



Columbia River Gorge Commission
57 NE Wauna Avenue
White Salmon, Washington 98672

June 30, 2020

Dear Columbia River Gorge Commission,

The public comment opportunity for the Gorge 2020 Draft Management Plan edits were only brought to our attention a day before the public comment virtual meeting on June 25th and less than a week before all public comments were due. Not knowing about this public comment period until very last minute was experienced by many tourism entities in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Because tourism has a significant impact on the economies of the region (see attached economic impact report), and edits to the plan directly impact that industry, we would have hoped for better outreach to tourism industry partners and that an extended time frame had been made for key stakeholders to read, digest, and respond to the proposed edits.

From the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance's cursory review, there seem to be two key issues that impact tourism businesses within these edits: agritourism and overnight accommodations.

Agritourism is a growing industry in the Gorge and has become a fruitful investment for farms to diversify their income by finding ways for visitors to take part in the farm experience, through farm to table events, fruit stands, u-picks, and overnight experiences. Per page 356, we understand that all that is new is a requirement for a yearly report to be submitted to the reviewing agency by January 31st reporting on events held the previous year. This report shall include the number of events held, how many people were in attendance, and copies of catering contracts or other vendors used to verify. Permits for this work will not be renewed if there have been past violations, including failure to file. Our ask is that you communicate these changes clearly and in a timely fashion with farms that engage in agritourism events so they do not fall into the category of being unable to renew their permits because of failure to report.

As defined on page 347, Overnight Accommodations in rural areas that are associated with residential use, such as an Airbnb, are limited to no more than 90 room nights per year. I have heard from multiple stakeholders in the region who offer shared vacation rentals on their property who rely on that income to support their families. Limiting the opportunity to only 90 nights a year could have a significant impact on their livelihoods. Especially in the current pandemic circumstances, vacation rentals are anticipated to be the first overnight lodging to recover in the tourism industry, so having those available to guests in our region will help spur the local economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this plan and for considering our feedback.

Lizzie Keenan

Regional Coordinator

Mt. Hood and the Columbia River Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance