



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Columbia River Gorge Commission

**FROM:** Joanna Kaiserman, NSA Land Use Planner  
Bryce Guske, Klickitat County Land Use Planner  
Jessica Olson, Sr. Natural Resources and Land Use Planner

**DATE:** September 11, 2018

**SUBJECT:** **Action Item:** "Gorge2020" Land Uses and Development Reviews

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### **Action Requested**

Gorge Commission staff will provide a brief background presentation on the "Land Uses and Development Review Process" focus topic to provide context and an opportunity for the Commission and the public to comment. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on our proposed approach, the key issues recommended for further discussion, and which topics the Commission would like the staff to address in presentations at future Commission meetings.

### **Background**

During public scoping, staff meetings with state and federal agencies, and discussions with county planners, the Commission received many comments related to language and policies in the plan that are perceived to cause unnecessary confusion and inefficiencies in the development review process. We also heard suggestions about specific land uses and activities that might need to be added to or revised in the Plan. Through our permitting duties in Klickitat County, Commission staff have identified areas in the review process that could be clarified, and we have heard similar feedback from planners working in the other NSA counties. At public scoping sessions and at recent Commission meetings we heard from landowners who shared their experiences with the Commission's development review process, their critiques, and suggestions for improvement.

As part of our Gorge2020 process, Commission staff identified Land Uses and Development Reviews as one of our plan review focus topics, which means we will take a deeper look into the issues raised during our scoping sessions, discuss development review issues with NSA county planners, and present what we learn to the Commission for feedback. We want to be responsive to landowners and county planners who have expressed their concerns and suggestions, and we want to allow dedicated time to hear more from them, present the issues to the Commission, and receive direction from the Commission.

## **Land Uses**

During public scoping, Commission staff heard about several land use developments and activities that landowners and counties want us to discuss in the plan review process. We also heard recommendations about ways to make the process of review for certain uses more clear and efficient. The issues raised revolved around the following:

- Wind and solar power generation for home and/or agricultural use
- Master planning for phased development or new agricultural uses
- Extended expirations and providing for conditional uses
- Additional uses to qualify for expedited review, such as public facilities upgrades
- Existing and emerging uses not currently addressed in the Plan

Staff requests that the Commission discuss these topics and identify topics/issues you are interested in hearing more about. These key topics will be presented back to the Commission by staff for more in-depth conversations at a future Commission meeting.

## **Gorge2020.Consider.It**

In February 2018, staff posted introductory statements on the Consider.It webpage based on issues raised during the scoping process. Consider.It is another public outreach tool to solicit public comments online and give people an opportunity to weigh in with their opinions, with the ability to see how others view the issues. The Consider.It statements below are intended to highlight the feedback we received from the public initially on these issues with the goal of having others comment on them as well. The statements are:

1. The Management Plan should provide standards for uses that do not appear in the Plan but have been allowed, such as solar panels for home or agricultural uses and cideries/distilleries.
2. There are additional types of developments that should be eligible for expedited review.
3. The Management Plan should promote commercial event space and small commercial operations.

Staff requests that the Commission discuss the above statements and suggest modifications to these statements and/or additional statements to post to Consider.It based on the additional information the Commission wants to gather from the public.

## **Initial Staff Recommendations**

### *Expedited Review*

During our March 2018 meeting, staff provided an overview of the expedited review process. We recommend a deeper consultation with the planners in other Gorge counties to understand how the expedited review process has been used and in what ways it might be improved to serve its intended purpose: to streamline the review process when our initial analyses show that NSA resources would not be adversely affected.

### *Conditional uses or permit renewals*

For some land uses, a conditional use permit or a permit renewal process might be more appropriate than a standard permit. Staff recommends consulting with Gorge county planners to see if they can provide insight into how these types of permits do or do not work well within and outside the NSA.

## **Next Steps**

### *At Commission meetings*

- Staff will record Commissioner feedback from the discussion today to identify key issues and topics the Commission is most interested in learning more about. We will determine what items are within the scope of plan review and which ones are outside the Plan and identify the items that are technical fixes vs. what topics require more information and discussion.
- Staff will plan one or more presentations at future Commission meetings based on the key topics identified. These presentations may include panel presentations about the identified topics of interest. We will invite public comment. We hope to gain a common understanding among Commissioners, staff, county planners, and the public about the unique land uses and future development needs in the NSA. We will solicit input to help us be more forward-thinking in our policies and processes.

### *Outside Commission meetings*

- Staff will continue to gather input from county planners on the trends in land uses they observe, recommendations for additional land uses in the Plan and clarification of existing uses, with suggested solutions to address the challenges with the development review process.