

Collaborative Engagement Assessment

Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area



Assessment Report

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COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

Prepared for the Columbia River Gorge Commission
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the product of an assessment project undertaken by Oregon Consensus National Policy Center (OC) in partnership with the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (Ruckelshaus Center).¹ An assessment team from these two university centers for collaborative public policy conducted more than **80** interviews of individuals. These interviews represent a wide range of interests, parties, and stakeholders, including governmental entities and were selected in a deliberate effort to obtain information from as broad and inclusive a group as possible. The Assessment Team began with interviews of the Columbia River Gorge Commission (Commission). The interview protocol sought to develop information which could be used to assess the potential for collaborative approaches to the management of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (NSA). The interview process generated a great deal of information on issues that could be addressed in managing the NSA; the positions and interests of those who have a stake in, participate in, or are affected by management decisions and; the amount of support for, and potential for success in, collaborative approaches to managing these issues. The Assessment Team concludes that there is, indeed, potential for successful collaboration in the NSA, but pursuit of that potential must be deliberately informed and intentionally developed, and depends upon appropriate capacity, commitment and credibility. Key observations discussed in greater detail in this report are the following:

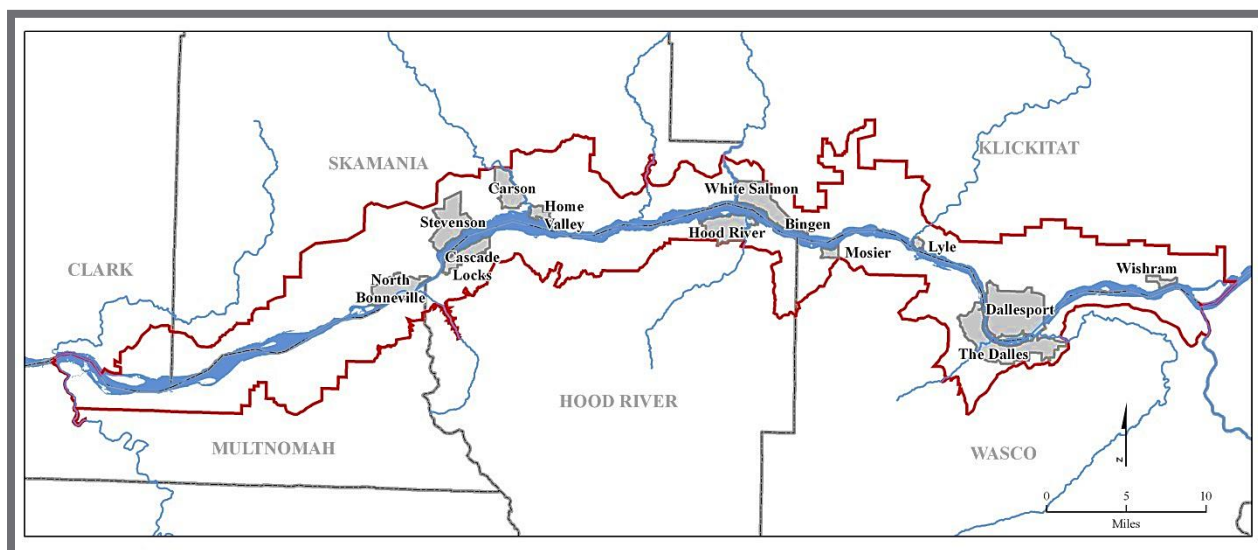
1. There is widely held dissatisfaction with the status quo.
 - a. Current regulatory, adversarial and political approaches to management issues are seen as unsatisfactory.
 - b. Most interviewees believe that progress on management issues is slow, overly influenced by a number of interests, and has resulted in a backlog of pending policy decisions.
 - c. Interviewees think funding and capacity gaps contribute to the current unsatisfactory status and need to be resolved.
2. There is a general perception that there are significant additional management issues on the horizon.
3. There is a general sense of cautious expectation created by the recent changes in membership on the Commission. External parties anticipate new energy and willingness to engage on the part of the new Commission.

¹ Oregon Consensus is a program of the National Policy Consensus Center in Portland State University's Hatfield School of Government. OC is the state's program to provide neutral conflict resolution and collaborative public policy making services to Oregon's state agencies, local governments and the public. The Ruckelshaus Center is a neutral resource for collaborative problem solving in the state of Washington and the Pacific Northwest. The Center is a joint effort of Washington State University and the University of Washington, providing expertise to improve the quality and availability of voluntary collaborative approaches for policy development and multi-party dispute resolution.

