

## Gorge 2020 Draft Management Plan- written public comments

### 1- STUDY THE CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN THE GORGE AS PART OF THE CHANGING DRY WEST

We need detailed, scientific climate change studies with new modeling of key water resources for the gorge and Pacific NW region. We know from EPA and other older studies that the modeling shows a hotter, dryer climate with increasing pressures on the available aquifers, casual streams, creeks and rivers. Much of the beauty of the scenic area relies on springs and seeps that feed native plants, insects, small and large animals.

We are facing a change in the amount and type of precipitation expected in the future; just rain wouldn't suffice in sections of the gorge and dry west. Falling annual snow pack levels which traditionally have been sources of water in the late summer early fall timeframes are like "canaries in the coal mines", telling us a key resource is shrinking. It warns of water shortages in the urban and non-urban areas in the gorge as well as increased numbers and severity of devastating fires in all areas of the gorge. Over all reduction in the amount of precipitation will limit the annual recharging of the aquifers and threaten the scenic, agricultural and urban values of the gorge. The water resource modeling as a result of climate changes should inform all areas of the Management Plan going forward.

### 2-URBAN BOUNDARIES

I would encourage holding fast to the decision made by the majority of the Gorge Commission to hold Urban Boundaries in place for now and abide by the definition of "minor" boundary expansions agreed to in that meeting.

There is always tension between development and non-development; between human habitation and open spaces for nature and humans. The National Scenic Area with key urban boundaries was put in place to hold open spaces for nature and for the nation to enjoy. The value of the open space is key to the scenic area and its draw to visitors. The value of smart development inside the current urban boundaries is key to providing amenities for visitors and great habitable urban spaces for smart businesses and families to work and live. Without those original decisions on urban boundaries, the length of the gorge would be full of trophy homes with views and condos stacked on all the ridgelines. The economic value of the gorge would be irreparably damaged and there would be no going back. A handful of people would be enriched to the detriment of those who grew up in the urban and rural areas of the gorge and still live there. This is a key tendency of humans, to develop and replace nature; the Scenic Act attempts to help us save some open space. I would encourage we hold boundaries for now.

### 3-REGIONAL BUILDABLE LAND INVENTORY & ANALYSIS IN LIGHT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

I encourage careful re-evaluation of any proposed urban boundary expansion pressure for the human impacts it has on water, land and natural resources as opposed to only concentrating on acres of urban land vs non urban land that was set up in 1986, or increasing a tax base in an urban area or a “need to grow” urban boundaries. I grew up in the gorge and understand fully the pressure to develop. I watched some mistakes occur as I grew up and the damage businesses like aluminum plants did longer term to orchards and the health and environment in exchange for a few years of jobs that relied on cheap hydroelectric power.

Develop and build models that show if and when smart urban growth is occurring now and in the future. Make sure water resource utilization and availability is built into those models. Let the data guide further discussions of boundary expansions when the Buildable Land Inventory (BLI) and analysis metrics show discussions are needed.

Provide regional resources to assist towns and counties do the work to build in water resource availability and use as a result of current and Future boundaries and climate change. Infrastructure to deliver services to a new development area is not good enough going forward. We need a regional water plan that speaks directly to the urban and agricultural pressures the gorge faces area by area, town by town. The needs will be slightly different from West to East because of the precipitation levels, water sources, geography-water holding capacity and modes of use in the various areas. Let’s be sure we have solid smart water and land use metrics in place for the gorge in light of changing precipitation levels going forward. If an urban area inside or outside the gorge in the dry West has good metrics in place, lets examine them for value and see how they might fit other areas.

Work with all impacted counties to share and inform the public of the models and metrics in basic language all can appreciate.

Work with the counties to inform the public of smart water and land use practices on an ongoing basis.

Work with the counties to build understanding of the value of smart water and land utilization in light of human and environmental pressures.

We are caretakers for a precious national resource many of us call home, let’s be smart about management while taking care of our urban zones.

Judy Zettergren  
Small GMA land owner  
Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area

