

Forest Service Role

Implementation of the Management Plan charters a federal presence with an expanded focus beyond traditional Forest Service roles. In addition to administration of the National Forest System (NFS) lands in the Scenic Area, the Forest Service will be actively involved as a partner and provider of technical support for state and local governments on non-federal lands.

The Forest Service has acquired, through purchase, exchange, or donation, approximately 34,000 acres of new federal land in the Scenic Area added to the existing national forests. In addition, approximately 40,000 acres of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Mt. Hood National Forest are inside the boundary of the Scenic Area. Additional federal lands will be added as the land acquisition program continues. Management and protection of these federal lands will be carried out by the National Scenic Area Forest Service administrative unit.

Management responsibilities on NFS lands will include administration of recreation facilities; design of resource protection, management, and enhancement strategies on federal lands; and provision of public information and services to visitors, users, and other interested parties.

The Forest Service intends to implement strategies designed to protect and integrate resource management. Additional opportunities, such as providing leadership in cultural resources, anadromous fisheries, oak woodland and wetlands management, will be incorporated into ongoing administration of the NFS lands in the Scenic Area.

The National Scenic Area Forest Service administrative unit will continue to administer the White Salmon and Klickitat Wild and Scenic Rivers, as designated in the Scenic Area Act and guided by the management plans prepared for these areas.

Monitoring and technical assistance responsibilities will continue after adoption of the Management Plan, and the Forest Service will maintain an active and visible role with the Gorge Commission, the six counties, and others involved in those activities. Forest Service plans call for staffing to provide assistance in specialized areas, including biology, forestry, botany, and landscape architecture.

Revisions and amendments to the Management Plan will require review and involvement of the Forest Service. The need for revisions should be tied closely to monitoring conclusions.

The Geographic Information System (GIS) has been used by the Forest Service to maintain inventory information, analyze data, and generate maps as necessary for the creation of the Management Plan. The GIS will be maintained and updated for use by the counties, Gorge Commission, and Forest Service.

to design, construct, operate, and maintain recreation facilities that are included in the recreation assessment for the Scenic Area. The Forest Service will participate in the development process, either directly by designing and building the facilities and administering the sites, or by facilitating partnerships with other providers and user groups.

Section 16 of the Scenic Area Act authorizes funds for continuing land acquisitions, and provides \$32.8 million for economic and recreation development programs. The Forest Service will administer the distribution of those funds, ensuring that the public interest is served and the purposes of the Scenic Area Act are fulfilled. Section 7(d) of the Scenic Area Act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture

The National Scenic Area Forest Service administrative unit is supervised by the National Scenic Area Manager, who reports to the Regional Forester and is responsible for local Scenic Area administration. The administrative office for this unit will be headquartered in Hood River, Oregon, to continue providing local contact and accessibility to public and agency partners in administering the Scenic Area.

LAND ADJUSTMENT

Landownership patterns within the Scenic Area are a complex pattern comprised of multiple ownerships and governmental jurisdictions. Intermingled ownerships greatly increase the probability of public trespass onto private land, private landowners encroaching on National Forest System land, and confusion by the public over where one ownership ends and a different one begins. There is also a high degree of urban interface within the Scenic Area that adds to management complexity and reduces management efficiency. Where mixed ownerships are found, access issues are usually more complicated and troublesome.

The Scenic Area contains approximately 292,615 acres, of which approximately 115,100 acres fall within the Special Management Area (SMA). Of the 115,100 acres, some 71,000 are comprised of National Forest System land. The remaining acreage is comprised of a multitude of ownerships including County, State, other Federal, Tribal and private.

The first purpose of the Scenic Area Act is "to protect and provide for the enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge" [Section 31]. Section 9 of the Scenic Area Act states that "The Secretary is authorized to acquire any lands or interests therein within the special management areas and the

Dodson/Warrendale Special Purchase Unit which the Secretary determines are needed to achieve the purposes of this Act."

The primary purpose of acquisition, then, is to protect or enhance the resources of the Scenic Area.

