

MEMORANDUM

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission
FROM: Morai Helfen; USFS Landscape Architect
DATE: November 13, 2018
SUBJECT: Gorge2020 – Scenic Resources Technical Review

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

The Act, Scenic Resources, & Management Plan Framework

Protecting the outstanding scenic resources was a key motivating factor for the establishment of the Columbia River Gorge as a National Scenic Area and through the purposes of the Act. The Act established three management areas, Special Management Areas (SMA) and Urban Areas (UA), and the remainder of the area the General Management Area (GMA).

The Act next called for the development of land use designations (LUD) used to identify areas suitable for various types of use. The Management Plan identifies the following types of Land Use Designations; Agriculture, Forest, Open Space, Residential, Commercial and Recreation. Together, Management Areas and Land Use designations frame what development looks and feels like throughout the Gorge.

Scenic Resources

The plan identifies goals, objectives, policies, and guidelines for resource protection and enhancement; with the first chapter dedicated to the provisions for scenic resources. These goals include;

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.

In order to address these adequately, inventories were carried out and landscape settings were identified and mapped.

Landscape Settings

Landscape settings apply to both GMA and SMA, and apply to all land uses. Landscape settings describe the distinct qualities, both culturally and visually, of the area which make it unique.

The descriptions were designed to help us visually comprehend the fabric of the Gorge Landscapes and cultural uses, and corresponding design guidelines describe how new uses can be compatible with their setting without degrading its character.

Where appropriate, descriptions contain recommended parcel size for new land use divisions, signage and compatible recreation use guidelines.

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

Scenic Resource Management in GMA and SMA

In the GMA the required scenic standard is Visually Subordinate, requiring that development be visually subordinate to its landscape setting as seen from key viewing areas (KVAs). In the SMA the standard may be visually subordinate or not visually evident depending on the combination of land use designation and landscape setting.

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.

Key Viewing Areas		
Historic Columbia River Highway	Cook-Underwood Road	Washington State Route 142
Crown Point	Rowena Plateau and Nature Conservancy Viewpoint	Oregon Highway 35
Highway I-84, including rest stops	Portland Women's Forum State Park	Sandy River
Multnomah Falls	Bridal Veil State Park	Pacific Crest Trail
Washington State Route 14	Larch Mountain	SMA only:
Beacon Rock	Rooster Rock State Park	County Road 1230/Old Highway 8
Panorama Point Park	Bonneville Dam Visitor Centers Columbia River	Wyeth Bench Road
Cape Horn	Washington State Route 141	Larch Mountain Road
Dog Mountain Trail		Sherrard Point on Larch Mountain

Visually subordinate: *A description of the relative visibility of a structure or use where that structure or use does not noticeably contrast with the surrounding landscape, as viewed from a specified vantage point (generally a key viewing area, for the Management Plan). As opposed to structures that are fully screened, structures that are visually subordinate may be partially visible. They are not visually dominant in relation to their surroundings. Visually subordinate forest practices in the SMA shall repeat form, line, color, or texture common to the natural landscape, while changes in their qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction, pattern, etc., shall not dominate the natural landscape setting.*

Not visually evident: *A visual quality standard that provides for development or uses that are not visually noticeable to the casual visitor. Developments or uses shall only repeat form, line, color, and texture that are frequently found in the natural landscape, while changes in their qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction, pattern, etc., shall not be noticeable.*

To provide guidance and tools, the Scenic Resources Implementation Handbook was developed to help planners and private landowners to achieve the scenic standards when undergoing development.

Scenic Resources Implementation Handbook

The handbook can act as a guide to understanding development regulations for site location, orientation, size, color, height, shape, materials, plantings, and grading. This handbook provides a step-by-step guide for landowners to understand scenic resource protection and enhancement measures and how to meet the scenic standards. This handbook can often provide resources to landowners on how to develop their property and meet the resource protection measures and scenic standards.

Next Steps

The next steps of the technical review are to identify the scope of proposed updates to these components of scenic management.