

Economic Development

~~The Columbia River Gorge is home to nearly 55,000 people. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area spans 85 miles of the Columbia River and includes 292,500 acres of diverse landscapes and 13 urban communities. Congress intended the National Scenic Area Act to support the economy of the communities in the National Scenic Area. The second of the Act's two stated purposes~~ One of the Act's two stated purposes is "to protect and support the economy of the Gorge by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development in a manner that is consistent with protection of scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources [Section 3(2)]."

The term "economic vitality" as used in this chapter, refers to a strong and diverse economy that contributes to increased prosperity, job opportunities, and an enhanced quality of life. As stated in the National Scenic Area Oregon and Washington Economic Vitality Plan (2016): "The purpose of the National Scenic Area Oregon and Washington Economic Vitality Plan is to set forth a vision and strategies for enhancing the economy and quality of life of Oregon and Washington communities located within the National Scenic Area". The economic vitality of the National Scenic Area and the health of the scenic, natural, recreational, and cultural

resources of the Columbia River Gorge are interdependent. The goals and policies in this chapter support the vision of a thriving economy supporting diverse business opportunities that operate in harmony with the National Scenic Area's rural qualities, values, and resources, especially with ~~the Gorge's principal~~ economic sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, and tourism. ~~while allowing new commercial uses on lands designated Rural Center, Commercial, and Commercial Recreation.~~ Climate change directly and indirectly affects many of the region's current economic sectors. Addressing climate change will improve the viability of those economies into the future. In addition, the necessity of adapting to changing conditions and the interest in mitigating effects create new opportunities for a natural resource-based economy.

This chapter focuses on the General Management Area as the primary location for commercial development. The Special Management Areas (SMA) include the region's most sensitive lands and resources. In the Act, Congress explicitly limited new development in the SMA, and directed that commercial development take place outside of the SMA.

GMA PROVISIONS

GMA Goals

1. Protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by encouraging growth to occur in existing Urban Areas.
2. Protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by allowing future economic development in a manner that is consistent with the protection and enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge.

GMA Policies

1. The Gorge Commission shall consult with the States of Washington and Oregon in the States' updates to their coordinated Economic Vitality Plan developed pursuant to Section 11 of the National Scenic Area Act. ~~development and implementation of their state and regional economic development plans.~~
2. The Gorge Commission recognizes the importance of their participation in updates to the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as may be requested by Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, the bi-state economic development entity that coordinates the CEDS planning process.
23. The Gorge Commission shall support the economic development efforts of the States of Oregon and Washington pursuant to their Economic Vitality Plan ~~economic development plans established under the National Scenic Area Act.~~ The Gorge Commission recognizes and supports the importance of the economic vitality efforts of regional and community organizations and the four treaty tribes, pursuant to their economic development strategic plans and as consistent with the purposes and standards of the Act and the Management Plan.
3. ~~The Gorge Commission shall encourage the States of Washington and Oregon to coordinate their economic development planning in order to maximize the benefits of federal dollars to all Gorge communities.~~
4. Agriculture and forest industries in the Columbia River Gorge shall be protected and supported by:
 - preventing fragmentation of the land base ~~and by;~~
 - minimizing interference with agricultural and forest practices from conflicting uses;

- enhancing agricultural lands for agricultural uses, forest lands for forest uses and forest lands for agricultural uses;
- being consistent with the strategies listed in the Economic Vitality Plan to provide ongoing support for these industries;
- encouraging conservation efforts such as renewable energy and water efficiency; and
- allowing commercial uses and events on GMA agriculture lands that are incidental and subordinate to the agricultural use.

~~5. The economic vitality of the Gorge economy shall be enhanced by encouraging growth to occur in Urban Areas.~~

~~6. New commercial uses shall be allowed outside Urban Areas on lands designated:~~

~~Rural Center.~~

~~Commercial.~~

~~Commercial Recreation.~~

75. The following commercial uses may be allowed outside Urban Areas:

A. Home occupations ~~and cottage industries~~ in all designations except Open Space.

B. Commercial recreation in appropriate recreation intensity classes throughout the Scenic Area.

C. Commercial uses in conjunction with public recreation on lands designated Public Recreation.

D. Conversion of existing industrial sites to commercial use.

E. ~~Wineries and farm produce stands~~ Wine sales/tasting rooms, in conjunction with a lawful winery, on lands designated Large-Scale or Small-Scale Agriculture, Commercial Forest Land, or Large or Small Woodland.

F. Commercial events in all GMA designations except Open Space and Agriculture Special, in conjunction with a lawful winery, wine sales/tasting room, ~~bed and breakfast inn~~ overnight accommodation, commercial use or dwelling listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

G. Commercial uses in all GMA designations except Open Space and Agriculture Special on a property with a building either on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and that was 50 years or older as of January 1, 2006.

PART III-Action Program

86. The Gorge Commission shall support the economy of Gorge communities by ~~encouraging-integrating~~ recreation development at appropriate rural locations with adequate infrastructure and coordinating with appropriate organizations.

7. The Gorge Commission recognizes the importance of adequate efficient and reliable infrastructure (such as water, sewer, roads, energy, telecommunications, and broadband) to protect the health and safety and to support the economic vitality of Gorge communities.

Development

- ~~9.—The Gorge Commission shall recognize the special role of the five ports in the Scenic Area as providers of river transportation and recreation facilities in Urban Areas, and support their efforts to stimulate urban waterfront economic development by:~~
- ~~• Assigning priority for revisions to Urban Area boundaries to those requests involving port properties or projects.~~
 - ~~• Relying upon existing state and federal wetlands regulations on the Columbia River and exempting urban waterfronts from wetland and riparian area guidelines in the Management Plan.~~
8. The Oregon Investment Board and the Washington Investment Board review economic development proposals for loans and grants in the National Scenic Area and recommend the projects for federal funding appropriated for this purpose. The Gorge Commission encourages the States of Washington and Oregon to coordinate their economic development efforts in order to maximize the benefits of federal dollars to all Gorge communities.
- A. Prior to the approval of any grant under the states' plans for economic development projects pursuant to Section 11 of the National Scenic Area Act, the Gorge Commission shall certify that all activities undertaken under the grant are consistent with the purposes of the National Scenic Area Act, the Management Plan, and land use ordinances adopted pursuant to the National Scenic Area Act.
- B. If such activities would take place wholly within an urban area, the Gorge Commission shall, after consultation with the appropriate city or county, certify that the activities are consistent with the National Scenic Area Act, the Management Plan, and land use ordinances. The Gorge Commission shall maintain this certification process so that it is simple, efficient, and speedy to not delay consistent activities. The details of economic development projects shall be confidential consistent with Gorge Commission rules on disclosure of public records.
- ~~11.—In consultation with the States of Washington and Oregon and Gorge counties, and after public hearings, the Gorge Commission established a process for certifying that activities to be undertaken under a grant pursuant to Section 11 of the Scenic Area Act are consistent with the purposes of the Scenic Area Act, the Management Plan, and land use ordinances adopted pursuant to the Scenic Area Act. The Gorge Commission shall maintain this certification process so that it is simple, efficient, and speedy to not delay consistent activities. The details of economic development projects shall be confidential consistent with Gorge Commission rules on disclosure of public records.~~

