for protection and development of the Gorge. On November 17, 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act which created the 292,500 acre National Scenic Area.

The National Scenic Area Act has two purposes:

1. To establish a National Scenic Area to protect and provide for the enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational and natural resources of the Gorge; and
2. To protect and support the economy of the Gorge area by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing for future economic development in a manner consistent with paragraph 1.

To achieve these purposes the Act created the Columbia River Gorge Commission (a bi-state regional planning agency with federal authority) and established a partnership between the USDA Forest Service, and the States of Oregon and Washington, six Counties and four Treaty Tribes in the National Scenic Area.



Recreation in the Columbia River Gorge

For over 100 years, people have been attracted to the Gorge for its scenic beauty and recreational opportunities. Visitors from the Portland area came by steamboat and train to recreate at Multnomah Falls as early as the 1880's. The Gorge however was largely inaccessible to most recreation minded people. Everything changed when the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) was built (1913-17). The HCRH suddenly provided easy access to the Gorge and ushered in a new era of recreation use.

The first modern era campground in the Forest Service was developed in 1915 at Eagle Creek. In 1925, the Historic Multnomah Falls Lodge was built on private land that has been donated to the City of Portland a few years earlier to ensure the area would be preserved as park. Recreation and the scenic beauty of the Gorge was determined to be so important that on July 27, 1915, the US Secretary of Agriculture designated a 22 mile long corridor stretching from Warrendale to Viento called the Columbia Gorge Park Division of the Oregon National Forest. It was dedicated to preserve the Gorge's scenic beauty and appears to be the first time the Forest Service dedicated an area purely for recreational purposes.



Eagle Creek Campground

Today, millions of recreationists visit the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area annually. Its scenic beauty, numerous recreation opportunities and proximity to the Portland/Vancouver Metro area and communities within the Gorge make the CRGNSA a popular day use recreation area and national and international tourist destination.

The Purpose and Need for a Recreation Strategy

To achieve the purposes of the Scenic Area Act, Congress called for the preparation of a Management Plan that would treat the area as a region. The recreation chapter of the plan, written in 1991, does not address all of the concerns and planning needs of recreation managers today. As part of the Vital Signs Indicators Project, which began in 2007 as an effort to track high-level measures of resource conditions and provide feedback for the Management Plan, public recreation managers and agencies began to address increasingly complex issues that warranted ongoing discussion and new interagency management strategies.

In 2010 the USDA Forest Service hired Independent Resources Enterprise Team to assist the Forest Service and Columbia Gorge Commission in developing a process and facilitate team meetings. On November of 2010 a core group of interagency partners that had been meeting as a part of the Vital Signs Indicators project, formed the Interagency Recreation Strategy Team to begin discussing needs, concerns and strategies.

At first, a Steering Committee was formed that included the US Army Corp of Engineers, Washington and Oregon State Parks, USDA Forest Service National Scenic Area, USDA Forest Service Independent Resources Enterprise Team, Columbia River Gorge Commission, a representative from academia (Dr. Robert Burns, West Virginia University), and the four Treaty Tribes of the CRGNSA. The Committee met intermittently as time permitted until February of 2012 when the Committee committed to meet monthly to facilitate the completion of the strategy. At that time other Land Management Agencies were also invited to participate, including Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington and Oregon Department of Transportation, US Fish and Wildlife Service and The National Park Service (Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail).

The Team identified four common recreation related issues faced by land management agencies in the Gorge. These issues became the basis of the Team's goals and outcomes:

- Growing demand for new recreation sites and emerging new uses.
- Increased impacts to natural and cultural resources from growing demand and unmanaged¹ recreation use (i.e. overcrowding and illegal trails).

¹ Unmanaged recreation: "a broad environmental decision and management problem, involving multiple stakeholders and numerous outdoor recreation activities and conflicts, occurring simultaneously in and around urbanizing National Forests" (See Defining Unmanaged Recreation in the appendix for more detailed explanation).

- Decreased budgets and agency capacity to meet current and future demand.
- Increased dependency of local and regional economy on recreation resources.

The issues identified focus on natural resource based recreation outside of urban areas. It should be noted a formal public engagement process was not conducted during the development this report. The intent of the report is to serve as an internal working document that provides context for future recreation planning efforts and identifies interim strategies that can be implemented in the short term until a more robust public planning effort can be completed. It is clear that implementing many of the interim strategies should involve other recreation stakeholders, such as Gorge communities and chambers of commerce, county, port, and city recreation departments, private recreation organizations and special interest groups, private recreation providers (outfitters and guides), trail organizations, residents and other stakeholders with an interest in recreation.



Stan Hinatsu

Goals

The Team identified the following vision, goals and outcomes for this effort.

Project Vision Statement: To develop an Interagency Recreation Strategy that builds capacity, improves efficiency and creates citizen stewards.

Goals:

- Create a common vision amongst public land managers for natural resource based public recreation in the Columbia River Gorge;
- clarify roles and identify the strengths and focus areas of each agency;
- practice working collaboratively toward sustainability;
- identify management strategies to address increases in demand, unmanaged recreation and the capacity needed to provide for current and expected demand; and
- increase citizen stewardship through education (increasing the public's understanding of the impacts unmanaged recreation has on sensitive resources, agency capacity and future recreation development opportunities).

Recent Planning Efforts

The Report continues to build from the good regional planning work that has occurred over the last several years to inform how well the Management Plan is working for the region. Past work includes multiple community visioning events monitoring work, and public projects that have helped us to better understand the recreation related values, needs and goals of the region. These efforts are briefly summarized here.

In 2008, the Columbia Gorge Future Forum community visioning event sought to develop a vision of a more vibrant, sustainable Columbia Gorge. Community leaders and hundreds of citizens from throughout the Gorge participated.

The result of the Future Forum regional visioning event, and subsequent community visioning events, was a citizen-inspired vision that focuses on six themes and includes 75 strategies that can be used to put the vision into action. The Future Forum Final Report (see Appendix C) captures concern regarding recreation in the Gorge and acknowledges an increase in some uses, a decline in others, and a general observation that conflicts between users, and theft and vandalism at trailheads is becoming an increasingly problematic situation. Recreation related impacts to the natural environment were also discussed as an environmental concern. Some participants said that certain areas should be protected from all human activity – including recreation, and it was agreed by all that area outdoor recreation managers should educate residents and visitors about the area and unique landscape (Future Forum Final Report, Pages 18 and 21).