The acquisition philosophy of the Forest Service has been, and will generally continue to be, based on the "willing seller, willing buyer" concept, recognizing the Scenic Area Act's provisions and limitations on the use of eminent domain [Section 9].

Acquisitions of land and interests can occur through purchase, donation, or exchange. Acquisitions from states or political subdivisions may be made only through donations or exchange. Use of scenic or conservation easements is another method that can be used to protect or enhance a particular resource.

LAND ADJUSTMENT DIRECTION

Since passage of the Scenic Area Act, land acquisitions have occurred through 1) the timberland exchanges specifically directed in Section 9(d), 2) direct purchases of tracts fitting the "hardship" provision of Section 9(c), and 3) purchase of a number of key properties containing important scenic, cultural, or natural resources. There have also been some parcels acquired through donations. Most of the acquisitions have been from individuals who came to the Forest Service with an offer to sell.

The Scenic Area Act authorizes acquisition of any lands or interests therein within the special management areas and the Dodson/Warrendale Special Purchase Unit. In addition to the Scenic Area Act, there are other land adjustment authorities applicable to the Forest Service that allow acquisition of lands and interests outside of the two areas specified in the Scenic Area Act.

As of October 2003, the following funds have been expended and lands acquired:

Purchase:

16,803 acres acquired in fee

1,894 acres of partial interest acquisitions utilizing conservation easements

\$54,991,849 funds expended

Land Exchange:

16,600 acres acquired through exchange

The Management Plan identifies resource opportunities and needs that are important to fulfill the purposes of the Scenic Area Act. Those opportunities will be the focus of the land acquisition program. The Forest Service will take a proactive role in negotiating with landowners to ascertain the availability for sale of lands that enhance resources identified in the plan.

The following criteria will be used for determining federal land acquisition:

- High-priority public recreation sites.
- Sensitive lands such as wetlands, riparian areas, and floodplains.
- Lands supporting threatened or endangered species of fish, wildlife, or plants.
- Lands designated Open Space where significant resources have been identified, and where uses or development may endanger the resources.
- Highly scenic lands that are visible from key viewing areas.
- Lands with known concentrations of cultural resource sites or a high probability of cultural resource sites.
- Consolidation for increased efficiency in land management.
- Rights-of-way needed for public access.

In many cases, more than one of the above conditions may appear on a site. If that is the case, the priority of the site for acquisition could be higher. Priorities will be determined by the degree to which offered properties meet one or more of the criteria and resource or project needs, the timing of acquisition to meet such need, and the availability of properties for sale by willing sellers.

The value of landownership consolidation cannot be overstated. Where ownerships occur in large blocks, there is reduced trespass, encroachment, access issues, and public confusion over differing regulatory requirements that occur with different management agencies. Management costs and boundary maintenance costs are also reduced, and there is less of a need to authorize third party uses on National Forest System land.

PURCHASE

Real property purchases in the Scenic Area can be accomplished by one of two methods. The first method is known as “fee” acquisition, and consists of acquisition of the entire group of rights associated with a property. Most lands purchased will be acquired in fee to provide the greatest degree of resource protection, management flexibility, and public benefit. The second method of purchase is known as partial interest acquisition in which only a specified group of rights is acquired and legal title remains vested with the private landowner. These acquisitions are commonly known as conservation easements or scenic easements. Very limited use will be made of this second method due to the perpetual costs of administration of the easements and the lesser public benefits derived from only owning a limited set of rights to a property.

LAND EXCHANGE

Although the land exchange authority set forth in the Scenic Area Act was limited in both scope and duration, the Scenic Area retains the ability to conduct land exchanges through broad authority given to the Forest Service by laws such as the Weeks Law Act of March 1, 1911 and the General Exchange Act of March 20, 1922. The use of land exchanges to consolidate landownership is considered a potentially important tool in accomplishing the goals and objectives of the Scenic Area. This is particularly true where there are intermingled ownerships involving National Forest System land and land owned by a State or political subdivision thereof. In particular, serious consideration should be given to exchange proposals between the Forest Service and State Park agencies that would consolidate ownership around public recreation sites. Land exchanges within the Scenic Area will be considered only if the scenic, cultural, recreational, or natural resources of the Scenic Area are not compromised. Exchanges are discretionary and must be found to be in the public interest. Land exchanges are typically costly, complex, and require a substantial amount of time and resource commitment to be successfully completed. It is expected that use of land exchange as a tool to accomplish the purposes of the Act will remain limited.

RIGHTS-OF-WAY NEEDED FOR PUBLIC ACCESS

Rights-of-way acquisition objectives include acquiring road and trail rights-of-way that are adequate for the protection, administration, and utilization of the National Forest System, and also acquiring all interests needed for use of roads and trails to meet the long-term management and multiple use objectives of National Forest System lands as set out in the Scenic Area management plan and Forest land and resource management plans.

Mixed ownerships and a multitude of private roads combine to make providing full public access to lands within the Scenic Area a challenge. The Recreation Development Proposals list identifies trails, campgrounds, and other visitor and administrative "facilities" that will need planned access, either by trail or road. Public access to some lands acquired chiefly for scenic, natural or cultural reasons may continue to be limited. Specific access needs will be identified in the Scenic Area's annual program of work. Negotiating for purchase, exchange, or donation of easements will be an important acquisition tool. Access needs offer opportunities for partnerships with a wide range of cooperators, including landowners and user groups.

EFFECT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCES

The Scenic Area Act included several provisions for offsetting the potential reduction of local taxes as a result of federal land acquisition. Section 14(b) provides that acquired lands will be included in determining a county's share of timber receipts from National Forest System lands. Also, Section 14(c) provides for payments in lieu of taxes to a county for a certain period of time.

REVISION OF SMA BOUNDARIES

The Scenic Area Act [Section 4(c)] describes the following procedures for adjustments to SMA boundaries:

The Secretary, in consultation with the Commission, may make minor revisions in the boundaries of special management areas after publication of notice to that effect in the Federal Register and submission of notice thereof to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate and the Committees on Agriculture and Interior and Insular Affairs of the United States House of Representatives.

The Scenic Area Act also requires publishing the proposed boundary revision in the Federal Register.

To date, one minor revision has been made to the SMA boundary at Rowena. As the Scenic Area Act requires, the procedure followed in that case will be used in any other boundary revision that might be appropriate. Changes in the SMA boundary will be considered where such changes would help enhance and protect scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources. In addition, Congress changed about 310 acres at Chenoweth Table in Wasco County, and about 27 acres at "Pioneer Point" in Skamania County from GMA to SMA.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

A comprehensive program to monitor implementation of the Management Plan is essential to ensure that the purposes of the Scenic Area Act are achieved. Monitoring should emphasize two components:

1. Are the guidelines being met through appropriate implementation of the county ordinances and other requirements?
2. Are the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources being protected and enhanced through application of the management guidelines and implementation of enhancement and action program strategies?

Monitoring of county implementation actions is primarily the responsibility of the Gorge Commission, as required in Section 15 (a)(l) of the Scenic Area Act. However, in the SMA, where lands are being used or are in imminent danger of being used in a manner incompatible with the county ordinances, Section 9 gives the Forest Service the authority to acquire such lands without consent of the owner. Therefore, the Forest Service will also monitor actions in the SMA.

Counties will not have authority to implement all guidelines through county ordinances. In some cases, such as review of forest practices, the Forest Service will retain jurisdiction

to review uses or development and certify consistency with the Management Plan. Where this is the case, the Forest Service will monitor the results of these actions to ensure that required mitigation measures are implemented and the resources are protected.

Specific subjects and data elements for monitoring the resources are proposed below. A detailed monitoring program will be designed to include methodologies and show progress, problems, and proposed adjustments. Periodic reports are proposed to summarize the monitoring results and make recommendations to the Gorge Commission for any management changes that may be indicated by the findings.

