

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Columbia River Gorge Commission  
**FROM:** Stan Hinatsu, Casey Gatz; USFS & Aiden Forsi, CRGC Staff  
**DATE:** March 12, 2019  
**SUBJECT:** INFORMATION ITEM: Gorge2020 – Recreation Resources Focus Topic Review

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**Presentation Goal:** Provide information on existing protection and enhancement measures for Recreation Resources in the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

### **Background: The Act, Recreation Resources, & Management Plan Framework**

The importance of recreation to the Columbia River Gorge is reflected in the first purpose of the Act; to protect and enhance its scenic, cultural, natural and **recreation** resources. Perhaps more than any other part of the National Scenic Area Act, the recreation mandates pose a number of unique and formidable challenges to balance resource protection with access and development.

The Management Plan provides the following guides and tools to manage recreation and reflects the recreation assessment mandates specified in the Act;

- Overall recreation resources goals, objectives and policies
- Recreation intensity classes, with specific guidelines and criteria addressing new public and commercial recreation development
- Public and Commercial Recreation land use designations
- A recreation development plan that provides the policy framework for implementing high-priority proposed public recreation facilities

### **The Management Plan**

#### **Recreation Resources (Part 1, Chapter 4)**

The plan identifies goals, objectives, policies and guidelines for protecting and enhancing recreation resources. In the GMA these are itemized to include goals, objectives and policies for:

Protection of Resources	Interpretation/Education
Scenic Appreciation and Scenic Travel Corridors	Trails and Pathways
Resource-Based Recreation	Transportation
River Access and Protection of Treaty Rights	Coordination

The guidelines for managing GMA recreation developments are focused in the Recreation Intensity Class provisions outlined below and in the approval criteria for recreation uses, facility design guidelines for all recreation projects, and variances and plan amendments.

The SMA Provisions provide the overall goals, policies and guidelines for all recreational developments, including guidelines for the Recreation Intensity Classes in Special Management Areas. These guidelines outline that all new developments should protect recreation resources and allow only natural resource-based recreation developments. Guidelines for the Recreation Intensity Classes are also included and are outlined below.

## Recreation Intensity Classes (Part 1, Chapter 4)

Recreation intensity classes have been applied to all GMA and SMA lands in the CRGNSA. They are an overlay to the underlying land use designations and these classes identify areas potentially suitable for varying intensities of new recreation uses and facility development. Recreation intensity classes do not supersede any provisions of underlying land use designations, nor do they affect recreation uses existing as of the date the Gorge Commission adopted the Management Plan.

### Recreation Intensity Classes

- 1 – Very Low Intensity
- 2 – Low Intensity
- 3 – Moderate Intensity
- 4 – High Intensity

Uses range from very low intensity uses (Class 1) such as trails and simple interpretative displays, to high intensity uses (Class 4) such as campgrounds for up to 175 individual recreation vehicles. Recreation Intensity Classes also dictate many development actions, such as the size or quantity of signs, parking lots, and camp sites. For example, the maximum space allowed for a newly developed parking area is 10 cars in Class 1 to 250 cars in Class 4.

**Recreation Land Use Designations (Part 2, Chapter 6)** There are two land use designations that are specific to recreation, though recreation uses may also be authorized in other land use designations.

The **Public Recreation** designation occurs in both GMA and SMA and its goal is to protect and enhance lands and opportunities that are suitable for public recreation. The lands that were designated Public Recreation were generally existing parks and recreation sites as well as private and public lands suitable for moderate or high-intensity recreation uses. Guidelines are in place that identify uses allowed outright, uses allowed through an expedited review process, and review uses. In the GMA there are also guidelines that manage non-recreation uses in the Recreation land use designation.

The goals of the **Commercial Recreation** designation are to protect and enhance existing and potential opportunities for commercially owned, resource-based recreation. Commercial Recreation only occurs in the GMA. Guidelines are in place that identify uses allowed outright, uses allowed through an expedited review process, review uses as well as non-recreation uses in the Recreation land use designation.

**Recreation Development Plan (Part 3, Chapter 1)** The Recreation Development Plan provides the policy framework for implementing high-priority proposed public recreation facilities. This supported projects such as Drano Lake and Beacon Rock, as well as the reconstruction of abandoned segments of the Historic Columbia River Highway. The goal of the GMA and Urban Areas provisions are to identify those highest priority projects that meet the recreation goals and facilitate their implementation. For the SMA, the goal of the Development Plan is to provide opportunities for public and private recreation use and access to the Columbia River.

**Next Steps** Currently USFS and CRGC staff are engaging technical experts and stakeholders to develop a process for identifying the scope of proposed updates, development of a public engagement strategy, and setting the framework for the Recreation focus topic.