

Scenic 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 **scenic resources** and identifies goals, objectives, policies, and guidelines for resource protection and enhancement of the scenic resources by regulating viewsheds from Key Viewing Areas (KVAs), maintaining diversity in the scenic beauty and rural character of Gorge landscapes, establishing guidelines for scenic travel corridors, and regulating signage necessary for commerce, recreation, safety, and public information.

How Updates Were Identified and Proposed

The goal of the technical review is to update, clarify, and provide consistency within the language and tools of the chapter so the Management Plan can consistently protect, enhance, assess and monitor the existing natural resources and ensure efficiency in carrying out purposes of the Act.

Synopsis of Proposed Updates

Existing **Landscape Setting Descriptions** were refined and clarified by better depicting the scenic character within a broader ecological context to include more distinctive land use and cultural features, landform patterns, vegetation, and waterforms. Settings were moved within the chapter to better clarify they are relevant in both SMA and GMA. This will allow the Counties, Commission, and Forest Service to manage the scenic resources as the dynamic landscapes they represent and provides a visual vernacular planners and experts can use to help land owners successfully meet and maintain scenic visibility standards.

LANDSCAPE SETTINGS

Pastoral, Coniferous Woodland, Oak-Pine Woodland, Grassland, Rural Residential, Residential, Village, River Bottomland, Gorge Walls, Canyon and Wildlands, and developed settings

The definition of a **Key Viewing Area (KVA)** was refined to address scale and scope, so that implementers of understand they may include associated parking areas, rest areas, gathering spots, and trailheads. This is designed to make determinations of “visibility” from KVAs more comprehensive, accurate, defensible, and consistent. The KVA list now clarifies the KVA Historic Columbia River Highway includes the HCRH State Trail.

Two regulatory determinations used in implementation, **Visually Subordinate** and **Not Visually Evident Definition**, were linked to landscape setting character descriptions, to bring the plan up to date with the state of the science of scenery management. This will provide landowners with additional tools to ensure distinctive characteristics of a landscape setting remain intact. This can be carried out by repeating design elements such as form, line, color, and texture present in the attributes of the landscape setting. Language related to **Visual Management System** has been deleted or updated, to align with the current science, reflecting that it has been superseded by the newer **Scenery Management System**.

The concept of “**species common to the landscape**” has been updated to ecologically native species and relevant examples for each landscape will be provided in the accompanying handbook.

Modifications to Definitions

- **Topographic Visibility** – added to Plan to align with the accompanying Scenic Implementation Handbook.
- **Skyline** - clarified as the juncture of the topographic surface of the earth against the sky, for consistency in implementing.

Formatting / Editorial Changes

- Guidelines for **signs** consolidated from other sections in the Plan to make implementation easier.
- Guidelines for **structural development application grading plan** consolidated in Part II, Chapter 7 with the other Standards for Applications for Review Uses.
- **Mining and reclamation guidelines** were moved to Part II, Chapter 7 to clarify that they not solely connected to the Scenic Resource, but all of the resources protected in the Act.

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