4. There is general approval for, and threshold commitment to, collaborative approaches to resolving existing and newly-developing issues.
 - a. However, there is concern about the Commission's capacity to successfully engage in such processes.
 - b. There are concerns over relative power, capacity, and willingness to engage.
 - c. Successfully addressing issues depends upon the Commissions' ability to convene and participate in a process designed to engage appropriate parties and to foster collaborative action.
 - d. Collaboration is seen by many interviewees as the last best hope for resolving the backlog of unresolved management issues as well as emergent issues.
5. The Assessment Team recommends a sequenced process of capacity building, engagement of necessary and appropriate parties, careful initiation of collaboration, and relationship building in order to enhance a culture of collaboration in the NSA. This developmental process should include:
 - a. Enhancement of internal Commission capacity through board development activities and the procurement of professional assistance.
 - b. Deliberate creation of a collaborative environment in the NSA by engaging those with interests in the NSA in a series of activities designed to build a common information base.
 - c. Strategic selection of issues for early collaborative action that will provide the maximum opportunity for successful collaborative outcomes and will reinforce the growing collaborative culture.
 - d. Transparent sequencing of activities and processes to provide a predictable timeline for collaborative action, with multiple mid-course assessment opportunities.

I. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The Columbia River Gorge region (Gorge) encompasses a wide array of assets, activities and residents. This includes small and large business interests such as agriculture and light industry, major transportation corridors and port facilities, and recreational and service sectors. The Gorge is home to a number of rural and urban communities, and holds special status for Native American tribes with treaty rights on the Columbia River. In addition, the Gorge boasts significant recreational assets including opportunities for hiking, biking, and a number of water-focused activities along with diverse flora and fauna in a setting of unique and spectacular scenery and vistas. These assets draw not only local residents, but visitors from both far and near, including many from nearby urban centers like Portland and Vancouver, and from Native American communities in the Northwest.



Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Map – Courtesy of the Columbia River Gorge Commission

In 1986, Congress created the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (NSA) to:

- Protect and enhance the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge; and
- Protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development consistent with resource protection (16 U.S.C. § 544a).

The NSA is categorized into three areas: Special Management Areas, General Management Areas and Urban Areas. The NSA is co-managed by six Gorge counties, 13 urban and rural communities, the states of Oregon and Washington, the US Forest Service, four Tribal Governments, and the Columbia River Gorge Commission (Commission).

The Commission is an interstate compact agency authorized by the NSA Act and by Washington and Oregon legislation. The Commission is funded equally by Oregon State and Washington State. The Commission has 13 members: three appointed by each of the governors of Oregon and

Washington, one appointed by each of the six Gorge counties, and one (non-voting) representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – U.S. Forest Service.

Oregon Consensus (OC) and the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (Ruckelshaus Center) (described collectively as the Assessment Team) were asked to conduct interviews with a wide range of individuals to assess opportunities for collaborative engagement among the many parties interested in the NSA and to identify key issues. This assessment report summarizes the opinions and perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders, and local, regional and Tribal government leaders interviewed by the Assessment Team. However, it does not necessarily reflect the overall position of any entity involved in this process. This report first presents an overview of the assessment process. That is followed by a summary of key issues that emerged from the confidential interviews. This information was used to develop a section of recommendations regarding the potential for collaborative action. This report concludes with a process development recommendation, and several appendices.

II. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Assessment Team conducted interviews and conversations with more than 80 individuals who have or represent an interest in, or are familiar with management of the NSA. Those interviewed included residents/landowners; federal, tribal state and local (city and county) government; economic development interests; educators; various nongovernmental organizations; and Gorge Commissioners. The Assessment Team conducted interviews in person and by telephone. A consistent set of interview questions were used for all interviews. A copy of the interview protocol and questions is provided in Appendix B.

The Assessment Team inquired of interviewees in four general areas: (1) their relationship to and interest in the Gorge, (2) their thoughts about the balance struck among the several purposes of the Act and the Commission's handling of that balance, (3) their sense of the key issues facing the Scenic Area (including barriers to addressing them), and (4) the potential for a collaborative process to address key issues.

The sections below highlight key issues and concerns raised in assessment interviews, along with the Assessment Team's analysis and recommendations for whether and how these issues might be addressed through a collaborative process.

III. INTERESTS, ISSUES AND POSITIONS

In this section *issues* refer to the subject matter of concern to interviewees and the organizations or stakeholders they represent, while *interests* refer to the reasons for which interviewees are concerned about those issues. Simply put, issues represent the *what* of identified concerns and interests represent the *why* of such concerns. The Assessment Team attempted to focus discussions during interviews in terms of issues and interests rather than in terms of positions, which are best described as preferred solutions or public postures on the underlying issues. To the extent interested parties can communicate in terms of interests rather than positions on given issues, the opportunities for collaborative resolution are greatly improved.

A. INTERESTS

The Assessment Team designed the assessment interviews to cover a wide variety of issues and interests. As might be expected, interviewees expressed diverse opinions and interests related to the Gorge. As stated previously, where interests are discussed, the Assessment Team is not referring to the opinions held by various interested parties or their positions on particular issues, but rather to the underlying forces or reasons that motivate their position on an issue – such as their need to make a living or their desire to preserve a scenic view. Thus, before discussing the diverse viewpoints on key issues in managing the Gorge, a description of the interests that underlie those viewpoints is given below.

The majority of interviewees' interests can be loosely aligned with one or more of the multiple related purposes of the NSA Act under which the Commission manages. Some interests are more closely connected to traditional economic activity like making a living or running a business, while others are more closely connected to enjoying and wanting to preserve the scenic, cultural, recreational, and/or natural resources of the region – either as a visitor or as a resident. However, despite the two-clause delineation in the NSA Act, there is not a clear dichotomy between economic interests and the four resource interests set forth above. For instance, recreational and tourist activities are an economic benefit for the Gorge. Interviewees whose interests are not directly linked with any particular one of these perspectives, notably those in the public sector, struggle to balance those interests in the course of their decision-making roles.