During this same time frame, the Columbia River Gorge Commission was working through a public planning process with communities and partner agencies to develop key measures of resource health for the Columbia River Gorge Vital Signs Indicators Project. This project was and continues to be a collaborative effort that utilized a community advisory team and technical advisory team and included more than 65 public meetings and presentations. The Vital Signs Indicators project also relied heavily on partnership and community support. The public process for this project began in 2007 and the Commission issued its State of The Gorge Report in 2009 (see Appendix D). As a result, 51 high-level measures of resource health, or indicators, were created through an open and transparent public process. One of the project goals is to protect and enhance recreation resources. The report asks: with the changes in recreation use, the increase in the number of



Tom Iraci

users and the decreased capacity of land managers to manage resources – how can we all share in the Gorge experience without loving it to death? Recreation resource objectives include: 1) address the demand for resource based recreation opportunities in an environmentally sustainable manner, and 2) protect and enhance the quality of recreation experiences. Information to achieve these objectives were collected in surveys to public recreation managers and surveys to recreation users – aiming to assess demand, availability, access, quality, conflicts, and environmental sustainability (VSI, State of the Gorge 2009, pages 12 and 58).

In 2011, the region celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the National Scenic Area Act. A diverse committee met for nearly two years to plan for the commemoration and celebration of the Act by creating a regional identity that could increase awareness and support of the Gorge at the local, regional, and national level. The Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association played a key role in coordinating this effort and raised many concerns regarding the need to better coordinate unified messages and stewardship education for residents and visitors alike. This effort helped identify relationships between communities and their desire to increase recreation related tourism.

In 2012, a collaborative engagement assessment of the region was conducted by the Oregon Consensus National Policy Center in partnership with the William D. Ruckleshaus Center – two university centers for collaborative public policy. The team interviewed more than 80 individuals who represent a wide variety of interests. The objective was to develop information that could be used to assess the potential for collaborative approaches to the management of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. In the Collaborative Engagement Assessment Report (see Appendix E), recreation and tourism was identified as one of the key management issues. In general, interviewees noted that recreation and tourism were key drivers in the Gorge economy. Several mentioned a need to increase recreation opportunities but in a way that protects resources. Others said that unauthorized trails were a threat to both natural and cultural values and that high-season usage is nearing a point of resource degradation. Some interviewees expressed the need for a comprehensive look at recreation planning in the Gorge. The Sustainable Recreation Strategy was mentioned as an example of an effort to understand the impacts of existing planned and unplanned recreation (Collaborative Engagement Assessment Report, Executive Summary and pages 11 and 12).

Current Situation#

The Columbia River Gorge diverse landscape also provides a diversity of recreation opportunities and attractions. Stratifying the Gorge into distinct recreation settings based on the unique features and opportunities each setting provides will help describe why, where and how people recreate in the Gorge. Interagency Team agreed to use recreation settings previously identified in the Forest Service Recreation Facilities Analysis (2007). They included seven unique recreation settings based on distinctive landscapes and recreation activities that occur in each setting.

Recreation Settings

Columbia River – This internationally known river drains an immense watershed and ties Washington and Oregon together. A dominant scenic feature, the river and its banks serve as an East/West transportation corridor through the Cascade Mountains. It provides electricity and river transportation and supports wetlands & riparian habitats for fish and wildlife. The river islands and banks are rich in pre-historic and historic features.



Western Gateway – Distant views of steep gorge walls and a rolling, pastoral landscape dotted with small farms provide a physical sense of entry; where the urban lights fade and the natural character of the Gorge begins.

Walls and Falls – The precipitous gorge walls, cascading waterfalls, and lush vegetation highlight this setting. This dramatic backdrop draws millions of people from the nearby Portland/Vancouver Metro area for short day trips.



Features such as the Historic Columbia River Highway, Crown Point, Multnomah Falls Lodge and Civilian Conservation Corp era structures blend into the spectacular landscape and serve as portals to the relatively wild upland section of this setting.

Columbia Tributaries – The White Salmon Wild and Scenic River is spring fed with narrow gorges and known for its whitewater. The

Klickitat Wild and Scenic River is a broad free flowing river known for its fishing and the dramatic Klickitat gorge. The Sandy River delta and estuary provide habitat for fish and wildlife as well as recreation. The Hood and Wind Rivers are characterized by scenery and secluded falls. The Deschutes River has served as a transportation route for First Nations and emigrants.



Skamania Highlands – Wild lands, woodlots, pastoral farms, small towns and the Columbia River exist in a unique balance. Lakes and wildlife refuges provide a diversity of wildlife habitat.



