

# Gorge 2020 Phase I and II Scoping from January through March 2017

## Summary of Public Comments

The Gorge Commission staff recorded comments shared at three public listening sessions and received in written form regarding Gorge 2020, the National Scenic Area Management Plan review and revision. Comments ranged from very general to specific suggested policy changes. The following comments have been organized by staff to reflect issues that are:

- 1) Related to the Plan Review process and approach, rather than to its content
- 2) Directly related to sections of the Management Plan, that identify a problem to be addressed, that suggest a change to an existing section, or that identify a gap that should be addressed in the revised Plan,
- 3) Indirectly related to the Management Plan and can be addressed outside of Gorge 2020 through staff-led programs, partnerships, and operations, and
- 4) Not related to the Management Plan, are beyond the Commission’s authority, are too general to be addressed, or conflict with specific Commission Rules and Resolutions.

<b>1. COMMENTS RELATED TO THE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS AND APPROACH</b>
Consider what our vision is for 30 years from now – be forward thinking
Recognize revisions identified in 2004 that were deferred to this Plan Review
Update resource inventories/assessments – what is the state of the scenic, natural, cultural, recreation resources we are protecting? Identify what has changed in the Gorge between 1986 and now, and 2003 and now? How is the Gorge economy unique or similar to other places?
Inventory developable lands, commercial, and industrial lands.
Complete a “buildout” analysis of full development in SMA & GMA
Focus on what the Commission can actually do and on increasing effectiveness
Focus on topics of greatest impact or threat when prioritizing issues to address
Promote public education and engagement – solicit more input by publicizing better for future public input opportunities
Ensure listening sessions with each individual tribe
Form a citizen advisory committee to assist the Commission with Gorge 2020
Use best available science and VSI to inform and guide the process
Think about how Gorge 2020 relates to other plans; tie dynamically to regional economic development plans and other related documents
Use policies where appropriate to drive winners and losers (e.g. solar versus reflectivity)
Ensure each change is discussed and voted on, rather than wholesale approval of revisions

**2. COMMENTS THAT ARE DIRECTLY RELATED TO SECTIONS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN, THAT IDENTIFY A PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED, THAT SUGGEST A CHANGE TO AN EXISTING SECTION, OR THAT IDENTIFY A GAP THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED**

- Define what “enhance” means in the Plan. It can mean ecological restoration, but what about scenic enhancement? Recreation? Promote meaningful resource enhancement

**Increase understanding of NSA within the front matter and throughout the Plan**

- Describe living cultures and tribal treaty rights
- Highlight geologic history including the Ice Age floods; consider policies to protect geologic features
- Clarify roles and responsibilities; describe how the Plan relates to existing plans

**Increase tribal engagement and protect treaty rights**

- Incorporate tribal perspectives in Plan content; provide history and education throughout. Reorganize content (Tribes are currently addressed at the end of Plan)
- Ensure that Celilo Falls and in lieu sites are described and protected
- Protect tribal fishing access in areas of high recreation use
- Tribal treaty rights consultation process should be government-to-government
- Protect first foods and plant gathering places

**Update and strengthen Cultural Resources protections**

- Broader than tribal – should include agronomy, community histories
- Protect high value farmland and agricultural practices
- Incorporate Native American views of cultural resources (i.e. the landscape is a pharmacy and medicines can be damaged)
- Recognize historical tribes (like the Cascade Chinook) and address tribes in addition to four treaty tribes
- Until a thorough survey is completed, require cultural resource reconnaissance surveys prior to approval of land divisions, ground disturbing activities, and development

**Improve Scenic Resources policies and protections**

- Restore views through vegetation management
- Parking areas should be designed to look nice, natural aesthetics
- There should be a distinction in setting between residential and agriculture – cumulative impacts of rural development in ag and forest LUDs
- Consider policies to move all development toward visual subordination, rather than requiring only new development to meet strict standards
- Protect dark skies and minimize light pollution
- Address timber harvest viewshed impacts
- High privacy fences are blocking views
- Cell towers should blend better into the landscape (e.g. look like trees?)
- Dark roof requirement adds to labor housing cooling costs for ag producers

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**Address Natural Resources concerns**