There is a great diversity of interests and, consequently, divergent opinions about the issues that arise in managing such a unique and diverse landscape and their possible solutions. Nevertheless, common viewpoints underlie many of the interviews. In particular, there is a consistent and underlying appreciation for what a unique and exceptional place the Gorge is among almost everyone interviewed. Few seem to question there is indeed a *balance* to be struck among the NSA Act's economic development and resource protection goals, that the uniqueness and special nature of the Gorge demand a unique and special approach to management. This common affinity for place and support for balance are important because these may serve as fundamental building blocks for a collaborative effort the Commission or others may want to undertake to address challenging issues.

B. KEY ISSUES

Interviewees identified what they see as key management issues, recognizing the Commission's role involve a number of goals focused on both resource protection and economic development. What follows is a summary of principal observations and findings from interviews, generally presented in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned. Frequency of reference should not be confused with importance or priority, nor should either frequency or priority necessarily influence the choice of initial collaborative activities. Issues for initial action should be selected based on other factors discussed below.

1. FUNDING

a. Gorge Commission Funding

Many interviewees feel that a lack of staff and resources limits the Commission's ability to:

- Address important issues and projects, such as Vital Signs Indicators and Management Plan updates.
- Review development proposals in a timely manner.
- Provide technical assistance or information about NSA requirements and urban area boundary amendments.
- Coordinate with stakeholders.
- Respond to and follow-up on Tribal concerns.



*Photo courtesy of the
Columbia River Gorge Commission*

Some interviewees think that without adequate Commission funding county approaches to implementing the NSA Act will be inconsistent, coordinated management capacity will be limited, and lawsuits will result. Others feel that cost efficiencies might be possible by trimming down regulations, and reprioritizing the Commission's work.

b. Federal Funding

Many interviewees stated that the NSA should receive direct federal funding because it is a federally created area. Many opine that the federal government has abandoned commitments to the NSA, in particular:

- Funding appropriated by the NSA Act to the Oregon and Washington Investment Boards is not fully allocated and limits the Boards' ability to carry out the economic development goals of the Act.
- Federal funding promised to the Discovery Center was not allocated and US Forest Service commitments to provide staffing are not fully met. Some feel the Discovery Center is a financial burden on Wasco County as a result.
- Promised funding for recreational projects was not provided and funding cuts to the US Forest Service and other agencies interfere with development of recreational facilities and service delivery.

c. Funding from Washington and Oregon

Some interviewees think that the NSA Act requirement that Oregon and Washington contribute equally to the Commission has led to "a race to the bottom," because if one state reduces funding, the other must follow. Some stated a belief that the Commission is a greater priority for Oregon than Washington. Others think the Commission budget is used as a bargaining chip during state legislative sessions.

2. BALANCING THE MULTIPLE PURPOSES OF THE GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

All interviewees agree the Gorge is a treasure, and that all purposes of the Gorge NSA Act—protecting scenic, natural, recreational, cultural and historical resources and economic health—are important. However, perceptions about the appropriate balance and relative importance of these goals differ substantially. In addition, a strong tendency exists to see resource protection goals and the economic sustainability goal as a competitive dichotomy, when the actual relationship between the several stated goals is perhaps more complex, with more opportunities for mutual-gains outcomes.

Whether viewing the NSA Act as creating two competing goals or a number of inter-related goals, many interviewees feel the purposes of the Act are intertwined, as articulated in the following examples of comments heard:

- If scenic quality is not preserved, local communities become unattractive to visitors.
- If local economies are not healthy, support for protecting natural resources is diminished.
- Recreational opportunities and tourism rely on natural, scenic and cultural resources, and can create impacts that negatively affect those resources.
- Resource protection increases tourism, which drives the local economy.
- Scenic qualities and recreational opportunities contribute to quality of life for local residents.
- NSA regulations protect land for agriculture that supports the local economy.
- Quality of life and recreation opportunities attract companies to the NSA (e.g. Google and Insitu), improving the economy.

Interviews revealed significant disagreement regarding the relative importance of the multiple purposes of the NSA Act. Most interviewees think that balancing among or between the several purposes is a key issue. Opinions about the appropriate balance differ for different areas of the Gorge, and from the perspective of various interests. Interviewees pointed out that emphasis or balance might be different for the different types of management areas. Also, the interviewees opinions differ considerably about whether balance among the purposes of the NSA Act is being achieved by the Commission, especially among those who saw the management balance as a simple two-goal dichotomy.

a. Emphasis on Resource Protection

Some interviewees reported that a strongly held belief exists among residents of communities in the NSA that the Commission is too focused on regulation and resource protection, putting little effort into achieving the NSA Act's purpose of supporting the economies of Gorge communities.

