

Recreation 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 CRGNSA Management Plan protects **recreation resources** and identifies goals, objectives, policies, and guidelines for resource protection and enhancement. In the GMA, this is for protection of resources, scenic appreciation and scenic travel corridors, resource-based recreation, river access and protection of treaty rights, interpretation and education, trails and pathways, transportation, and coordination. The SMA focuses on resource protection.

How Updates Were Identified and Proposed

Forest Service and Commission staff held four meetings with technical recreation experts in spring 2019 to evaluate scoping comments and assess the best available information to explore how the Management Plan could be improved.

In 2019 through 2020, staff convened a stakeholder meeting which included public and private land managers, state agencies and county planners. These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss both strengths and limitations within the existing plan, and to build on the comments and feedback from the Commission, public and stakeholders on draft revisions. A public meeting was held in October 2019 and featured a presentation on the overview of the process and recreation chapter, and received feedback on revision topics and proposed changes

Feedback from the public during scoping, discussions with technical experts and stakeholders, and Commission feedback provided the foundation for updates to this chapter. This discussion provided additional clarification and perspectives on the information presented in the draft chapter.

Synopsis of Proposed Updates

- Incorporating recreation settings into Recreation Intensity Classes (RICs). Currently the Management Plan provides clear and objective guidelines on the development and construction of Recreation Facilities. Development is controlled based on the RICs where the development is proposed. This includes factors managing the site's physical development. As recreation sites experience higher volumes of visitors, the recreational use at the site has the potential to affect protected resources. Applicable RICs should identify user experience standards for recreation managers to consider in the development of new sites to consider ongoing use and visitor experience during the development of the recreation site. The proposed updates would incorporate social, physical, managerial, and trail considerations into the GMA and expand and clarify those in the SMA.
- Include a policy statement supporting recreation managers utilizing recreation management practices to protect scenic, natural, or cultural resources from recreation use. This would provide support for recreation managers to take action during times when the use at a recreation site has the potential to impact protected resources.
- Update recreation goals to meet Commission and FS direction. This included revising language that encouraged expanding recreation supply to meet demand. Objectives, Policies and Guidelines were revised to reflect updated goals for recreation.
- Objectives and policies requiring consideration of equitable and accessible recreation for new development to encourage recreation access for all visitors.

Modifications to Definitions

- **Recreation Setting** – the tool for managing recreation development and opportunities based on the sites social, physical and managerial setting. Definitions for **Social Setting**, **Physical Setting** and **Managerial Setting** were also included.
- **Equitable Recreation** – Developments that are equally accessible and available to all people
- **Accessible** – In compliance with the Federal accessibility guidelines and standards.

Formatting / Editorial Changes

- Sign guidelines identified in the Recreation chapter were relocated and consolidated with other signage guidelines.
- Guidelines that repeat existing applicable guidelines in other chapters were removed to reduce redundancy.

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 Casey Gatz – casey.gatz@usda.gov