

To: Columbia River Gorge Commission

From: Katie Skakel, 1550 State Rd, Mosier, OR

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The Scenic Area Act gives the Gorge Commission the authority to amend the Management Plan at any time if it determines that conditions within the Scenic Area have changed significantly. In the face of increased tourism, gentrification, and climate instability, the Gorge Commission must be prepared to take a more proactive stance in order to maintain livability and preserve natural, cultural, and scenic resources. To be consistent with the Act, the Gorge Commission needs to recognize and shift to a new way of doing business. Our region deserves an agency that is a strategic leader; that leads with a very full public engagement process. Unfortunately, the Plan update process has lacked a robust public engagement process. I was aware of the update and received notice from Wasco County (not the Gorge Commission). I do not mean to lay blame on the Commission. Rather, I recognize that the Commission has had fiscal issues since its inception which have resulted in staff turnover. The Commission should investigate and pursue other more sustainable funding mechanisms rather than relying on state funding.

Respectfully, I'd like to suggest that the Gorge Commission consider a paradigm shift and use the Management Plan update as a catalyst for what the Commission's role could be - a Regional Planning Agency.

Specific comments on the proposed Management Plan update:

- I appreciate the addition of the Climate Change chapter but strongly urge the Commission to revise the proposed language to include Special Management Area (SMA) lands. The Climate Change Chapter reads:

“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.”

The NSA must address climate change on a regional level – not parcel out land areas. There has been significant change in the SMA that impacts the region as a whole and this needs to be included in a Climate Action Plan.

- Add a ‘Regional Transportation Plan’ requirement which includes a methodology for estimating vehicle miles travelled and greenhouse reductions throughout the NSA.

- Add language concerning groundwater protection and water quantity as they are significant issues for farmland protection and sustainability. Water related issues are impacted by climate change and have received significant federal dollars in both Hood River (surface water) and Wasco County (ground water).
- In addition to a Climate Action Plan consider a strategic and coordinated Resiliency Plan for the cities and counties in the Gorge using a framework that includes equity, resiliency, and climate protection.
- Counties and cities in the NSA need a regional strategy to effectively address areas of impediments for affordable housing which is closely linked with economic development in the NSA. The NSA has grown exponentially and will only continue to grow which threatens the resources and values that the ACT was created to protect.

In sum, I am eager to see the Gorge Commission take a more regional approach to its planning efforts. Let's help the Gorge as a region strategize and optimize community resiliency.

Thank you for considering my comments.