- However, some interviewees noted with approval recent efforts by the current and former Executive Directors to become more involved with community groups that are

working on economic development issues, such as the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District. They feel these efforts are important, would help to improve the public perception of the Commission, and should continue.

b. Emphasis on Economic Development

Interviewees who view the primary purpose of the NSA Act as protecting resources in the NSA feel Commission decisions over the last few years have focused primarily on economic development, with secondary consideration given to resource protection. They believe the Commission needs to recommit itself to what they see as the primary purpose of the Act.

3. URBAN AREA BOUNDARY AMENDMENTS

Interpretations differ about the intent of the NSA Act with respect to urban area boundary (UAB) amendments. Some interviewees referenced the wording of the Act, which speaks to supporting development within existing urban areas. Others feel the NSA Act was never intended to restrict the size of UABs to the lines that existed when the Act was adopted, and that such a limitation was not discussed when the Act was passed. Some stated the Commission's institutional memory on the intent of the Act to allow UAB amendments has been lost.

Some interviewees feel UAB amendments are a more pressing issue for Oregon jurisdictions than Washington jurisdictions. There is some confusion and concern about the relationship between UABs under the NSA Act and urban growth boundaries (UGBs) under Oregon land use laws.² There is a general sense that boundaries for urban areas on the Oregon side of the NSA are more restrictive than boundaries in Washington (some interviewees attribute this to the prior existence restrictive UGB boundaries). These interviewees stated that if Oregon jurisdictions are not allowed to expand their UABs, those communities are being penalized for having smaller boundaries initially.

a. Meaning of "Minor" Boundary Amendments

The NSA Act authorizes the Commission to approve minor boundary amendments supported by a majority of Commission members from each state. The Act, however, does not define "minor" amendments, and does not specify a mechanism for resolving larger boundary amendment issues. We heard the following interpretations of the meaning of a "minor" amendment:

"Minor" is determined by:

- Only a small number of acres being included in an urban area amendment.

² The NSA Act designated certain urban areas and their boundaries (urban area boundaries or UABs). At the time the Act was passed, and currently, urban areas in Oregon are also required to maintain urban growth boundaries (UGBs) under Oregon's statewide land use planning program. However, Washington communities designated as NSA urban areas are not required to establish or maintain similar urban growth area (UGA) boundaries under Washington's Growth Management Act.

- A small percent increase of the size of the urban area.
- An amendment that impacts only one property (e.g., an amendment to avoid a property being bisected by the scenic area boundary or to allow road access to a particular property).
- The overall loss of acres within the NSA boundary.
- The proportion of overall of urban area acres, as compared to the overall acreage of the NSA.
- The impact on the resources of the NSA.

b. Need for Urban Area Boundary Amendments

Interviewee responses differ substantially regarding the need for UAB amendments. The following reasons were presented as to why UAB amendments should be allowed:

- Cities need to grow in order to be sustainable and prosperous.
- Not allowing UAB amendment will inflate land values, limit affordable housing and discourage employers from moving to the area due to costs and the lack of affordable housing for employees.
- Oregon jurisdictions are constrained from expanding by the Columbia River, steep topography, NSA boundaries and agricultural land. Some Oregon cities are completely or partially surrounded by the NSA.
- If UABs cannot be expanded, cities will either be prevented from growing or will have to expand into prime agricultural land outside the NSA that is important for a healthy economy.
- Oregon's land use planning program requires cities to provide a 20-year supply of buildable residential, commercial and industrial lands based on population projections. If urban area boundary amendments are not allowed for jurisdictions that are partly or wholly surrounded by the NSA, these areas will not be able to meet this requirement
- Oregon's land use program requirements applicable to UGB amendments will be adequate to maintain compact urban area boundaries and provide for orderly, well-considered growth (so UAB amendments should be permitted so long as Oregon's requirements for UGB amendments have been met).

Other interviewees described a number of reasons why UAB amendments should be avoided, including:

- Allowing urban area boundaries to expand into the NSA to accommodate continuing growth will have cumulative impacts on the area.
- Alternative approaches to growth are available and should be explored.
 - Promote redevelopment, infill development, or increased densities within existing urban areas

- Look at the need for residential, industrial and commercial development on a regional basis, and consider alternative areas within the region for accommodating growth.

c. Significance of Request for Amendment of The Dalles Urban Area Boundary

For several years, The Dalles has been developing a justification for a UAB amendment to provide sufficient residential, industrial and commercial land. This impending request for a UAB amendment was frequently mentioned as a reason why resolving the UAB issue is a key concern.

Many Oregon interviewees reported that a UAB amendment to accommodate additional industrial and commercial land for The Dalles is particularly needed to support job creation and maintain the tax base. Some pointed out that there are limitations to development on existing industrially zoned lands in The Dalles due to the presence of wetlands and concerns about the impact of development to endangered species. The Dalles is surrounded by the NSA boundary and prime agricultural land. Some interviewees indicated the existing strong border between The Dalles UAB and agricultural lands needs to be maintained to protect the agricultural economy.

d. Context for Urban Area Boundary Amendments.

Interviewees who identified urban area boundary amendment as a key issue have different ideas about the overall context within which to address the issue.

