

Summary of Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Planning in Gorge 2020: New Climate Change Chapter

Gorge 2020 is a three-year process to review, and revise as necessary, the **Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) Management Plan**. Given that the National Scenic Area Act predated widespread understanding of and planning for climate change, the current Management Plan does not specifically discuss the implications of climate change for protecting and enhancing the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources and economic vitality of the National Scenic Area. *The proposed, new Climate Change Chapter responds to the vital need to address climate change impacts directly within the Management Plan.*

Synopsis of New Climate Change Chapter

Climate change poses the most wide-reaching and urgent challenge facing resource management agencies today. The National Scenic Area is particularly vulnerable to the extremes of climate change impacts, including wildfire, given its topography and high winds. As a bi-state compact agency overseeing a complex patchwork of land ownership at the doorstep of one of the region's largest metropolitan areas, the Columbia River Gorge Commission has a unique responsibility to respond to the urgent threats of climate change. The proposed Climate Change Chapter, included in Part III: Action Program, outlines a **Framework for Action** to address climate change impacts to National Scenic Area resources through a suite of adaptation and mitigation actions.

The Climate Change chapter includes these topics:

- Most pressing and significant impacts of climate change in the National Scenic Area.
- Roles of the Gorge Commission in addressing climate change impacts both inside and outside of the Management Plan and as both a lead agency and partner.
- Framework for Action to address climate change impacts through an integrated climate **adaptation** and **mitigation** approach. Applies to the General Management Area (GMA) within the National Scenic Area.
- GMA Policies included in the Framework for Action, summarized below. This section includes preliminary text on stream and forest land protections. The Gorge Commission seeks public comment on this text and its implementation. For details, see Part III Chapter 1: Climate Change.

Adaptation: *Actions to manage the risks of climate change impacts*

Mitigation: *Actions to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases that cause climate change*

GMA Policies for Climate Adaptation and Mitigation

The Framework for Action: Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation includes seven GMA policies that provide high-level guidance to the Gorge Commission for climate change planning, implementation, and monitoring:

1. Develop and adopt a **Climate Change Action Plan** based on a local vulnerability assessment. Includes a target completion date, clear objectives, integrated monitoring, and these action planning topics:
 - **Streams and riparian areas** – protecting and enhancing aquatic and riparian systems. Includes expanding stream buffers, requiring vegetation enhancement, protecting cold water refuge habitats, and other approaches.
 - **Forest resources** – protecting forested lands for carbon storage. Includes siting and development standards, forest practices policies, land conversion policies, and other approaches.
 - **Wildfire** – protecting scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources from wildfire and reducing the risk of human-caused ignitions from new development and other causes. Includes siting and development standards, building design and materials standards, and other approaches.
 - **Climate change priorities of the four Columbia River treaty fishing tribes** – protecting culturally-important resources, including traditional First Foods, Treaty-reserved rights, and cultural sites.
 - **Agricultural lands** – protecting agricultural lands from conversion to other uses, except for conversion to forest land.
2. Incorporate climate change indicators as part of the Vital Sign Indicators (VSI) monitoring program. VSI will inform planning efforts, support decision-making, and guide adaptive management.
3. Evaluate changes to the condition of National Scenic Area resources based on new information and monitoring data to determine the need for Management Plan amendments.
4. Partner with local, state, and federal agencies; the four Columbia River treaty fishing tribes; non-governmental organizations; and diverse community residents and stakeholders to develop and implement climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and actions.
5. Develop and implement climate mitigation strategies, as consistent with the Gorge Commission's authorities and responsibilities, that limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance forest carbon storage, and encourage renewable energy and transportation solutions.
6. Support development and maintenance of safe, climate resilient infrastructure that strengthens economic and community resilience within the National Scenic Area.
7. Encourage and support voluntary efforts, consistent with the Management Plan, to improve climate change resilience through landscape health, stream enhancement, and other proactive measures.

What's Next?

Public comment will be accepted on the draft Management Plan from **June 1 to June 30, 2020**. The Gorge Commission and Forest Service will also host two informational Zoom video webinars:

- Proposed Changes to the Management Plan: **June 11, 2020 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**
- Public Comment Virtual Open House: **June 25, 2020 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

For more information on how to submit comments and to register for these webinars, visit the Gorge Commission website: www.gorgecommission.org.

After all comments are reviewed, staff will provide a summary to the Gorge Commission at their July 2020 Meeting. The final draft of the Management Plan will be presented for Commission approval at the August 2020 meeting. Following adoption of the revised Management Plan, the Gorge Commission will begin work on a Climate Change Action Plan.

Questions about this chapter? Contact Lisa Naas Cook – lisa.naascook@gorgecommission.org