SCENIC RESOURCES

The Management Plan goals for scenic resources call for protecting the scenic values on both the broad landscape setting level and the individual development level.

Much of the value of the Scenic Area is expressed in the opportunity to appreciate important vistas. The level of visibility affects the ability to appreciate the beauty of the landscape, especially the color and contrasting forms of distant features. Air pollution can impair the quality of the viewing experience, and should be monitored to ensure the protection of the clear views that everyone enjoys.

Aerial and oblique photographs will provide the monitoring record to assess changes to the scenery. A system of visual monitoring points was established in 1988. Twenty-seven sites in the Scenic Area were designated as monitoring points from which oblique panoramic photographs will be taken on a regular basis. This photography will be repeated every 5 to 10 years to measure changes in the landscape and identify problem areas.

In 1987 and 1988, complete sets of black and white and color vertical aerial photographs were taken for the entire Scenic Area. All or part of the Scenic Area can be re-photographed on a regular basis or as needed for a specific area. Analysis of the changes from a vertical perspective will supplement the panoramic photographic monitoring.

Monitoring of the scenic resources will address the following topics:

1. Effects of changes to the scenery that may have occurred from development, including cumulative effects.
2. Results of air quality visibility monitoring to assess changes to viewing ability.
3. Evaluation of county actions to assess the effectiveness of the county ordinances to protect scenic resources.
4. Effects on the scenic resource of enhancement activities performed during the preceding year.

CULTURAL RESOURCES AND TREATY RIGHTS

The Management Plan goal is to protect cultural resources from potential adverse effects. Site-specific inventory and analysis, consultation with Indian tribes, and design of mitigation measures are required to implement this goal. Expanded and strengthened law enforcement efforts will also be developed to reduce or minimize theft and vandalism of cultural resources.

Scenic Area inventories include identification of known cultural resources and will be expanded to include data on resources located during site inventories and analysis for new developments.

The monitoring program will address the following topics:

1. Effectiveness of the guidelines for protecting cultural resources, including county implementation.
2. Summary of cultural resources located during the previous year. Site-specific data will not be included in any report released to the public.
3. Effectiveness of law enforcement efforts for preventing vandalism of cultural resource sites.
4. Evaluation of Indian treaty right protection measures.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources in the Columbia River Gorge are varied and extensive. The Management Plan goal to protect and enhance those resources therefore involves a broad program with participation by numerous agencies focused on the many different elements in the environment.

Baseline information in the Scenic Area inventories is not, for the most part, site specific. More detailed information will be gathered over time, particularly for those natural resources most at risk. The monitoring program will be designed in conjunction with the many agencies with responsibility for managing and protecting the resources.

In addition, organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, and the Native Plant Society maintain data bases and expertise relative to various natural resources. Their assistance could help ensure a strong and effective monitoring program.

The monitoring program will address the following topics:

1. Effects on fish, wildlife and plant habitat and populations resulting from development actions, including cumulative effects.

2. Results of county actions to assess the effectiveness of the county ordinances in protecting natural resources.
3. Effects and results of natural resource enhancement activities.
4. Establishment of a wetlands and riparian area database for the entire Scenic Area.
5. Water quality.

OPEN SPACE

Open Space lands are important to protect the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Scenic Area. Monitoring will address the following topics:

1. Progress towards completion of Open Space management plans for designated areas.
2. Protection and enhancement projects or activities undertaken in Open Space areas.
3. Effectiveness of guidelines to protect Open Space resources.

FOREST AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Forest and agricultural lands are important elements of the economic base of the Scenic Area and provide a variety of other benefits, including scenic and natural resources.

Monitoring will address the following topics:

1. Compliance with the forest practices guidelines established for the Scenic Area, including mitigation for adverse effects on scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources.
2. The effectiveness of the forest and agricultural land use guidelines to ensure sustained productivity of forest and agricultural products.
3. The condition of forest lands in terms of health, disease, and protection from conversion.
4. Effectiveness of cooperative fire protection and management strategies.
5. Protection of wetlands and riparian areas from agricultural practices.
6. Effectiveness of county implementation of guidelines protecting agricultural and forest lands from conversion.