- Address renewable energy (small scale hydro, wind, solar)
- Protect biodiversity and native plant communities, intact systems in addition to rare species
- Protect water quality, especially in the Columbia River. Consider impacts from wineries and breweries. Consider increased levels of nitrogen on native plant communities.
- White Salmon River protections – in general are riparian protections adequate?
- Prohibit open pit and other mining activities
- Noxious weeds – treat, remove, manage spread (i.e. boot brushes at trail heads)
- Include guidelines for “bee-friendly” practices
- Limit recreation access and use in sensitive areas
- Expand protective buffers for streams and sensitive sites
- Require large developments to provide analysis of climate change impacts
- Hazard mitigation planning
- Protect air quality and dark skies
- Limit rail traffic and fossil fuel transport; require strict safety and impact controls
- Protect and promote old growth
- Increase resiliency to fires and reduce fire risk. Revisit requirements in Forest LUDs
- Protect Oregon white oak habitat

**Address increasing recreation and consider recreation planning that serves urban areas**

- Provide for or initiate regional recreation planning to address capacity, dispersing use, etc
- Consider recreation impacts and tradeoffs, risk of loving the Gorge to death, locals vs visitors, and strategically restricting access
- Increase and provide multi-modal and transit access to recreation areas
- Parking areas and roadside parking are over capacity (Larch Mtn, Mult Falls, Cath Creek)
- Enhance synergy between local business community and recreation; locate trailheads and parking near stores and eateries
- Accommodate various rec users and provide for various experiences, including equestrian trails on public lands and safe biking
- Provide more access in low-use areas to disperse visitors to WA and the east side
- Plan vision needs updating, then new implementation plan; update or remove the 1980s project list
- Increase river access points, parking (Klickitat, While Salmon)
- Consider “safety corridors” in recreation areas where people live
- Revisit strategies that didn’t work in the past, given increased use today

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**Ensure laws and policies are upheld**

- Articulate objective and measurable standards in the Plan
- Address cumulative impacts – require analysis of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions (i.e. Underwood developments, what would build out look like?)
- LUDs should have teeth (Open Space)
- Review discontinued use – does this category work as intended?
- Extend expiration date on permits

**Review Land Use Designations & parcel-level amendments**

- Management Plan should provide rezoning guidance and criteria
- Open Space – is protection in GMA viable and enforceable? Do acquired public lands need more OS protection?
- Reassess SMA boundaries using best available spatial data and tools with USFS
- Urban Areas – should they be expanded? Through what process and criteria?
- Update Recreation Intensity Classes (e.g. Drano Lake). Do RICs still work as intended?
- Grandfathered uses – make it easier to repurpose abandoned buildings (old mill in Skamania County, abandoned commercial buildings)
- Address SMA federal acquisition of private lands, esp in Skamania County; Counties should be compensated for lost tax base, consulted during applications
- Public facilities, including emergency response facilities and water storage (fire response) outside the UAs
- Create a “limited review” zone
- Protect landscape features and consider whether protection buffers are sufficient

**Streamline ordinance implementation with clarification, updates**

- Eliminate or provide guidance on how to measure visual subordination, how to determine compatibility, how to define a major development
- Address new economic uses including value-added ag, cideries, commercial events
- WA environmental laws have improved – there is redundancy and overlap now
- Expand the list of uses allowed outright or by expedited review (e.g. utilities, retaining walls, replacements, public facilities, in-home business uses, etc). Consider simpler conditional use process
- Reorganize the plan to be more user-friendly (e.g. all uses allowed outright in one place)
- Address solar panels as an allowed use
- Review home business guidelines and review requirements
- Review cluster and planned development policies – they don’t seem to be working
- Reduce subjectivity to improve consistency
- Plan should provide more guidance than regulation (fewer “shalls”)

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**Address transportation issues**

- Adopt guidelines addressing fossil fuel transport through the NSA, require worst-case analysis of oil spills and prohibit coal pollution. Require insurance and compensation to communities for risk and impacts
- Require rail traffic through towns and parks to observe safety measures (10mph speed, etc)
- Research solutions from Spokane and other communities to address rail
- Encourage improved public transportation across bridges/new Hood River bridge

**Consider regional and landscape planning**

- In general, consider how to improve connectivity for wildlife and human access to water
- Consider how the plan can support green design and minimize environmental impacts within the urban areas
- Is transfer of development rights a possible strategy in the NSA?
- Need to consider cumulative impacts – quantify and monitor these through Vital Signs Indicators Program

**Support community economic development**

- Provide a sound process for urban area expansion; define a minor revision
- Consider expanding funding assistance to areas outside NSA
- Economic diversity – what does it look like now versus 50 years ago? How do we promote diversity? How do we support transition from declining industries? Can we incentivize and attract new and diverse companies?
- Committed economic development funds have not been delivered. How should the remaining be spent?
- More funding should go to sustaining local businesses
- How does recreation and tourism impact communities (positively and negatively)?
- Highlight Skamania Lodge and other gems throughout the Gorge
- Review policies for commercial events, weddings, etc
- Consider options to provide or partner for rural/ag grants, provide design assistance, etc
- Commission could pay added development cost to landowners to protect resources
- Provide for selective logging for firewising and income. Base in latest restoration science and require strict oversight
- Review small-scale fishing and fish processing operations –particularly guidelines related to employees and use of existing or accessory buildings
- Address farm labor housing needs
- Consider allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- Allow larger accessory and agricultural buildings, and larger Bed & Breakfasts. What are current industry norms and needs?

**3. COMMENTS THAT ARE INDIRECTLY RELATED AND CAN BE ADDRESSED OUTSIDE OF GORGE 2020 THROUGH STAFF-LED PROGRAMS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND OPERATIONS**

**Partner and engage in regional efforts related to:**

- Impacts of trains and fossil fuel transport: pollution, traffic, fire danger, dust
- Understanding climate change impacts (e.g. increasing water temps and fish mortality)
- Opportunities for sport fishing and supporting salmon fisheries
- Habitat fragmentation caused by railroads, highways, and development
- Managing fire risk: keep in mind that large, intense fires impact the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources as well as economies
- Opportunities for Good Neighbor Authority
- Airspace and increased use of drones
- Reducing conflicts between recreational uses (hiking, biking, hunting, water uses, etc)

**Support livable communities and quality of life for residents by engaging in:**

- Tribal housing solutions
- Traffic congestion issues and dispersing visitor use
- Emergency services resources for search and rescue, law enforcement, fire response
- Recreation management solutions including permits, shuttles, gorge pass, Gorge towing, railroads as people-movers, adding restrooms and trash cans, addressing illegal camping, trail-building, and parking, teaching Leave No Trace
- Implementing projects supported in the Plan, like Towns to Trails and HCRH
- Providing user information - lesser known trail info, real time “Plan B” for crowded sites
- Ensuring fair and consistent implementation of the Plan
- Monitoring and enforcement of NSA approvals, conditions
- Education and outreach to all ages and backgrounds about the NSA and its resources
- Creative and sustainable funding sources for the Commission
- Citizen science and volunteer stewards
- Targeted education for real estate professionals, builders, industry, etc
- Website improvements and online resources; tools to assist landowners
- Identifying “Gorge-approved” services and products. Certification or educational program for designers, architects, planners, realtors, landowners to be experts in NSA development. Showcase successful projects and “proven winners”
- Long-range planning and visioning for smaller communities
- Housing affordability and attainability improvements

**4. COMMENTS THAT DO NOT RELATE TO PLAN REVIEW, ARE BEYOND THE COMMISSION'S AUTHORITY, ARE TOO GENERAL TO BE ADDRESSED OR CONFLICT WITH SPECIFIC COMMISSION RULES AND RESOLUTIONS**

- The Gorge Commission and Counties are underfunded
- Day users don't necessarily spend in communities
- The Plan should limit logging or eliminate clear cuts
- Improve way-finding and signage
- Work with private landowners for easements to improve connectivity (i.e. Lacamas Lake, Pacific Crest Trail)
- Culverts are barriers to salmon migration
- Address population increases, growing transportation, housing, and visitor needs
- Haze results from diesel locomotives, trucks, ships, and wood stoves
- There is economic disparity between Hood River/Bingen and the rest of the Gorge
- Wind energy development outside the NSA impacts views
- Allow for the production and processing of cannabis
- Cumulative impacts of coal and oil trains are not addressed
- Create a long-range transportation plan
- Gorge Commissioners should be required to live in the NSA to experience being subject to the rules
- Commission should include more members with expertise in agriculture, business, recreation, etc with subcommittees to work with citizen groups
- High density UA development can create undesirable aesthetic; sprawl is undesirable
- NSA should provide regional leadership in climate change issues
- Light pollution is not monitored
- Consider how railroads act as barriers for both humans and wildlife, separating the rest of the landscape from the waterfront; Connections to the River are cut off by RRs and highways
- Eliminate split lot zoning
- Prohibit hunting in the NSA