- Some stated that urban area boundary amendments should be addressed within the broader context of an overall strategy for implementing both purposes of the NSA Act in a balanced way. Some believe the broader context would provide more opportunity for trade-offs and would increase the chances of reaching agreement on issues.
- Others believe urban area boundary amendments should be addressed as part of a broader discussion of an overall urban area framework that would include information about smart growth and best practices within urban areas (for example, how to encourage investment in urban areas and what challenges are associated with infill development) and how decisions on urban area boundaries impact NSA resources, adjacent areas, and the economy.
- Others perceive a sense of urgency about addressing urban area boundary amendments because of the pending request from The Dalles, and want to focus on this issue. These interviewees are concerned that addressing urban growth boundary amendments in a larger context will delay a decision on the issue.

4. MEASURING SUCCESS IN MEETING THE PURPOSES OF THE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA ACT

Some interviewees identified a need to develop ways to measure how successfully various purposes of the NSA Act are being met. There were two types of suggestions relating to measuring the success of the Act: (1) continuing the Vital Signs Indicators Project and (2)

developing a methodology for assessing cumulative impacts from development in the Gorge.

a. Vital Signs Indicators

Some interviewees identified continuation of the Vital Signs Indicators Project as a key issue. The Vital Signs Indicators Project is comprised of 51 measures developed to provide a means for evaluating the condition of scenic, natural, economic, cultural and recreational resources (SNECRs) in the NSA. They feel the indicators:

- Appropriately reflect the multi-goal character of the Act.
- Serve as an “accountability” scale.
- Provide information that can inform decisions on other important issues, such as decisions on future management plan amendments or monitoring efforts, or urban area boundary amendments.
- Are foundational and allow policy discussions to be conducted more objectively.

b. Assessing Cumulative Impacts

A few interviewees suggested there is a need to develop a methodology for assessing the cumulative effects of development in the NSA over the last 25 years, in order to determine if the Scenic Area Management Plan is fulfilling the Act’s purpose of protecting natural, scenic, cultural, recreational and economic resources. They believe the Vital Signs Indicators are not a substitute for a cumulative impacts assessment program.

5. IMPROVING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE GORGE COMMISSION

Several interviewees mentioned the historic lack of communication and engagement between the Commission and the public has played a role in contributing to frustration with the Commission. Consequently, some interviewees identified the need to improve public perception of the Commission as a key issue. They believe this is important in order to increase public support and the likelihood that the Commission receives adequate funding. While some interviewees noted that recent changes in the Commission and staff have resulted in positive shifts in the Commission’s engagement on issues, they remain concerned that lingering negative perceptions inhibit the current Commission’s ability to be effective and solve problems. While these interviewees generally agreed on the need for improvement in the public’s perception, opinions differ as to why public perception of the Commission was poor and how it could be improved.

a. Inflexibility

Some interviewees reported there is a widely held perception that the management regime for the NSA is inflexible and overly focused on regulation. Some stated that many individuals in the NSA are frustrated with the rules that limit what they can do with their property, and many have the perception that their requests to alter their property will be automatically denied. Some believe that the Commission should adopt a management approach that puts greater

emphasis into working with applicants to explain the basis for scenic area regulations and assisting applicants in meeting the regulations.

b. Inaction

Some interviewees believe public confidence in the Commission has been decreased by the Commission's perceived past failures to take action on important issues. One example cited by a number of interviewees was the Commission's inability to reach a decision on the meaning of "minor" for purposes of urban area boundary amendments and to improve the process for reviewing UAB amendment requests. Some of these interviewees also stated the absence of clear guidance to local governments on this issue was resulting in increased uncertainty, with related costs and time commitments to justify an amendment.



Photo courtesy of Peter Marbach

Interviewees have different perceptions about the underlying causes for this perceived inaction, including:

- Funding and staffing limitations.
- The absence of an overall vision of how to implement the NSA Act.
- Lack of agreement on a given issue within the Commission.
- Fear of lawsuits.
- Influence from interest groups opposed to UAB amendments.

c. Undue Influence

A possible systemic issue was raised by interviewees through a commonly-held concern that the Commission is subject to undue influence. The fact that there were significant differences as to the particular interests that used influence to receive undue benefit may indicate an issue with transparency more than an issue of specific influence. Some interviewees reported a perception that certain interests have an undue influence on the Commission, in particular environmental interests. Others had a perception that wealthy developers received more favorable treatment than other citizens.

d. Imbalanced Membership

Some interviewees noted that many residents of the NSA feel Commission membership is not well-balanced. They perceive the Commission is dominated by special interest groups that are focused solely on resource protection and regulation. Some interviewees feel appointments to the Commission by Oregon's governor contributed to this imbalance. Others feel Washington's appointments to the Commission were too focused on economic development, at the expense of resource protection.

6. ROLE OF THE GORGE COMMISSION

Interviewees revealed a fundamental disagreement about the role of the Commission in economic and natural resource issues. One reported viewpoint is the Commission should focus on being a convener for issues that need bi-state coordination (for example, opportunities for consolidating school districts or fire districts across state lines, or bi-state transportation projects). Another is the Commission should be a resource to communities, supporting projects in urban areas, helping communities obtain funding and navigate the regulatory process, and supporting downtown redevelopment efforts.



