

Economic Development

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area spans 85 miles of the Columbia River and includes 292,500 acres of diverse landscapes and 13 urban communities. Congress intended the National Scenic Area Act to support the economy of their communities in the National Scenic Area. One of the Act's two stated purposes is "to protect and support the economy of the Gorge by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development in a manner that is consistent with protection of scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources [Section 3(2)]."

The term "economic vitality", as used in this chapter, refers to a strong and diverse economy that contributes to an enhanced quality of life. As stated in the National Scenic Area Oregon and Washington Economic Vitality Plan: "The purpose of the National Scenic Area Oregon and Washington Economic Vitality Plan is to set forth a vision and strategies for enhancing the economy and quality of life of Oregon and Washington communities located within the National Scenic Area". The economic vitality of the National Scenic Area and the health of the scenic, natural, recreational, and cultural resources of the Columbia River Gorge are interdependent. The goals and policies in this chapter support the Gorge's economic sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, and tourism, while allowing new commercial uses on lands designated Rural Center, Commercial, and Commercial Recreation.

This chapter focuses on the General Management Area as the primary location for commercial development. The Special Management Area includes the region's most sensitive lands and resources. In the Act, Congress explicitly limited new development in the SMA, and directed that commercial development take place outside of SMA.

GMA PROVISIONS

GMA Goals

1. Protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by encouraging growth to occur in existing Urban Areas.
2. Protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by allowing future economic development in a manner that is consistent with the protection and enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge.

GMA Policies

1. The Gorge Commission shall consult with the States of Washington and Oregon in the States' updates to their coordinated Economic Vitality Plan developed pursuant to Section 11 of the National Scenic Area Act.

2. The Gorge Commission recognizes the importance of their participation in updates to the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as may be requested by Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, the bi-state economic development entity that coordinates the CEDS planning process.
3. The Gorge Commission shall support the economic development efforts of the States of Oregon and Washington pursuant to their economic development plans established under the National Scenic Area Act. The Gorge Commission will support and recognize the importance of the economic vitality efforts of regional and community organizations and the four treaty tribes, pursuant to their economic development strategic plans (Economic Vitality Plan) and subject to consistency with the purposes and standards of the Act and the Management Plan.
4. The Gorge Commission shall encourage the States of Washington and Oregon to coordinate their economic development efforts in order to maximize the benefits of federal dollars to all Gorge communities.
5. Agriculture and forest industries in the Columbia River Gorge shall be protected and supported by:
 - preventing fragmentation of the agricultural and forest land base,
 - minimizing interference with agriculture and forest practices from conflicting uses
 - enhancing agricultural lands for agricultural uses, forest lands for forest uses and forest lands for agricultural uses
 - being consistent with the strategies listed in the Economic Vitality Plan to provide ongoing support for these industries.
 - encouraging conservation efforts such as energy and water efficiency.
6. The economic vitality of the Gorge economy shall be enhanced by encouraging growth to occur in Urban Areas.
7. The Commission shall provide a clear process for urban area boundary revisions and shall coordinate with land use management agencies in the General Management Area (*cite reference in new 2020 Management Plan after Urban Area Boundary Policy adopted*).
8. The Gorge Commission shall allow commercial uses that are consistent with the guidelines of the land use designations contained within this document and consistent with the resource protections policies and guidelines.
9. The Gorge Commission shall support the economy of Gorge communities by integrating recreation development at appropriate rural locations with adequate infrastructure and coordinating with appropriate organizations.
10. The Gorge Commission shall acknowledge the importance of adequate infrastructure (such as water, sewer, roads, telecommunications, and broadband) to protect the health

and safety and to support the economic vitality of Gorge communities.

11. The Gorge Commission shall recognize the unique role of the ports in the National Scenic Area as providers of river transportation, recreation facilities, and as developers of infrastructure to support economic vitality. The Gorge Commission shall support their efforts to stimulate economic development by:
 - Assigning priority for revisions to Urban Area boundaries to those requests involving port properties or projects.
 - Relying upon existing state and federal wetlands regulations on the Columbia River and exempting urban waterfronts from wetland and riparian area guidelines in the Management Plan.
12. Prior to the approval of any grant under the states' plans for economic development projects pursuant to Section 11 of the National Scenic Area Act, the Gorge Commission shall certify that all activities undertaken under the grant are consistent with the purposes of the National Scenic Area Act, the Management Plan, and land use ordinances adopted pursuant to the National Scenic Area Act.

If such activities would take place wholly within an Urban Area, the Gorge Commission shall, after consultation with the appropriate city or county, certify that the activities are consistent with the National Scenic Area Act, the Management Plan, and land use ordinances. The Gorge Commission shall maintain this certification process so that it is simple, efficient, and speedy to not delay consistent activities. The details of economic development projects shall be confidential consistent with Gorge Commission rules on disclosure of public records.