



MEMORANDUM

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director, Gorge Commission
Lisa Naas Cook, VSI Planner, Gorge Commission
Rachel Pawlitz, Public Affairs Officer, National Scenic Area Forest Service

DATE: May 12, 2020

SUBJECT: **Information Item*:** Gorge 2020 Public Comment Plan for June 1-30, 2020

Background: The Gorge Commission began the “10 year” Management Plan review process as required by the National Scenic Area Act in November 2016. Staff conducted scoping meetings called “Listening Sessions” in January through March 2017 throughout the Gorge and compiled a list of themes that emerged from discussions with the public, counties, agencies, ports, regional economic development entities and the Columbia River Treaty Tribes. These themes were presented at the April 2017 Commission meeting. Later that summer, staff hosted additional public workshops to share back to the public “Here is What We Heard” and the proposed themes to address during plan review. In October, the Commission approved staff’s recommendation to move with the six focus topics. Two topics would be technical updates only - the Scenic and Natural Resources Chapters - and four would be “deep dive” topics that required more in-depth analyses, stakeholder and expert engagement, with possible policy level changes. These were Recreation Resources, Economic Vitality, Urban Area Boundaries and Land Uses.

From November 2017 through April 2020, Gorge Commission and Forest Service staff worked closely together to review each of the focus topics and provided updates and overviews to the Commission. Each focus topic was featured for public comment throughout the process to assure the public had a chance to weigh in early and often.

Draft Management Plan Public Comment Plan: The Draft Gorge 2020 Management Plan will be posted on the Gorge Commission website for public comment beginning on Monday June 1, 2020 through Tuesday June 30, 2020.

- The Draft Plan will have incorporated comments and recommendations from the Commission during the April and May Commission meetings concerning each Focus

Topic: Natural Resources, Scenic Resources, Recreation Resources, Economic Vitality, Urban Area Boundaries and Land Uses. An additional Climate Change Chapter will be added. The public reviewed the draft language the Commission considered at the April and May meetings. The Commissioners considered the public's comments before they deliberated and then endorsed the draft language to be incorporated into the Draft Plan.

- The Draft Plan will also include proposed edits to other parts of the Plan for the purpose of streamlining the Plan, reducing redundancies, correcting inconsistent terminology, updating the glossary and removing information that is no longer relevant.
- In addition to posting the Draft Plan, staff will provide short fact sheets that summarize the proposed changes for the six focus topics and climate change.
- The public is welcome to submit comments and questions during June to Gorge2020@gorgecommission.org.
- An informational **Zoom Webinar** will be scheduled for 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm on Thursday June 11, 2020. An invitation to attend will be sent out June 1, 2020. Anyone wishing to attend will need to register as per the instructions sent out with the invitation, just like a regular Commission meeting. The session will be recorded and posted on the Gorge Commission website for those who will not be able to attend. There will be limited time for questions, so the public is encouraged to submit questions in by June 11 at 4:00 p.m. to give staff a chance to review.
- A separate Zoom Webinar will be scheduled in late June specifically to hear oral comments from the public who do not wish to submit written comments. The date will be announced on June 1, 2020. Written public comments will be accepted until June 30, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. Staff cannot guarantee that comments received after June 30, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. will be considered.
- Staff will review and compile all comments and provide an overview and response summary to the Commission at the July 14 (or 21), 2020 Commission meeting. Based on Commissioner feedback, staff will update the edits to the Draft Plan.
- Staff will provide the Final Gorge 2020 Management Plan to the Commission for approval at the August 11 (or 18), 2020 Commission meeting.
- The approved Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture for concurrence.
- Once the Secretary of Agriculture concurs with the Plan, the Commission will work with the six National Scenic Area counties to adopt the Plan changes into their county ordinances.