*Photo courtesy of the
Columbia River Gorge Commission*

Some interviewees expressed concern that the Commission has not taken a position on certain projects inside urban areas they feel would have significant impacts on areas outside the urban areas. Others pointed out that the Commission has no authority in urban areas and are concerned about the Commission extending (or appearing to extend) its authority, becoming involved in the scope, scale or density of development. Interviewees stated that public perception of the Commission would improve if people had a clearer idea of what projects the Commission would and would not get involved in and why.

The Assessment Team also observed a diversity of views among the commissioners as to their role. Some view themselves as delegates, who represent and NSA Act in the stead of their constituents. Others see themselves as trustees, with an obligation to act in pursuit of a more broadly-defined common good. This difference in perception has a potentially significant impact on the vision and actions of the Commission.

7. RECREATION AND TOURISM

Many interviewees noted that recreation and tourism are important drivers, although not the only drivers, of the Gorge economy. Several mentioned a need to increase opportunities for recreation, but said that it should be done in a sustainable way that protects natural resources. Some identified unauthorized and unplanned trail systems as a threat to both natural resource values and cultural values. Some feel that recreation in certain areas during high-use periods in the summer is reaching the point where it could negatively impact natural resources. Some said that dispersing additional recreation sites throughout the Gorge would protect popular sites that are being “loved to death.” Many interviewees believe increasing recreational tourism is consistent with the economic development purpose of the NSA Act and if well-planned and managed, would also be consistent with the goals of multiple resource protection.

Other comments related to the need for additional travel, camping, and lodging facilities for tourists. Some feel facilities should be confined to urban areas and others feel there should be opportunities for small developments along the scenic highway, similar to development that existed there in the 1920’s. Others feel there should be more flexibility for allowing existing historic structures to be repurposed as tourist facilities.

Interviewees identified a number of obstacles to increasing recreation opportunities in the NSA, including:

- A perception that some interests want to treat the Gorge as a wilderness, but there needs to be a better balance between recreation and natural resource protection.
- Funding to public agencies for recreation projects is inadequate. Public demand far exceeds the ability of public agencies to provide recreational opportunities and manage existing facilities.
- Procedures for siting recreational projects are overly complex and there needs to be a streamlined process for siting reasonable recreation projects.
- Opposition from residents near proposed recreational facilities.
- Some publicly-owned lands are not being made available for recreational use because of lack of funding or competing priorities.
- Tribes may oppose additional recreational opportunities or expansion of recreational impact areas if they perceive those uses will conflict with tribal interests, uses, cultural resources or treaty rights.

Some interviewees feel a comprehensive look at recreation is needed. They mentioned an ongoing effort, the Sustainable Recreation Strategy, as an example of an effort to understand the impacts of existing planned and unplanned recreation.

8. MANAGEMENT PLAN REVISIONS

Some interviewees mentioned the importance of preparing for an upcoming ten-year update to the Scenic Area Management plan. They noted that having information to assess whether the Management Plan is achieving the purposes of the NSA Act (i.e., the Vital Signs Indicators or a cumulative impact analysis) will be important to inform and guide development of these amendments.

Regarding the substance of the Management Plan, some stated the Plan deals predominantly with resource protection and should be amended to place more emphasis on supporting the economy of the Gorge. They believe there is a need to examine the regulations in the Management Plan and their impact on economic development. They also believe the Commission needs a staff person who understands economic development to gather information on economic development issues. Others think the Management Plan needs to have an increased focus on protection of natural resource values such as air quality, water quality and ecosystem management, and feel the Management Plan focused predominantly on scenic values.

9. TRIBAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

The opinions and reflections obtained through interviews of a number of tribal representatives are included throughout the discussion in this report. Since tribal governments in the Gorge have unique standing as dependent domestic sovereigns and strong treaty rights, this report specifically identifies some of the most strongly-held tribal perspectives. Many tribal

interviewees spoke about the importance of continued coordination between the Commission and tribes, and the need to integrate tribes more consistently into policy making, discussion of cultural issues, and local communities.

Some tribal interviewees stated tribal governments might have staff and resources that could be leveraged to help address issues in the NSA. Key tribal government issues identified during this assessment include tribal fishing access and “usual and accustomed” rights; destruction of tribal property, especially with regard to fishing equipment; the potential for coal transport through the NSA; and depletion of traditional tribal food crops. Strategic planning for housing for tribal members (including some who reside in the NSA) was identified as a potential upcoming effort for Tribal governments. The limited staff and funding availability for the Commission and potential collaborative efforts among the Commission and the tribes to seek funding to enable the Commission to better perform its role also came up in conversations with tribal leaders.

10. HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND COST

Interviewees cited the overall availability of housing and increasing cost of existing homes as a concern. A regional examination of housing issues was noted as an important need within the Gorge. Interviewees stated that the availability of housing is an increasing issue with respect to the sustainability of a growing high-tech manufacturing element in the Gorge.