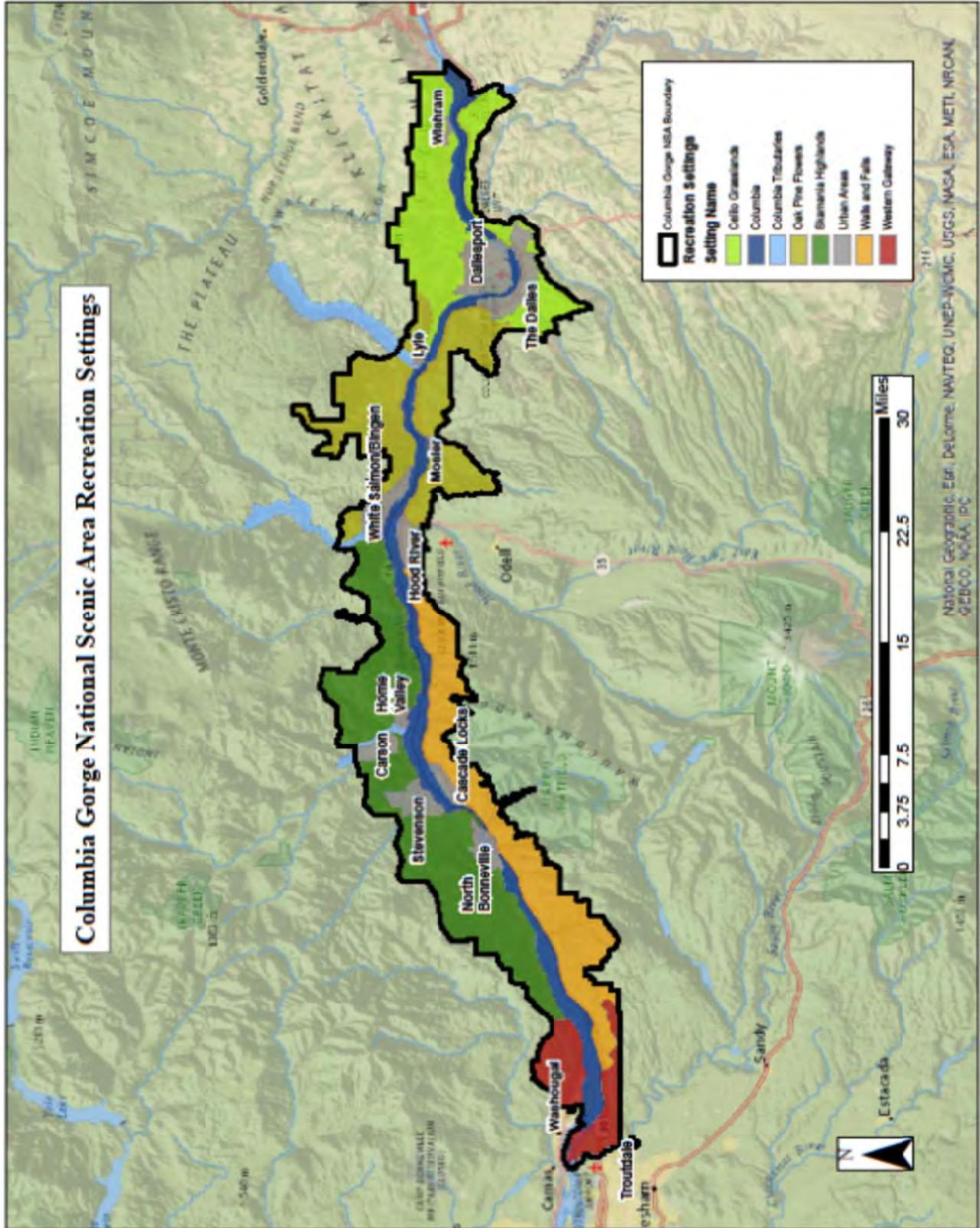
Oak Pine Flowers – This dry east side setting offers open views and sunshine. The oak woodlands, wildflowers, grassland, and Rowena Plateau present a breathtaking backdrop for day use recreations during the dreary days of winter. The unique combination of the Historic Columbia River Highway, important Native American areas, small farms & residential developments contribute to the area's rich

culture.

Celilo Grasslands – Vast, open, treeless views, with rolling steep hills provide a striking setting for the eastern gateway to the Gorge. Miller Island, State Parks, Chenoweth Table and the mouth of the Deschutes represent unique physical features of the area. Lands outside the urban areas are dominated by large, privately owned farms and ranches. Celilo Falls was the center of Native American Commerce in the Columbia River Gorge.



Figure 1. Recreation Settings Map



Recreation Analysis in the Region

As part of the team's work, a meta-analysis was prepared by Dr. Robert Burns of West Virginia University. Dr. Burns has been involved with recreation related surveys and analysis in the Columbia River Gorge, and Pacific Northwest for 15 years. A summary of Dr. Burns work is included below. The full analysis is available upon request.

The population in the United States continues to grow. Some suggest that there will be 440 million people by 2050 from the 2010 population of 308.7 million (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). In recent years, populations have become more racially and ethnically diverse due to rapid migration. During the past decade Hispanic and Asian populations have shown the fastest growth at 110% and 95% respectively (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). Americans are also getting older. The fastest growing age groups are the so called baby boomers (ages 44-54 and 55 and above).

National trends indicate that overall participation in outdoor recreation activities, including nature based recreation is growing, however some traditional activities such as hunting and fishing are declining. Viewing wildlife and scenery has shown tremendous growth over the past decade. Overall participation in nature based recreation has increased 7.1%. The number of days spent recreating has increased 40% over the same period (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013).

Closer to home, Oregon and Washington populations have grown faster than the national growth rate. Between 1950 and 2010 US population has grown 104% as compared to Oregon 152% and Washington 182% (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). Portland is the largest City in Oregon and Multnomah and Washington Counties are the most populated in Oregon. According to the Portland State Population Research Center Clark County is projected to grow 40% from 2000-2025 and is among the fastest growing counties in Washington. Multnomah and Clackamas Counties are projected to grow 15% and 31% respectively (1995-2025).

Hispanic and Asian populations are increasing significantly. Hispanic or Latino populations have increased 4 times in Oregon and about 3 times in Washington between 1990-2010 (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). Asian populations in both Oregon and Washington have increased more than 100% during the same time frame. That said, the proportion of the Hispanic population (about 11%) is lower than the National average (17%) whereas the Asian population in Washington is higher (OR 3.7%, WA 7.2%, US 4.8%)(Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). Northwesterners also continue to age with 34% in Oregon and 37% in Washington 50 years old and older. Both Oregon and Washington are forecasted to experience more than 100% growth in the 65 and older age group by 2030 (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013).

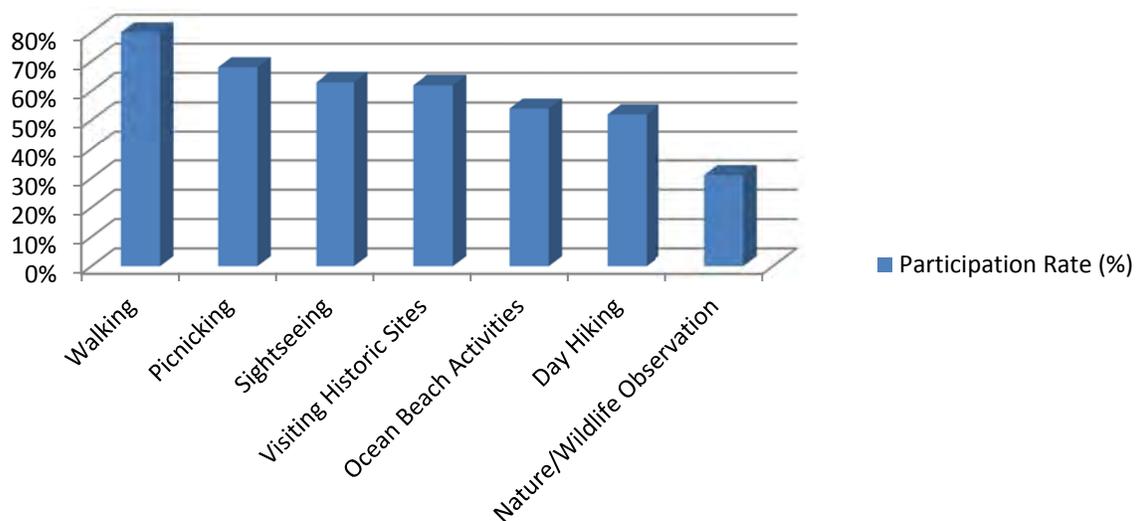
The rapid growth rate in Asian and Hispanic populations as well as an aging population is expected to change what activities they participate in, group size, motivations, etc. Recreation

Managers will need to consider these populations as they manage existing and future recreation opportunities.

