

**Urban Area Boundary Revision Policy  
Workshop Summary  
July 24, 2018 and August 1, 2018**

The Gorge Commission staff held duplicate workshops on July 24 and August 1 to kick off its effort to update the Commission's urban area policy. Between the two dates, 27 people attended.

The Commission's urban area policy is a combination of three principal documents. (1) The National Scenic Area Management Plan, page IV-1-5 includes six policies and restates the criteria in the National Scenic Area Act for revising urban area boundaries. (2) Commission Rule 350-40 contains procedural rules for applications to revise urban area boundaries. (3) The Urban Area Boundary Revisions Handbook (dated Feb. 11, 1992). The workshops are focused on updating the policy generally and will include discussion of how to distribute the final draft among those three documents, or other existing or new documents.

We discussed reasons for the project:

- The policy is outdated.
- Counties and communities need this guidance to do their long range planning.
- The current policy only addresses urban area boundary expansions; it does not address how to apply the NSA Act's criteria for land swaps or shrinking urban areas.
- There is no pending request to revise a boundary, so the Commission is not pressured to "approve" or "deny" a particular request.
- The Commission is committed to updating the policy and has fulfilled or is working "precursors" to success identified in its 2014–15 Urban Area Policy Assessment.

We discussed deliverables for the project:

- Draft policy
- Alternatives where there is significant disagreement between workshop participants
- Final Report to the Commission that discusses the range of viewpoints and explains areas of disagreement

We discussed the background of urban area policy and the Commission's discussion of foundational questions with a focus on the Commission's interest in the policy reflecting the differences in the National Scenic Area as compared to Oregon and Washington's existing urban growth boundary and urban growth area policies.

We discussed the role of the workshops and participants. Commission staff will take the lead on drafting policy and alternatives. This helps ensure the policy and alternatives will be internally consistent. Workshop participants will be a sounding board for broad themes and will review draft text as the Commission staff produces it. There was discussion about the make-up of the workshop participants, that there were few people representing conservation interests relative to the number of people representing local government and economic development interests. Commission staff explained that it is committed to hearing all perspectives and that the policy and alternatives will not be written to reflect the loudest voices or perspectives with the most

number of “votes.” One of the purposes of the final report to the Commission is to explain differing viewpoints and how those were considered or why they were not written into the draft and alternatives. We discussed a few additional entities to contact to invite their participation.

The group generally agreed to hold workshops in White Salmon or Hood River rather than travel around the Gorge. One specific suggestion that everyone agreed with was to offer an open public workshop once the draft and alternatives gets further along, but before it is final. Commission staff agreed to do this.

Finally, several participants expressed hope that this urban area policy updating effort will be more successful than recent efforts, which did not result in revised policy. Participants also suggested that Commission staff develop a list of dates and topics of future workshops. Participants suggested several topics and there was discussion that these could also be good topics for briefings at Gorge Commission meetings.

- Oregon and Washington urban growth boundary/urban growth area revision process and requirements.
- Gorge Commission authority relative to urban areas and existing state policy.
- Climate change.
- Why Gorge communities need this policy and what local planning is dependent on this policy.
- Gorge communities’ recent buildable lands studies and related new information.
- Form of the final policy (non-binding guidance, binding rule, Management Plan policies and guidelines, etc.).

The next workshop will be August 21, 2018 in White Salmon at a location to be determined.