



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Gorge Commission Approves revised “Gorge2020” Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

October 14, 2020 — Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

The Columbia River Gorge Commission approved the revised “Gorge 2020” Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area on October 13, 2020. This vote was the conclusion of four years of work on the Plan.

The National Scenic Area Act recognizes the Gorge as a national treasure whose resources are to be protected and economies supported. The Act directs the Gorge Commission and the USDA Forest Service to review the National Scenic Area Management Plan as necessary to protect the scenic, cultural, natural and recreation resources, and to support the economy consistent with resource protections. The Plan was last reviewed and revised in 2004.

The Gorge Commission has 13 members appointed by the two state Governors and 6 counties in the National Scenic Area. The Secretary of Agriculture appoints one member represented by the Forest Service NSA Manager, who is a non-voting member. Nine commissioners voted to approve the new Plan. Two commissioners voted against approving the new Plan. One commissioner was absent from the meeting.

The Gorge Commission and the USDA Forest Service began the review and revision process in 2016 by seeking input from government agencies, the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes, stakeholders and the public. Efforts have focused on technical updates to the Scenic and Natural Resources chapters of the Plan, as well as policy updates to the Economic Development, Land Uses, Urban Area Boundary revisions, and Recreation Chapters. A new Climate Change Chapter has also been added to the Plan.

Jessica Metta, Executive Director of the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD), commented in response to the Commission’s approval of the Plan, “Thank you to the staff and Gorge

Commissioners for listening to our comments related to agricultural uses. Agriculture is an important part of our regional economy and heritage. The changes to allow for the sale of additional products at fruit and produce stands, and allowing cideries in addition to wineries, will be helpful for our agricultural producers to sustain their operations."

Robert Liberty, Multnomah County appointee and Chair of the Gorge Commission, stated "We have spent four years grappling with the tough questions about how to conserve the Gorge's natural, cultural and economic assets in the face of accelerating social, environmental and economic changes. Based on all we have heard and learned, we have updated our Management Plan, which is essential to fulfilling the mission Congress assigned to us. In addition, we have realized that the speed of change means that going forward we need to be continuously monitoring our performance and making adjustments when needed; we no longer have the luxury of waiting another decade before revising our Management Plan again."

Examples of changes to the Management Plan include:

- Updating, clarifying, and providing consistency within the language and tools so the plan can consistently protect, enhance, assess and monitor existing resources;
- Allowing cideries to have tasting rooms and host commercial events;
- Allowing incidental value-added products from the local region to be sold at fruit and produce stands;
- Expanding stream buffers from current 100 feet to 200 feet on 7 specific streams and rivers in the General Management Areas to protect salmon;
- Adding a new Climate Change chapter to better protect and support the resources and economy of the National Scenic Area;
- Adding "transportation" to the definition of "Exploration, development, and production of mineral resources";
- Clarifying the extent of a minor revision to urban area boundaries.

The revised Gorge 2020 Management Plan will be transmitted to the USDA Forest Service for concurrence. Following Forest Service review, the Gorge Commission will transmit the revised Plan to the counties in the National Scenic Area to incorporate into their county ordinances.

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area encompasses 292,500 acres of Washington and Oregon, where the Columbia River cuts a spectacular river canyon through the Cascade Mountains. The USDA Forest Service manages National Forest lands in the National Scenic Area and works together with the Columbia River Gorge Commission to protect and enhance scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Columbia River Gorge while encouraging local economic development consistent with that protection. Learn more about the USDA Forest Service at www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa and more information about the Gorge Commission at www.GorgeCommission.org.