In the Pacific Northwest several studies have found that participation rates in outdoor recreation are higher than in many other parts of the country (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). About half of the population in Oregon and Washington participate in outdoor recreation activities, which is higher than the national average.

In Oregon, between 2001 and 2002 approximately 73% of households reported participating in outdoor recreation activities (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). Oregon State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP 2008-2012) reports the top five recreation activities which include walking, picnicking, sightseeing, visiting historic sites and ocean beach activities. SCORP also showed the fastest growing activities were “viewing nature/wildlife” (+170%), and “RV/trailer camping” (+96%), “non-motorized boating” (+137%), “big game hunting using a bow,” (+124%) and “big game hunting (rifle)” (+70%).

Chart 1. Oregon Recreation Participation Rates

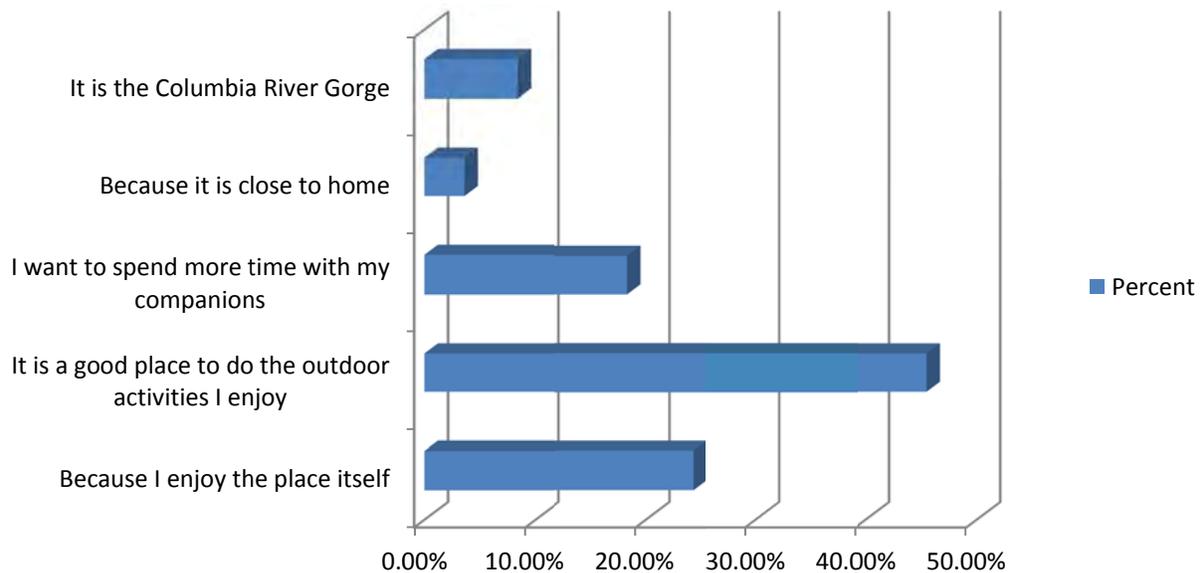


In Washington more than half of the population reported participating in some form of outdoor recreation. Hiking/walking, picnicking, sightseeing, viewing/photographing wildlife, visiting historic sites, bicycling and water activities are among the most popular activities (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office reported that recreation participation is increasing in most outdoor recreation activities in comparison to 2002. For example participation in “walking” increased from 52% to 73%, “nature activity including viewing and photographing,” increased from 42% to 53%, and “picnicking” from 20% to 46% (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013).

Recreation Analysis in the CRGNSA

In the CRGNSA, recreation demand will likely continue to grow into the foreseeable future. “An activity with a stable per capita participation rate will increase in the overall number of participants over time, so long as the population grows. Activities that show stable rates of participation actually bring more visitors over time in areas where population is growing.” (Hall, Heaton, Kruger, 2009). Participation rates have remained relatively stable or have grown over the last 10 years in the CRGNSA while the general population continues to grow in the Portland/Vancouver Metro Area (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013)

Chart 2. Most Important Reason for Visiting the CRG



Not surprising, viewing natural features and hiking or walking are the most popular activities in the Gorge. Recreation use is primarily day use with 64.1% participating in day trips with more than half (50.9%) spending 1-2 hours in the Gorge. Average duration of stay is about 3.14 hours. About half (53.2%) of the visitors to the Gorge travelled less than 50 miles while 25.2% travelled more than 500 miles. Interestingly, proximity to home was not a major factor in why visitors recreate in the Gorge, however nearly half indicate that the Gorge is a good place to recreate. Moreover 24% of the visitors recreate in the Gorge because they enjoy the place itself (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013).

The Gorge has also become a significant tourist destination over the last 20 years. National Geographic Travel Magazine lists the Gorge as the 6th best travel destination in the world. This is an assessment of authenticity and stewardship, evaluating the qualities that make a destination unique and measuring its integrity of place. National Geographic used six criteria weighted

according to importance: environmental and ecological quality; social and cultural integrity; condition of historic building and archaeological sites; aesthetic appeal; quality of tourism management; and outlook for the future.

Table1. CRGNSA Activity Participation (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013).

Activity	Participation (%)
Viewing Natural Features	84.4%
Hiking or Walking	71.6%
General Sightseeing	61.0%
Relaxing/Hanging Out	47.1%
Driving for Pleasure	42.3%
Viewing Nature Centers	29.2%
Visiting Historic Sites	29.0%
Picnicking and Family Time	17.4%
Nature Study	13.6%
Other	8.3%

Since 1991 direct spending from tourism in the Columbia River Gorge has increased two-fold in Oregon; five-fold in Skamania County and two-fold in Klickitat County. Beginning in 2008 the worldwide recession has had a profound effect on the travel industry. Between 2008-09 both states have declined over 7% in direct spending.

