

COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Last revised: 11/7/2016

What is Plan Review?

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (NSA) was established by Congress in 1986. Covering 292,000 acres and 85 miles of the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington, the National Scenic Area is managed jointly by the Columbia River Gorge Commission and the U.S. Forest Service. The purpose of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act (Act) is to protect and enhance the natural, cultural, scenic and recreation resources of the NSA, and to protect and enhance the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area. In accordance with the Act, the Columbia River Gorge Commission and U.S. Forest Service adopted a National Scenic Area Management Plan in 1991 to guide land use in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Section 6(g) of the National Scenic Area Act states:

“No sooner than five years after adoption of the management plan, but at least every ten years, the Commission shall review the management plan to determine whether it should be revised. The Commission shall submit any revised management plan to the Secretary (of Agriculture) for review and concurrence, in accordance with the provisions of this section for adoption of the management plan.”

In 2001, ten years after adopting the original Management Plan, the Commission and U.S. Forest Service initiated their first plan review, and in 2004 adopted a number of revisions to the Plan. Although the next review was to begin in 2014, budget cuts and reduced staffing at the Gorge Commission delayed the launch of the next 10-year review. Although the staffing and budget have not recovered to 2001 levels, the Commission decided to launch the Management Plan review and scoping process in November 2016.

Plan review is divided into two basic components:

1) Review--which consists of a comprehensive scoping process to identify important issues facing the National Scenic Area and analyzing data relating to those issues, with the result being a decision as to whether the Management Plan needs changes to reflect those issues

2) Revision--which consists of the actual changes that should be made to the Management Plan to address those important issues.

Why are the Commission and the U.S. Forest Service both doing Plan Review?

The Scenic Area Act directed the Gorge Commission to develop guidelines for the general management area (GMA), and the U.S. Forest Service to develop guidelines for the Special Management Areas (SMAs). The Commission and U.S. Forest Service worked jointly to develop the original Management Plan in 1991 and to revise the Plan in 2004, and will work together in this current Plan Review. Don't worry whether you are making comments to the right agency. We just want to hear from you and we will sort out which agency will address your concerns.

What are the standards that the Management Plan must meet?

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act sets forth the following requirements that the Columbia Gorge Commission must satisfy when revising the Management Plan:

- (1) Protect and enhance agricultural lands for agricultural uses;
- (2) Protect and enhance forest lands for forest uses;
- (3) Protect and enhance open spaces;
- (4) Protect and enhance public and private recreation resources and educational and interpretive facilities and opportunities;
- (5) Prohibit major development actions in special management areas;
- (6) Prohibit industrial development in the scenic area outside urban areas;
- (7) Require that commercial development outside urban areas take place without adversely affecting the scenic, cultural, recreation, or natural resources of the scenic area;



- (8) Require that residential development outside urban areas take place without adversely affecting the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the scenic area; and
- (9) Require that mining operations, and the reclamation of mined lands, take place without adversely affecting the scenic, cultural, recreation and natural resources of the scenic area

To meet these standards, the current Management Plan draws from elements of Oregon and Washington land use planning and law, elements of federal forest management, and unique elements that the Commission and U.S. Forest Service developed specifically to address situations in the National Scenic Area.

What is the Schedule for Plan Review?

Starting in November 2016 and concluding in June 2017, the Commission with public input, will be reviewing the existing Columbia River Gorge Management Plan and discussing which issues will need to be addressed. After the Commission and the U.S. Forest Service have identified which issues should be addressed in the revision process, the Commission and its staff, together with the U.S. Forest Service, will analyze and make decisions on overall goals and objectives that need revision and then craft specific policy proposals to implement those goals and objectives. The Commission and U.S. Forest Service expect to finish any needed revisions and complete the plan by June 2019.

How Do I Get Information About Plan Review?

The Commission maintains an email mailing list for persons interested in the activities of the Commission. If you would like to be on our mailing list, please send a note to planreview@gorgecommission.org. The Commission will use the mailing list to alert the public about upcoming meetings, new reports and other documents, and opportunities for comment and other involvement.

The Commission staff is also constructing a page on our web site (www.gorgecommission.org) devoted to Plan Review, which will provide current information on upcoming meetings and key documents, and invite public comment on currently discussed and studied aspects of the Management Plan.



How Do I Get Involved?

Public input is integral to our process! The Management Plan review and revision process is designed around ensuring that stakeholders in the Gorge can express their concerns and provide input to the Commission and U.S. Forest Service. The following are opportunities for the public, agencies, stakeholders, tribes and interested entities to get involved:

- Scoping Meetings with Key Partner Agencies – December 2016-February 2017. The Commission and Forest Service will schedule public meetings with the county commissions, city councils, and community councils, and meetings of the Tribal Councils of the four Treaty Tribes in the National Scenic Area to discuss the Plan Review and hear specific concerns and issues for the Commission to consider when revising the Management Plan.
- Public Scoping Meetings – January-February 2017. The Commission and Forest Service will host public three scoping meetings. These meetings will be in the west, central, and east portions of the National Scenic Area. At these meetings, the Commission will ask to hear what issues it should be addressed in the Management Plan revision and why those issues are important.
- Staff Workshops – At midpoints in the phases of revising the Management Plan, the Commission staff will hold public workshops to discuss progress and to seek specific recommendations for resolving the issues that the Commission has decided to address. The staffs will have done some preliminary work and will share it with the workshop participants in advance of the workshops. These workshops will be roundtable in nature and may be multiple days each. The Commission will provide information about these workshops closer to their scheduled dates.
- Commission Workshops – In each phase, the Commission will host a midpoint and a final workshop. At the midpoints, the Commission will review the status of the staff work to date, invite public comment, and provide guidance. At the final workshops in each phase, the Commission will review the complete draft products from the staff, invite public comment and adopt final products. If necessary, the final workshops will extend to two or three Commission meetings to allow time for staff to respond to Commission guidance before the Commission approves the product for the phase. The Area Manager for the Forest Service will attend select midpoint and final workshops in each phases to participate in discussion and hear comments about special management area provisions.



- Commission Approval – The last step in revising the Management Plan is the Commission’s final approval of the revised Management Plan. The Commission will incorporate U.S. Forest Service’s revisions for the SMA.

How do I submit comments?

Anyone can submit written comments by email to planreview@gorgecommission.org or filling out a form on our website (www.gorgecommission.org). You may provide oral comments by attending a Commission meeting or a Plan Review workshop which will be scheduled in various communities within the Gorge from November 2016 through June 2017.

What Happens After the Commission Adopts the Revisions?

After the Gorge Commission adopts the revisions, it will send the revisions to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for concurrence that the revisions comply with the standards in the National Scenic Area Act. After concurrence, counties will have 270 days in which to enact the revisions into their land use ordinances.

We look forward to your engagement in Plan Review and your help in identifying revisions to improve the Management Plan. For more information about Plan Review, please contact:

Jessica Gist at the Columbia River Gorge Commission (509)493-3323 x 228
Robin Shoal at the U.S. Forest Service (541) 308-1700.

