

From: [Deborah Lawless](#)
To: [Gorge 2020](#)
Subject: Urban Growth Boundary commentary
Date: Sunday, September 6, 2020 8:09:53 PM

Hello-

I am late (opportunity and timelines for direct commentary should be more obvious), and I understand that this may not get seen, but I feel so strongly about the urban growth issue that I had to write anyway.

In order to preserve natural resources, we certainly should NOT be increasing urban area boundaries. The most efficient and effective use must be made of the urban lands that already exist.

From the National Scenic Act:

The purposes of sections 544 to 544p of this title are— (1) to establish a national scenic area to protect and provide for the enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge; and (2) to protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development in a manner that is consistent with paragraph (1) (underline emphasis is mine).

I'm sure there have been many long debates about the meaning of these words. To me, the wording of the original act does not refer to balancing protections with economic growth, it is not meant to be a compromise. There is a clear priority. The act refers to supporting and protecting the Gorge area economies by encouraging growth in existing urban areas, and development that is consistent with the first point. How are we protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Gorge if we continually chip away at it??

I would ask - is a national scenic area not as sacrosanct as a national park? Would we want increased urban boundaries and development in the Grand Canyon? In Zion? I would also ask, what are the goals of those who would chose to increase urban areas? Do they align with the overall goals of the National Scenic Act? What is the future state that they envision for our National Scenic Area? Will we continue the destructive legacy of a 'bigger, better, faster, more' economy in our treasured Scenic area, or will we discover new and innovation solutions that will protect and enhance both local economies and the environment?

Please hold fast on limiting urban boundaries as much as possible. Please keep the original top level, big picture goals of the National Scenic Act in mind, before getting into the weeds of when/what/where/how of urban boundary changes.

Thank you for your time, both today and all of the time invested in the future of our National Scenic Area.

Deb Lawless