Today visitors to the Gorge “spend a considerable amount of money on recreation annually. The largest portion (31.5%) of respondents reported that they spend over \$1,000 on recreation activities per year and the mean expenditure was over \$2,000 (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). In general the CRGNSA is a place where recreationist can escape from the city (Portland/Vancouver Metro Area) and “play for the day”, where access is easy and quick. It is a national and international tourist destination where recreation and tourism plays a vital role in local gorge economies.

Table 2. Direct Spending

Mt. Hood/The Gorge Region (OR)	1991	2011
Total Direct Spending	\$121.4 million	\$295 million
Skamania County (WA)	1991	2009
Total Direct Spending	\$11.3 million	\$46.9 million
Klickitat County (WA)	1991	2009
Total Direct Spending	\$16.7 million	\$31.6 million

Source: OR/WA Tourism Commission & WA Department of Commerce (report prepared by Dean Runyan Associates, Inc.)

Growing Concern

While recreation is expected to grow in the Gorge, land managers have also observed several issues that have become important concerns that contribute to the complexity of managing recreation in the Gorge:

- Demand for more recreation opportunities continues to grow and so do the associated impacts to protected resources and landscapes.
- Limited capacity of land management agencies to plan for new opportunities or operate and maintain existing recreation facilities.
- Increasing interests by communities to develop more opportunities based on the unique natural resources for tourism related economic development.

Demand

Over the course of the last 10 years Recreation Managers have observed an increase in demand for a number of recreation opportunities. Hiking and walking, relaxing and fishing have shown a significant increase between 2000 and 2010 (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). Managers have also observed the following activities that appear to be on the rise in the CRGNSA.

- Mountain biking: While national trends seem to show this use has peaked and use in the Gorge has actually declined -4.5% (2000-2010). Demand for more mountain biking opportunities is seemingly growing as evidenced by several proposals to expand mountain bike trail systems.
- White water rafting & kayaking: The White Salmon Wild and Scenic River has experienced tremendous growth from approximately 4000 in 1987 to nearly 20,000 in 2007.
- Fishing: While nationally fishing is showing a decline in participation, fishing in the Gorge has grown 12%.
- Dog walking: This activity is very popular in the Gorge. SCORP reports 35% participating in hiking in Oregon and 36.4 % in Washington bring a pet.
- Trail running: The Gorge appears to mimic National trends which seem to indicate a slow but steady increase.
- Kite boarding: Kite boarding in the Gorge has grown significantly over the past 10 years.
- Interpretive service: There is a high demand for these services in the Gorge (Participation rates for visiting nature centers and visiting historic/prehistoric sites is 29%).
- Hiking: Nearly 72% of all visitors to the Gorge participate in hiking/walking. Studies forecast hiking to grow as much as 20% in the Northwest (Hall, Heaton, and Kruger, 2009).

- Road Biking: 6.3% of all visitors to the Gorge participate in cycling which includes both mountain bike and road bikes (Burns, Chuprinko, Shrestha 2013). While cycling is used in the Gorge is relatively small, it is expected to increase as much as 10% with the completion of the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail and the efforts local communities are making to promote cycling in the Gorge (Runyan and Associates, 2014)

Table 5. Changes in Gorge Recreation Activity Participation (2000-2010)

Activity	Change in Percent (2000-2010)
Hiking or Walking	+22.1%
Relaxing	+13.8%
Fishing	+12.3%
Driving for Pleasure	-16.0%
Viewing Historic & Prehistoric sites/areas	-17.5%

The increase in demand for more recreation opportunities has resulted in degradation of the recreation experience and/or on the ground impacts which the Team refers to as “hot spots.” In the inventory created as part of this report Recreation Managers noted one of the most significant issues was impacts to natural resources primarily from unauthorized trail development by both hikers and mountain bike enthusiasts. They also noted congestion, conflicts with adjacent private lands and public safety. Congestion, vandalism and public safety issues are concentrated in Walls and Falls recreation setting. Conflicts between water sports and sport fishing and tribal fishing occur on the Columbia River and its tributaries.

Unauthorized trail development typically occurs in dispersed areas on lands that have been put into public ownership in the last 25 years. Most of the conflicts with adjacent private landowners occur in these areas. Many natural and cultural resource specialists have expressed concerns regarding this increase in demand. Primarily, they include, introduction of invasive species; soil erosion, impacts to critical habitats, plants, animals and cultural resources and habitat fragmentation. Recreation managers have identified 26 areas in the Gorge where these impacts related to unauthorized trail use is occurring.

Recreation managers’ also reported that 30% of all developed recreation sites are between 80% - 100% of capacity during the summer months and 64% between are between 40-70% of capacity during the early/late summer, fall and spring months. Interestingly perception of crowdedness by visitors is relatively low in the CRGNSA, however visitors to the Walls and Falls reported that they feel significantly more crowding than other areas in the Gorge. Traffic and pedestrian congestion is concentrated in the Walls and Falls setting, particularly between Crown Point and

Ainsworth State Park along the HCRH. Visitors can experience as much as a 30-45 minute wait to find parking at Multnomah Falls during busy weekends in the summer months.

Vandalism, in the form of car break-ins at trailheads and recreation sites are on the rise. For example the Multnomah County Sheriff's Department (MCSO) recorded a 50% increase of reported car break-ins between 2008 (107) and 2010 (204). It should be noted that these only include car break-in officially reported to MCSO, actual break-ins may be higher.



Bev Linde

Dog waste is also of particular concern. In areas of concentrated dog use such as the Sandy River Delta where as much as 300 pounds of dog waste is removed weekly. Recreation managers have also observed an increase in conflicts between dog versus dog and dog versus humans.

Conflict between tribal fishery treaty rights and sport fishing, kite boarding and wind surfing are significant issues to Tribal Nations whose treaty rights are protected by the Act. Interference with tribal fishers and damage to their equipment especially gill nets seem to be the most significant form of conflict.

Access to the Columbia River in general is constrained by lack of safe and legal parking along SR-14 and I-84 and safe and legal access across Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads. This has resulted in several areas where unauthorized parking and trespassing across the railroad is occurring by recreationist accessing the Columbia River to fish and participate in wind surfing and kiteboarding (i.e. Dobson Warrendale, Squally Point, Klickitat Spit).

Capacity

Land management agencies capacity to manage existing recreation sites are being stretched under increasing use, growing facilities and tighter budgets.