RECREATION

Recreation is a fast-changing component of the Scenic Area. Changes in visitation could affect both the quality of the recreation experience and the other resources. Since recreation development funds are limited, it is important to analyze the effectiveness of the development program and adjust it as necessary.

Monitoring will include the following topics:

1. Effectiveness of the guidelines to protect the recreation resource, including compliance with recreation intensity class guidelines.
2. Tabulation of annual recreation visitation to the Scenic Area.
3. Status report of annual recreation development and enhancement projects and funds expended in the Scenic Area.
4. Assessment of whether new recreation developments, such as the Scenic Area Conference Center and the Interpretive Center, have met recreation objectives, policies, and guidelines.
5. Monitoring use at the most popular sites, such as Multnomah Falls, to determine if strategies are required to avoid overuse and damage to resources.

LAND ACQUISITION

The monitoring report will track land adjustment activities. Monitoring will include the following topics:

1. The amount of land purchased or acquired through exchange or easements.
2. Funds expended annually and cumulatively for land acquisition in the Scenic Area.
3. Compliance with scenic and conservation easement conditions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Scenic Area Act provides a number of measures to enhance the economy of the Scenic Area. These measures include protection of agricultural and forest lands; provision of economic development funds; and funding for recreation, interpretation, and conference facilities. Monitoring will include the following topics:

1. Compilation of available data regarding employment by principal sectors of the Scenic Area economy.

2. Changes in recreation and tourism visitation.
3. Effectiveness of recreation and tourism marketing efforts.
4. Review of economic activities undertaken with federal Scenic Area funding, as reported in each state's annual report in accordance with Section 11(d) of the Scenic Area Act.

NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS DIRECTION

Section 8(a) of the Scenic Area Act provides the following direction for National Forest System lands in the SMA:

The Secretary shall administer Federal lands within the special management areas in accordance with this Act and other laws, rules and regulations applicable to the National Forest System.

Direction for management of National Forest System lands is provided in this Management Plan and in the *Land and Resource Management Plan* for Mt. Hood National Forest (1990) and *Land and Resource Management Plan* for Gifford Pinchot National Forest (1990), as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan. These National Forest management plans were completed according to the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and include alternative analysis and direction for resource management.

Special Management Area water resource buffer widths shall be applied to National Forest System lands in the General Management Area, and forest practices on National Forest System lands in the General Management Area shall comply with the Special Management Area forest practice guidelines. Projects undertaken on National Forest System lands must comply with direction in the Management Plan and the two National Forest management plans, as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan. The most protective standards of the National Scenic Area Management Plan or the respective Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan) shall apply to National Forest System lands.

Section 8(a) also provides that:

The construction of roads and the management, utilization and harvest of timber on Federal lands within the special management areas also shall be subject to Forest Service visual resource management guidelines.

The Mt. Hood and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest management plans and this Management Plan provide direction as to visual quality objectives for National Forest System lands.

According to the Mt. Hood and Gifford Pinchot National Forest management plans, as amended, regulated commercial timber harvesting would not occur on the National Forest System lands within the Scenic Area. Any timber harvesting on National Forest System lands that would occur shall meet the assigned visual quality objective.

Section 8(a) further directs that:

The Secretary shall utilize lands acquired through exchange in calculating the allowable sales quantity on the Gifford Pinchot and Mt. Hood National Forests.

This requirement will be addressed in subsequent revisions of the Mt. Hood and Gifford Pinchot National Forest management plans. Section 9(a) of the Scenic Area Act also requires that acquired lands be subject to the Scenic Area regulations in accordance with this Management Plan.

As provided for in Section 17(f)(l) of the Scenic Area Act, Forest Service actions taken for the development of this Management Plan, land acquisition, and interim management are exempt from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). However, Forest Service implementing actions taken subsequent to the adoption of this plan must comply with all laws and regulations applicable to National Forest System lands, including NEPA.