

Economic Development Updates in Gorge 2020

Gorge 2020 is a three-year process to review, and revise as necessary, the **Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) Management Plan**. The Economic Development chapter of the Management Plan addresses one of the National Scenic Area Act's two stated purposes: "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)]."

How Updates Were Identified and Proposed

"Economic Vitality" was selected in 2018 as one of the four "deep dive" focus topics for the Gorge Commission to consider after comments were compiled from the public and agencies during the scoping phase of the Gorge 2020 Management Plan review process. Gorge Commission and Forest Service staff invited a group of local community leaders and members of the four Columbia River treaty fishing tribes with knowledge and experience in Gorge business, tourism and commerce, to participate in the Economic Vitality Work Group (EVWG). One of the tasks of the EVWG was to review and provide input on revisions needed to the Economic Development chapter. The EVWG met several times in 2018 and 2019 and provided recommendations for revisions to the chapter. Staff presented an initial revised draft chapter with EVWG suggested edits for Commission and public feedback at the August 13th, 2019 Commission meeting.

A public comment period was held December 1, 2019 to February 1, 2020 on the draft revisions to the Economic Development chapter. Comments were gathered from the public, the Commissioners, and participants in the EVWG during that period. On April 28, 2020, staff presented an updated draft chapter reflecting that input and asked for the Commission to either endorse the language as prepared by the staff or modify it to reflect its preferences. The Commission provided additional feedback on the draft chapter. This current draft Economic Development chapter is endorsed by the Gorge Commission.

Synopsis of Proposed Updates

Defining the term **economic vitality** as used in this chapter: "a strong and diverse economy that contributes to increased prosperity, job opportunities, and an enhanced quality of life."

Updating the list of the Gorge's primary economic sectors to include **high tech, health care, manufacturing** and **processing**.

Adding a statement recognizing the current and potential impacts of **climate change** on the region's economic sectors.

Adding more examples from the current Management Plan of how **agriculture** and **forest industries** are protected and supported:

- 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 uses;
- Encouraging conservation efforts such as renewable energy and water efficiency; and
- Allowing commercial uses on GMA agriculture lands that are incidental and subordinate to the agricultural use.

Updating the list of allowed **commercial uses** to reflect proposed updates to Part II Chapter 7: Land Use General Policies and Guidelines.

Adding a recognition of the importance of adequate, efficient and reliable **infrastructure** (such as water, sewer, roads, energy, telecommunications, and broadband).

Clarifying language about the Commission's role in the **certification of economic development proposals** for loans and grants in the National Scenic Area.

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.

Questions about this chapter? Contact Krystyna Wolniakowski – krystyna.wolniakowski@gorgecommission.org