Between 2002 and 2012 the Army Corp of Engineers Bonneville and The Dalles Dam projects reported a 40% reduction in their budget which resulted in a 30% reduction in staff. Similarly Oregon Recreation and Parks Department absorbed a 20% reduction from the 2009-2011 biennium to the 2011-2013 biennium and lost 40 seasonal work months in the 2011-2013

biennium. Over the course of the last 5 years the well documented Washington State budget reductions have resulted in significant budget and staff reductions for Washington Parks and Recreation Commission. On the other hand USDA Forest Service National Scenic Area recreation budget has increased 14% between 2002 and 2012, staffing however decreased 37% due to higher fixed costs. Recreation funds were also used to fund high priority planning projects such as Coyote Wall, Catherine Creek., Cape Horn and Klickitiat Rails to Trail projects. The Forest Service has also added approximately 40,000 acres of National Forest lands during the past 25 years. Additionally new recreation sites and trails that require management and maintenance have been added to the inventory under these budget conditions. Over the last decade Washington State Parks has added the large Doetsch Day Use Area and Woodard Creek Campground at Beacon Rock State Park, Columbia Hills Ranch facilities, Horsethief Butte Trailhead and Klickitiat Rails to Trails. Washington State Parks also plans for a new trail system at Columbia Hills State Park. The Forest Service has added BZ Corner Launch Site, Sandy River Delta Trailhead, Lyle Trailhead, Balfour Klickitiat Day Use Area, and approximately 40 miles of new trails (Sandy River Delta, Klickitiat Rails to Trails, Cape Horn, Balfour Klickitiat, Coyote Wall/Catherine Creek). The Forest Service has also begun planning for a new trail system near Cascade Locks and has recently constructed a new Trailhead that serves the Coyote Wall trail system. Staffing levels have continued to decline while these new facilities were developed.

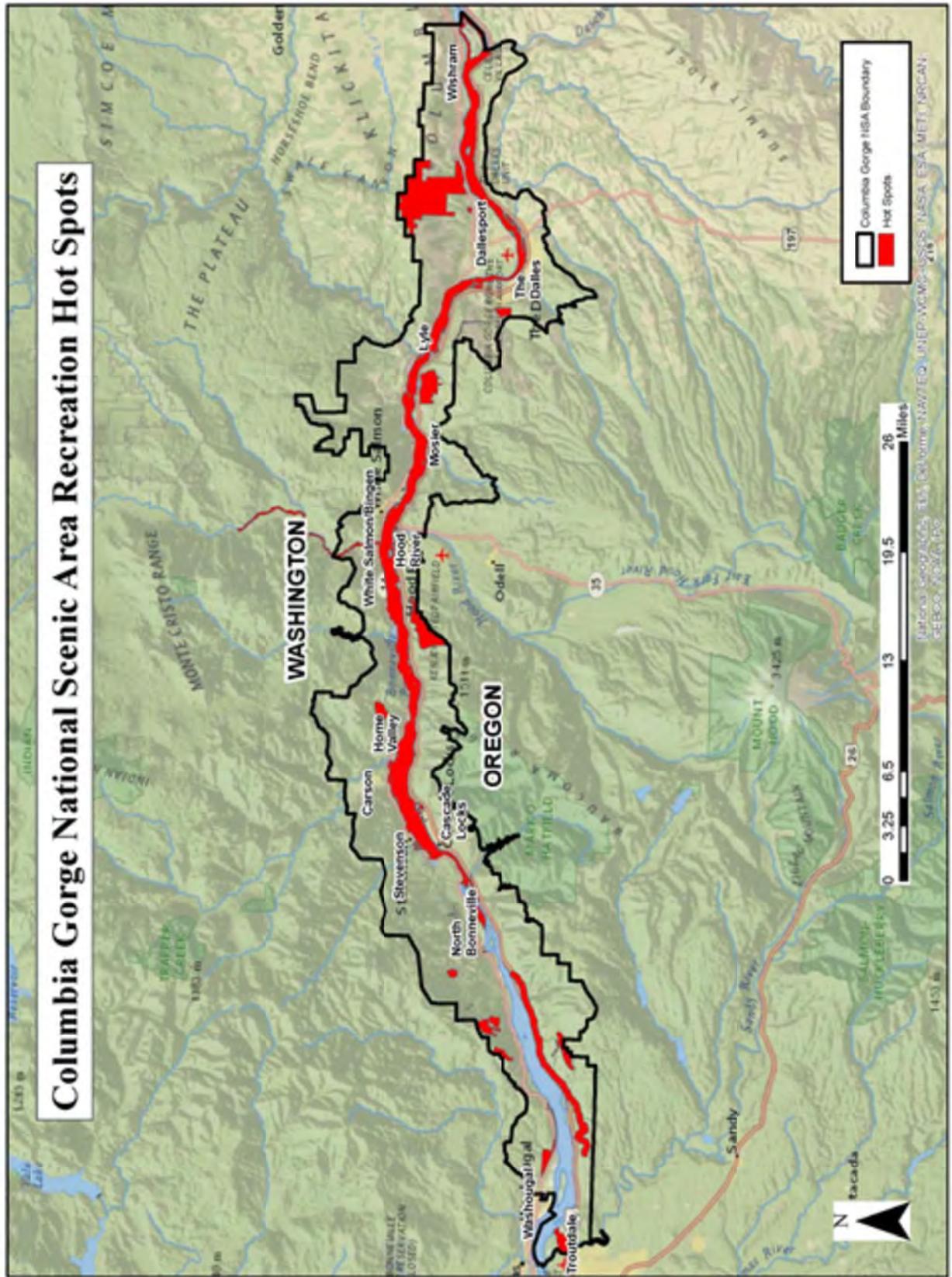
Competing Interests

Competing interests for more recreation opportunities, enhancing Gorge economies and protecting natural and cultural resources are challenging recreation managers. For example, recreation and tourism are recognized by local communities as key components to the economy in the Gorge. In 2008 the Columbia Gorge Future Forum community visioning event identified strategies to build a dynamic local economy by enhancing tourism experience for visitors by providing more visitor amenities, including kiosks, restrooms and campgrounds. During the recent Columbia River Gorge Tourism Summit (Oct 2012) participants expressed the desire of communities to capitalize on the unique Gorge resources to promote tourism in the Gorge. Tourism in the Gorge relies on the world class scenery and recreation opportunities the Gorge offers.

A number of efforts are currently underway to develop new opportunities for recreation and to draw more visitors to the Gorge to enhance Gorge economies. The following are a few examples.

1. Towns to Trail which envisions a Gorge wide loop trail connecting communities.
2. Chinook Trail, a high elevation loop trail through the Gorge.