11. OTHER ISSUES

a. Coal Trains

Pending proposals to transport coal by rail through the NSA were identified as an important issue that the Commission would eventually be asked to comment on. Some interviewees expressed concern about the impact of increased train through-traffic impairing access to tribal fishing sites, or public access to recreational sites. Some are concerned about the impacts of coal dust, and others feel that the impacts of coal dust were overstated.

b. Air Quality

Concerns about air quality were also raised. Some interviewees stated many of the impacts on air quality originate outside the NSA, which adds complexity to this issue, and urban smog, smoke, traffic fumes and the like are an issue of concern.

IV. INTEREST IN A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

A. VALUE OF COLLABORATION

Although almost universally unwilling to voluntarily identify any particular issue on which collaborative approach should be attempted first, most interviewees offered support for the concept of developing a collaborative process to address one or more of the key issues. Many believe that a collaborative process is the best option or the only feasible option, for addressing the key issues they identified. Interviewees offered a number of reasons for their belief that a

collaborative process would be valuable, including the following:

1. INFORMATION SHARING

Many interviewees believe that a collaborative process is a forum for civil, neutral information sharing and the development of mutually acceptable solutions. It could provide everyone with the same set of information, and help ensure that people's interests are recognized. This type of process can help move parties away from mutually exclusive positions that may not be entirely based on fact.

2. INTEREST SHARING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Interviewees also expressed the belief that a collaborative approach could help involved parties achieve a better understanding of each other's interests and improve communication and working relationships. Such activity could clear up miscommunications and build understanding. This could help divergent parties develop middle ground and find solutions that meet all parties' interests.

Some said there would be value in one or more collaborative processes for the reasons described above, even if consensus was not reached on issues; there was value in the relationship building and information sharing components of the process alone. Some pointed out there had never been a dialogue that all key parties participated in on key issues (e.g., an overall strategy for implementing both purposes of the Act).

As one interviewee suggested, there are 30 years of divergent and entrenched positions that might be beneficially impacted by a process to build the trust needed to solve complex problems by providing the parties with an opportunity to meet each other as equals, learn about each other's points of view, and get to know each other as people, not as opponents.

B. PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATUS QUO

A related consideration in determining whether a collaborative process might be helpful is to address what the potential participants perceive will be the likely outcome of either continuing with the status quo or resorting to existing, traditional approaches to changing the status quo. In some situations, there can be parties for whom the status quo is working well. They have incentive to try to keep anything from happening that might upset that status quo. This posture makes successful collaborations highly unlikely. In this situation, it seems that nearly all the parties and interests perceive the status quo as undesirable. The following bullets reflect some commonly heard predictions if no collaborative solutions are pursued:

- Issues won't be resolved. Things will continue as they are or deteriorate until there is a crisis.
- Issues will be resolved by the courts through litigation. There will be winners and losers.
- Congress may resolve the issues by amending or abolishing the NSA Act or Congress may not have the interest or ability to deal with the NSA Act and issues will continue to be decided by the courts.

- The Commission will make decisions on issues. Again, there will be winners and losers, and divisiveness among the parties will be reinforced.
- Inaction would lead to reduction or elimination of funding for the Commission.
- Inaction on urban area boundary amendment issues would block growth and communities would not be able to remain economically viable.

C. THE SHAPE OF A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Interviewees expressed a wide range of views about what a collaborative process might look like. Given the number of interests, issues, governments, parties and stakeholders in the NSA, some doubt whether the parties could reach agreement on which issues to address, or on the goals, objectives or desired outcomes of a collaborative process. Some believe a collaborative process would need to be focused and narrowly tailored to address specific issues. Others believed looking at issues at a higher level (for example, a vision for implementing both purposes of the Act) is a better approach.

Interviewees offered a number of suggestions regarding the design and characteristics of a collaborative process, including:

- The process must have a broad enough scope to capture the variety of important interests out there, but the group must be a reasonable size.
- The collaborative group should reflect a good balance between the Eastern and Western Gorge, and between Oregon and Washington.
- Individual participants in the group or process should be people who are open minded, willing to learn, willing to understand others' point of view, good/experienced at collaborating or willing to learn, and outcome focused.
- The group should seek individuals and organizations that can embrace a more regional approach and the overall good and avoid those constrained by more narrow interests.
- The process must provide clear ground rules that will help ensure a level playing field and a productive dialogue.
- There is a need for a strong facilitator.



*Photo courtesy of the
Columbia River Gorge Commission*

Some interviewees identified the Commission as the most likely convener, or host (as distinct from a process facilitator) for a collaborative process, because the Commission is responsible for administering the NSA Act, has regional authority, and has representation from all counties and both states. Some think it would be an expression of good faith by the Commission to be

the convener and would express the Commission's willingness to listen.

Others expressed concerns about the Commission as a convener. They stressed the importance of having the convener be someone that all parties perceive as being neutral and unbiased. Some believe there is a perception that the Commission is biased toward resource protection, while others believe there is a perception of bias toward economic development. These interviewees recommended against the Commission convening a collaborative process due to these perceptions of bias, feeling efforts would be needed to overcome the perception before the Commission could be accepted as a convener. Others feel that since the Commission is the decision-maker, they would control the discussion under any circumstance.

