



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Columbia River Gorge Commission

**FROM:** Jessica Olson, Natural Resources & Land Use Planner  
Casey Gatz, National Scenic Area Forest Service

**DATE:** April 29, 2020

**SUBJECT:** **Work Session\***: Gorge Commission climate change vision and roles

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### Background

The Columbia River Gorge Commission has demonstrated interest in pursuing climate change adaptation and mitigation. At the February 11, 2020 meeting, the Commission supported staff's draft Climate Change Strategies and Actions document, as a list of potential options to forward its work on climate change. Commissioners and staff are considering climate change throughout the current Management Plan review and revision process, Gorge 2020.

### Purpose of the Drafted Climate Change Language

Staff is recommending the Commission adopt a vision statement and general language to characterize the roles it intends to have in climate change adaptation and mitigation. This language will set the stage for staff work to finalize the draft climate change strategies and actions list.

### Relationship to the Management Plan

The language proposed below will stand alone as a guiding statement for this Commission to revise and adopt. The discussion of vision and roles will also assist the staff in drafting minor, non-regulatory revisions to the Management Plan Introduction, Action Program, and Administration sections, before the public comment period June 1 – June 30, 2020.

## **Proposed Climate Change Vision and Commission Role Statement**

### *Vision*

*The National Scenic Area is made up of natural systems, living cultures, and communities that are resilient to climate change and that contribute to climate change solutions.*

### Commission roles

- Through its Management Plan and land use policies, the Commission protects and enhances the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources of the gorge, and protects and supports the economy of the Gorge in the face of a changing climate;
- Through its Management Plan and land use policies, the Commission supports carbon reduction strategies that are consistent with resource protections, including renewable energy and transit solutions;
- The Columbia River Gorge Commission invests in proactive planning to adapt to and mitigate climate change in the National Scenic Area;
- The Commission leads a Vital Signs Indicators program that monitors the impacts of climate change on the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources, and the economies of the gorge;
- The Commission provides regional leadership and partners with communities and stakeholders who are working to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance forest carbon storage\*.

\* Forested lands provide as much as 90% of land-based carbon storage in the United States and offset a significant amount of carbon emissions ([Ontl et al. 2020](#)). To maintain and improve forest carbon storage, the Commission and partners might consider forest protections and management strategies for forest health into the future.

Ontl, T.A., M.K. Janowiak, C.W. Swanston, J. Daley, S. Handler, M. Cornett, S. Hagenbuch, C. Handrick, L. Mccarthy, and N. Patch. 2020. Forest Management for Carbon Sequestration and Climate Adaptation. *Journal of Forestry*. 118(1): pp 86-101.

### **Staff Request to the Commission**

Staff is seeking input from Commissioners today specifically addressing the following question:

- *Are there changes that need to be made to the language to achieve Commission support?*

### **Next Steps**

This language, upon approval by the Commission, serves as a stand-alone statement of intent and expectation. Staff recommends incorporating the text into the Draft Climate Change Strategies and Actions document presented February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

As part of Gorge 2020, staff will use today's climate change vision discussion to incorporate additional climate change language into non-regulatory sections of the plan.