Figure 2, Hot Spots



3. Connect Cascade Locks trail plan which would connect nearby hiking and proposed mountain biking trails to the community of Cascade Locks.
4. National Water Trail designation of the Lower Columbia Water Trail which stretches from Bonneville Dam the Pacific Ocean.
5. The Infinity Loop, a scenic drive through the Gorge and around Mt. Hood. The loop would offer visitors year round world class recreation and other amenities.
6. Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail was established by Congress in 2009.
7. Travel Oregon Bicycle Tourism Studio sponsored by the Gresham Chamber of Commerce to market bicycle tourism in East Multnomah County
8. Gorge Hubs – encouraging communities to develop recreation friendly hubs in Gorge urban areas by developing small pocket parts and services.
9. Fire and Ice Scenic Loop, a scenic drive that encompasses the Gorge and Mt. St. Helens.
10. Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail (HCRH) Connection project. The trail would provide connectivity from Troutdale to The Dalles via the drivable portions of the HCRH and new pedestrian and bicycle trail.

Recommended Strategies

Increasing demand for recreation opportunities, limited capacity of land management agencies to manage these demands and the increased reliance by communities on the unique natural resources for economic development/tourism present a unique challenge for recreation managers. To respond to this dilemma the Interagency Team identified several interim strategies. They represent some very practical ideas as well as lofty aspirations. The Team believe these goals, strategies and actions are the first steps to help recreation managers deal with the complex issues of balancing the demand for more recreation opportunities and tourism while protecting the recreation experience and cultural and natural resources. To fully resolve these complex issues the Team recognizes that a more robust public planning effort would need to take place.

The Team also recognizes that the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Plan and other land management plans, policies and guidelines remain as the framework for all new development and is an important tool for balancing the protection of natural resources, recreation demand, economic development and quality life goals of the Act. The Report does not attempt to set new goals for the region, but does propose interim strategies to deal with these issues.

The Strategies are organized by goals, followed by recommended actions.

Recommended Strategies

Goal 1: Create a common vision amongst public land managers for recreation in the Columbia River Gorge.	
	Strategy 1: Ensure NSA Management Plan and zoning are clearly understood by land management agencies
	<p><i>Recommended Action Items</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Distribute the recreation chapter of the Management Plan to public land managers.</i> b) <i>Review Management Plan guidelines as a group to further our collective understanding and familiarity.</i>
	Strategy 2: Develop an interagency vision for recreation in the National Scenic Area based on this report and the Management Plan.
	<p><i>Recommended Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Develop a vision. (Our vision of recreation in the NSA is shaped by the goal of the NSA Act and strengthened through regional commitment to be consistent with the Management Plan; support agencies; resource protection, and pursue beneficial relationships with each other.)</i> b) <i>Develop a framework to enhance coordination and cooperation between agencies.</i>
Goal 2: Clarify roles and identify strengths and focus areas of each agency.	
	Strategy 1: Meet with agencies to clearly define role, strengths, and opportunities to leverage each other's strengths.
	<p><i>Recommended Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Identify partnerships that will be easy to implement as a way to show success.</i> b) <i>Foster more in-depth partnerships.</i>
Goal 3: Practice working collaboratively toward sustainability.	
	Strategy 1: Practice collaboration to enhance interagency collaboration and improved communication between agencies.
	<p><i>Recommended Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Formalize the recreation strategy team with an MOU.</i> b) <i>Schedule routine coordination meetings to implement strategies.</i> c) <i>Hold an annual or semi-annual recreation summit.</i> d) <i>Actively look for opportunities to seek grants jointly.</i>

Recommended Strategies continued...

Goal 4: Identify management strategies to address increases in demand, unmanaged recreation and the capacity needed to provide for current and expected demand.	
Strategy 1: Address demand and unmanaged recreation.	
<i>Recommended Actions</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Engage with project proponents as soon as possible for early collaboration and good planning.</i> b) <i>Develop a critical resource suitability map to identify the best locations for new recreation or not suitable for recreation (Internal Use Only).</i> c) <i>Identify and inventory existing recreation proposals to provide context for managers and facilitate planning.</i> d) <i>Formalize a process to collaborate with proponents and key stakeholders.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Land Management Agencies identify key concerns, issues, fatal flaws, etc.</i> 2. <i>Meet with proponents to provide context, and identified issues and concerns.</i> 3. <i>Identify strategies for development and long term operations and maintenance.</i> 4. <i>Agree on time frame and next steps</i> 5. <i>Conduct an after action review to identify any missing steps or improvements to the process.</i> e) <i>Explore a trail master plan effort to identify broad goals for future trail projects and address existing unauthorized use.</i> 	
Strategy 2: Build capacity.	
<i>Recommended Actions</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Encourage proponents of new proposals to identify a partner that can assist with planning, development and long-term maintenance.</i> b) <i>Meet with stakeholders to generate ideas that can increase agency capacities.</i> c) <i>Develop a clearing house for volunteers in the Gorge.</i> d) <i>Develop a proactive approach for seeking grants, developing new partners and continue to promote volunteerism.</i> 	
Goal 5: Increase citizen stewardship through education by increasing the public's understanding of the impacts unmanaged recreation has on sensitive resources, agency capacity, and future recreation development opportunities.	
Strategy 1: Continue to foster new volunteers and friends groups while maintaining and growing our relationship with existing groups.	
<i>Recommended Actions:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Share list of volunteer organizations and explore opportunities to work together to effectively and efficiently share volunteer resources.</i> 	
Strategy 2: Enhance citizen stewardship by increasing the understanding of the interrelationship of recreation and tourism with the inspiring scenery and unique natural and cultural resources of the gorge.	
<i>Recommended Actions</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Develop an interagency communication strategy/plan that would communicate key unified messages, proactive approaches and provide for flexibility based on agency missions and goals.</i> b) <i>Develop and interactive map tool for improved way finding and better trip planning to understand what is appropriate and where.</i> 	

Recommended Priorities

The Team is aware that implementation of these Goals and Strategies is ambitious. In recognition of this fact it was agreed that prioritizing the Goals and Strategies in reasonable chunks would have a higher probability of success. Criteria that were considered during the prioritization process included the following:

- Does the strategy address an urgent issue or need?
- The level of difficulty to implement in terms of cost, time and feasibility.
- Can a strategy be lumped by topic with others?
- Overall importance to Team goals.

The following table summarizes the Team recommended Goal/Strategy priorities and rational.

