MEMORANDUM

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

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DATE: April 28, 2020

SUBJECT: Gorge2020 – Scenic Resources Technical Review

GOAL: Update information and provide clarity on the technical review and revision of the Scenic chapter for the Management Plan so revisions can be included with the Management Plan for public comment.

BACKGROUND: The Plan identifies goals, objectives, policies, and guidelines for resource protection and enhancement of the Scenic resources in the CRGNSA. They are grouped within the following 4 areas:

1. Emphasize protection and enhancement of Gorge landscapes seen from key viewing areas.
2. Maintain the diversity of Gorge landscapes to protect and enhance the Gorge's scenic beauty and retain the existing character of rural landscape settings.
3. Establish and protect scenic travel corridors to protect and enhance scenic resources within these corridors.
4. Provisions for minimizing visual impacts of signage and the development of a graphic signing system for signage necessary for commerce, recreation, safety, and public information.

Scenic Background Information [Memo from November 2018](#) and [Presentation](#)

PROPOSED TECHNICAL UPDATES: The goal of the technical review is to update, clarify, and provide consistency within the language and tools of the Scenic Chapter so the Management Plan can:

- Consistently protect, enhance, assess and monitor the existing Scenic resource.
- Ensure efficiency in carrying out purposes of the Act.

Landscape Setting Descriptions: Landscape settings are the backbone for the scenic resource and were developed to help us visually comprehend the fabric of the Gorge landscapes. Technical updates refine and clarify existing descriptions to better depict the scenic character within a broader ecological context. This allows the Counties, Commission, and Forest Service to manage the scenic resources as the dynamic landscapes they represent.

LANDSCAPE SETTINGS
Pastoral, Coniferous Woodland, Oak-Pine Woodland, Grassland, Rural Residential, Residential, Village, River Bottomland, Gorge Walls, Canyon and Wildlands, and developed settings

Character descriptions would include more distinctive characteristics of landscape attributes such as land use and cultural features, landform patterns, vegetation, and waterform. These combine to make each setting memorable and identifiable, and provide a visual vernacular planners and experts can use to help land owners successfully meet and maintain scenic visibility standards.

Existing landscape settings have always applied to both the GMA and the SMA, however, they are currently nested under GMA guidelines. The update would move the descriptions to a standalone section within the Scenic chapter, clarifying that these are relevant in SMA and GMA.

KVA Definition: The Plan currently says KVAs are "those *portions* of important public roads parks, or other vantage points within the Scenic Area from which the public views Scenic Area landscapes." Scenic Area planners met and identified that refining the KVA definition to better address the scale and scope of the variety of KVAs would be helpful. This would allow implementers to articulate that KVAs may include parking areas, rest areas, gathering spots, and trailheads directly associated with the designated KVA. This clarification would ensure determinations of visibility from KVAs be more comprehensive, accurate, defensible, and consistently applied. KVA list would also include clarification with the KVA Historic Columbia River Highway, which includes the HCRH State Trail.

Visually Subordinate and Not Visually Evident Definition: Technical update proposes to clarify and refine the definitions by linking to landscape setting character descriptions. The science of scenery management understands that visibility is not limited to simply being seen or not, but having more to do with the visual footprint of a development or use, i.e., the development or structure could be visible, but would be camouflaged so to speak, so as to not be obtrusive visually. This provides landowners with additional tools to reduce their visual footprint, and can ensure distinctive characteristics associated with a landscape setting maintain a level of intactness. This can be carried out by repeating design elements such as form, line, color, and texture present in the attributes of the landscape setting. Language used in the plan to describe requirements for 'visibility' from KVAs varies greatly. Technical update would include intentionally clarifying and making these consistent with existing definitions.

Topographic Visibility Definition: Topographic visibility is referred to in the Plan and is clearly defined in the Scenic Implementation Handbook. This update would add the definition for Topographic Visibility from the Handbook to the Glossary in the Plan.

Skyline Definition: Technical update would clarify the definition of skyline for consistency and clarity in implementing related guidelines. The definition would clarify skyline as the juncture of the topographic surface of the earth against the sky.

Sign Guidelines: Guidelines for signs are spread out between multiple chapters making them difficult to implement. Technical update would consolidate the existing language under the Scenic Chapter Sign section.

Application Requirements: Guidelines for proposed structural development application grading plan requirements have been moved and consolidated to Part II, Chapter 7 with the other Standards for Applications for Review Uses

Remove/Update Superseded Language Related to Visual Management System: This system has been superseded by a newer system, the Scenery Management System. Language would be updated to reflect similar terminology from the Scenery Management System, allowing for the most current science for managing scenery to be reflected in the Management Plan.

Vegetation Common to an Area/Scenic Implementation Handbook: Throughout the chapter users are encouraged to use "species common to the landscape." Update would clarify this language to encourage native species with examples provided in the Scenic Implementation Handbook as appropriate to the landscape.

Mining and Reclamation Guidelines: These components of the plan have been removed from the Scenic section and moved to Part II, Chapter 7 to clarify that these are general policies and guidelines not solely connected to the Scenic Resource, but all of the resources protected in the Act.

Outside the Plan: Through the original scoping efforts, several areas were identified that can be updated to help improve implementation that are outside of Management Plan review and revision. These included general and specific updates to the Scenic Implementation Handbook, and updating digital mapping efforts.

SUPPORT WORK OUTSIDE OF THE PLAN
Scenic Implementation Handbook Updates
Plants Chapter updates
Landscape Settings Chapter
Scenic Condition and Visibility Mapping
Existing Landscape Setting Condition Mapping
KVA Seen Areas Mapping

Next Steps: Following the presentation and today's public comment opportunity, staff requests agreement among Commissioners that the proposed revisions are ready to be included with other proposed revisions to the Management Plan for public comment June 1 – June 30, 2020.