

**Urban Area Boundary Revision Policy**  
**Workshop Summary**  
**October 15, 2018**

The Gorge Commission staff held its third urban area policy workshop on October 15, 2018. Nine people attended.

Jeff Litwak gave a short presentation and answered questions about a non-binding policy for urban area boundary revisions (like the Commission's current handbook) versus a binding rule. There was consensus that the Commission should enact a binding rule, but that the Commission might also adopt guidance if necessary to explain a rule. There was additional discussion of whether the policy would be in the Management Plan or in the Commission's administrative rules. Jeff said that the policy would probably fit best in the Commission's current urban area boundary revision rule (350-40).

Jeff presented the first draft policy. The draft recommends three types of revisions—land swaps, “de minimis” revisions, and “full” revisions. The details of these types of revisions are completely open for discussion.

Land swap revisions would be limited to 1% of the acreage of an urban area or 10 acres, whichever is less (or another metric), and urban areas could do one land swap every five years (or another times period) after the newly added land is developed. Land swaps could only move land from the general management area into an urban area. The land moved from the urban area into the GMA or SMA would need to be undevelopable at an urban scale and have little or no development. The test for “demonstrable need” would be easier than for a full revision. The purpose of land swaps is to allow the urban area to use the full amount of acreage in their urban areas.

There was consensus that small land swaps as outlined above are minor boundary revisions and could be workable. There was discussion about relying on resource values in addition to acreage.

“De minimis” revisions would be a one-time change to the boundaries of 1% or 20 acres, whichever is less for the purpose of allowing an urban area to use the land already in an urban area—generally for roads and utilities. De minimis revisions could move land from the GMA or SMAs into an urban area—this recognizes that urban area land adjacent to SMAs may have constraints that a small amount of SMA land could resolve.

There was consensus that de minimis revisions as outlined above are minor revisions and could be workable. There was discussion about whether this should be a one-time revision or whether each urban area should use the 1% or 20 acres as a bank of land that it may use over time. There was additional discussion about whether land swaps and de minimis revisions should be used solely as a means of connecting an urban area to land outside the National Scenic Area for the purpose of growth. Representatives from cities and counties generally disagreed with this when doing so would not be an efficient growth pattern.

“Full” revisions would be similar in concept to urban growth boundary revisions under Oregon law, but would use National Scenic Area-specific factors in lieu of some factors, assumptions, and ranges specified in Oregon law.

There was spirited conversation about whether “full” revisions could ever be considered minor revisions under the National Scenic Area Act and whether the restrictions on revisions necessary to ensure the revisions are minor and comply with the 4(f) criteria could in practice be impossible for counties to satisfy.

As a way of moving forward, Jeff suggested that for the next workshop, he would continue to draft details for the land trades and de minimis revisions and identify National Scenic Area-specific factors for the full revision type. The group could decide at the next workshop (or another future workshop) whether to continue moving forward with the full revision concept, start over, or eliminate the full revision type and present only the land trades and de minimis revisions to the Commission.

At the next staff workshop, Michael Lang from Friends of the Columbia Gorge will present on a conservation perspective of urban area boundary revision policy.

Next Workshop dates include:

**Nov. 19** – conservation perspective of urban area boundary revision policy; continued discussion of draft policy and alternatives

**Dec. 17** – continued discussion of draft policy and alternatives; framework of report to the Commission on the workshops, draft policy, and alternatives

**2019 Workshops** – TBD

REMINDER: All of the Commission and Staff Workshop Agendas, Staff Reports, and Workshop Summaries are on the Gorge Commission’s Gorge2020 webpage at <http://www.gorgecommission.org/management-plan/gorge2020/> (click on “Focus Topics and Technical Teams” tab).