Priority	Goal/Strategy	Rational
1	<p>Goal 5: Increase citizen stewardship through education by increasing the public's understanding of the impacts unmanaged recreation has on sensitive resources, agency capacity, and future recreation development opportunities.</p>	<p>The team selected this goal as their top priority, because it appears to be the fastest way to change the culture of recreation in the Gorge and can be done in a positive way. This effort relies on coordination and does not require a plan amendment or extensive public process. It is about unified messaging, sharing information, and working together to reduce resource impacts through education.</p>
<p><i>Strategy 1: Continue to foster new volunteers and friends groups while maintaining and growing our relationship with existing groups (merged this strategy with Goal 4, Strategy 2 Build Capacity).</i> <i>Strategy 2: Enhance Citizen Stewardship by increasing understanding of the interrelationship of recreation tourism with the inspiring scenery and unique natural and cultural resources.</i></p>		
2	<p>Goal 4: Identify management strategies to address increases in demand, unmanaged recreation and the capacity needed to provide for current and expected demand.</p>	<p>The team selected this goal, because it is the crux of the issue faced by recreation planners and managers. It was not selected as the first priority because of the level of difficulty. The team agreed that some of the strategies were doable, and that anything requiring an extensive public process may be better suited for a regional recreation planning effort to update the Management Plan.</p>
<p><i>Strategy 1: Address demand and unmanaged recreation.</i> <i>Strategy 2: Build capacity.</i></p>		
3	<p>Goal 4: Create a common vision amongst public land managers for recreation in the Columbia River Gorge</p>	<p>The team agreed that this is both very necessary for any forward progress and also very easy to accomplish provided that we are all working towards consistency with the National Scenic Area Act. The Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge Commission, and other public visioning and planning efforts described in the draft recreation strategy report are the basis for the shared vision.</p>
<p><i>Strategy 1: Ensure NSA Management Plan and zoning are clearly understood by land management agencies.</i> <i>Strategy 2: Develop and interagency vision for recreation in the National Scenic Area based on this report and the Management Plan.</i></p>		

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Appendix

Columbia River Gorge Meta-Analysis

Hyperlink for full report.

Defining Unmanaged Recreation

Defining unmanaged recreation is difficult at best. Two research papers from the USDA, Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station have done a good job in defining unmanaged recreation within the context of an “urban National Forest.” “Understanding the Wicked Nature of “Unmanaged Recreation” in Colorado’s Front Range”, (2006) and a Draft Report entitled the “Social Context of Unmanaged Recreation on National Forest Lands”, (2005) both authored by Jeffrey J. Brooks and Patricia A. Champ.

Brooks and Champ define unmanaged recreation as *“a broad environmental decision and management problem, involving multiple stakeholders and numerous outdoor recreation activities and conflicts, occurring simultaneously in and around urbanizing National Forests.”*

Brooks and Champ assert that unmanaged recreation is difficult to define as we have discovered. They go on to say: “The diversity of stakeholders contributes to the difficulty of formulating a succinct definition of unmanaged recreation (Brooks and Champ, 2005).” Each unmanaged recreation situation may include numerous or diverse stakeholders with differing values, perspectives and insights. The stakeholders understand and define problems of recreation management on public lands according to their various perspectives and insights.

“Unmanaged recreation can be characterized as having no one right solution on which people may agree. (Brooks and Champ, 2005)”

They go on to describe the problem and as a “wicked problem”. Wickedness is characterized by the following attributes: 1) there is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem; 2) wicked problems have no stopping rule to indicate that the problem has been resolved; 3) solutions to wicked problems are not objectively true-or-false, but tend to be value-driven, good-or-bad; 4) there are no immediate and no final tests of a solution to a wicked problem; 5) every solution to a wicked problem is a “one-shot operation” because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error, every attempt counts significantly; 6) wicked problems do not have an exhaustively describable set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of acceptable procedures that may be incorporated into the planning process; 7) every wicked problem is essentially unique; 8) every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem; 9) the existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways, and the choice of explanation determines the nature of resolution (Brooks and Champ, 2005).

It is clear that to fully understand the unmanaged recreation problem there is the need to recognize that it is a socially complex issue. Several factors increase social complexity on National Forest lands and they include 1) population growth and migration in counties that contain public land; b) urbanization near National Forest; c) increased participation in outdoor recreation; 4) changes in recreation technologies; and 5) dwindling resources for outdoor recreation programs and monitoring (Brooks & Champ, 2006).

A Comparison of attributes for wicked and tame decision problems (Brooks and Champ, 2006)

Problem Attribute	Wicked Problems	Tame Problems
Formulation of problem statement	Ill-defined, unstable	Well-defined, stable
Type of problem complexity	Social networks, cultural values	Technical, analytical, linear, ecological
Diversity of stakeholders	High	Low
Preferred solution	Emotionally satisfying	Rationally best, optimal
Set of alternative solutions	Numerous, unlimited	Limited
Cost of testing alternatives (i.e., trial and error)	High	Low
Evaluation of solution	Subjective, good or bad	Objective, right or wrong

“Increasing population, demand for recreation, and urbanization near public lands, when combined with decreasing capacities to manage these lands, confounds recreation planning and management, leading to situations of unmanaged recreation” (Brooks & Champ, 2006).

“The Forest Service appears to recognize the wicked nature of the unmanaged recreation problem, but it is not clear that the implications of this wickedness for addressing unmanaged recreation have been acknowledged. The Forest Service is similar to other stakeholders in that it values protection of natural resources on its lands and quality outdoor experiences for recreation visitors” (Brooks & Champ, 2005).

“The conflict inherent in unmanaged recreation appears to be inextricably linked to intrinsic values of the environment and the worldviews of different stakeholders. Decision problems become wicked and fraught with uncertainty when these values become central to the debate over how to address unmanaged recreation” (Brooks & Champ, 2006).

Brooks and Champ conclude that large-scale, centralized and unified planning from the top down simply does not work for socially regulated problems. Overcoming wickedness requires a social process. “Collaboration that overcomes wickedness requires that decision-makers allow themselves to be directly informed by local positions and knowledge rather than positions evident in national debates. Some local positions may be difficult to identify at first in not well organized or vocal. Nonetheless, in the context of increasing social complexity and wickedness, inclusive approaches that actively seek diverse input and involvement tend to succeed” (Brooks & Champ, 2006).

The Interagency Team has adopted Brooks and Champ definition of unmanaged recreation in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Current Situation Inventory (Spreadsheet)