Some interviewees favor an approach where the Commission would co-convene with another entity or organization. Suggestions included having the Commission as a co-convener with the US Forest Service, since both have management responsibilities. However, some were concerned the US Forest Service would be biased toward resource protection. Another suggestion is to have the Commission as a co-convener with the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD). Some feel that if the issue was discussion about how to achieve implementation of the multiple purposes of the NSA Act, having MCEDD be a co-convener would help assure that economic issues would be addressed.

Other interviewees suggested the Oregon and Washington Governors' offices would make a good convening team. These interviewees suggested that having the Governor's offices co-convene would elevate the importance of the process, provide more motivation for parties to reach agreement, and give both states a better understanding about issues in the NSA. However, some interviewees feel that having the Governor's offices co-convene would undermine the Commission's authority.

D. CHALLENGES TO COLLABORATION

In response to a question in the interview protocol asking for perceived barriers to addressing key issues, interviewees articulated what they see as challenges to successful collaboration. Some of the more commonly mentioned challenges included:

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS

Collaboration on urban area boundary amendments is viewed as potentially attractive but impractical until the Commission can successfully articulate, through a collaborative effort or otherwise, an acceptable definition of "minor." Other interviewees believe that having the definition of "minor" established or confirmed through legal action is necessary before any meaningful action can be taken on UAB issues.

2. ADEQUATE RESOURCES

Some interviewees expressed concern about the lack of funding for a collaborative process, while others were concerned about availability of staff or time.

3. GOOD FAITH PARTICIPATION AND ALTERNATIVE FORUMS

Some interviewees are concerned that some parties would participate in a collaborative process, and then later file lawsuits if they did not like the result. Similarly, some interviewees think other parties may have no incentive to participate in a collaborative process because regulations work in their favor and they have sufficient influence over the Commission to ensure there is no change.

4. INFLEXIBLE POSITIONS

Some interviewees believe other parties will not be willing to seek compromise or consider the needs of others. They believe these parties have positions that are cast in concrete and will not be willing to listen to new information.

5. RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

Some interviewees noted there is long-standing suspicion and distrust among some parties that in some cases has lasted decade). These challenged relationships were called out as a potential barrier to a collaborative process.

6. UNDERSTANDING OF COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

Some interviewees are concerned other parties, or even the Commission may not be familiar with interest-based collaborative processes and the distinction between simple public involvement (public meeting and forums) and truly collaborative processes involving multiple interests attempting to reach acceptable outcomes. Some are concerned about the Commission's ability to participate in a collaborative process and maintain its independence as a decision-making body.

7. GORGE COMMISSION PARTICIPATION AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

Interviewees are concerned about how recommendations from a collaborative process would be used by the Commission. Some expressed concern that the Commission could initiate and participate in a collaborative process, but ultimately make a decision that was not consistent with the outcome of the process. Others questioned whether it would be appropriate for Commission members to participate in a collaborative process since they are the ultimate decision makers.

8. PARTICIPATION

Interviewees expressed a number of other concerns or caveats about participating in a collaborative process including:

- Potential participants will need to be convinced there could be a beneficial outcome and there is a reasonable chance for success, even if consisting only of laying a better foundation for working together rather than focusing on achieving a solution.
- There was a great deal of uncertainty about the relative time commitments involved

required for collaborative processes as opposed to traditional approaches.

- Participation would depend on what issues are discussed, how the issues are framed, and whether the issues are relevant to the organization's interest or mission.
- Participation would depend on how the results of the collaborative process would be used.

V. ANALYSIS

A. KEY FACTORS AND PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

In assessing whether a situation and the relevant interests are amenable to collaborative or consensus-based resolution, it is important to consider whether some key characteristics or factors are present that are necessary to make collaboration productive and successful. These key factors may be related to the nature and negotiability of the issues, the ability of the parties to engage in meaningful negotiation, or to outside conditions or circumstances that either support or undermine the ability to collaborate. Assessing the situation in terms of the issues, parties, and external factors that influence the negotiating environment helps to identify challenges to a collaborative resolution of the issues. Collaborative approaches are best pursued when the collaborators recognize these challenges and develop ways to address them to increase the likelihood of a successful collaborative effort through creative and thoughtful process design.

1. FACTORS THAT SUPPORT A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The factors listed below are among those that tend to support a successful collaborative, consensus-building or agreement-focused process.

a. Issues

- Participants can agree on a clear and manageable objective or set of objectives for the process.
- The issues are inherently amenable to negotiation (e.g., they do not arise from fundamental value differences among the participants).
- There is adequate data and information to support an informed discussion on the agreed upon issues (or there is the ability to develop that information in the course of the process).

b. Parties

- Identifiable parties are capable of representing the diversity of interests related to the issue.
- Parties that are essential to a complete resolution of the issue can and will come to the table, and they are not so many in number as to make a complex negotiation unmanageable.

- All parties are able to participate in good faith. They believe they are as likely to achieve through negotiation more than they would be able to achieve through more traditional alternative approaches, such as litigation, legislative, or political approaches. This attention to Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) is an essential calculation in collaborative processes, and can help potential participants identify reasons to participate and a preferred range of outcomes.
- The parties are motivated to negotiate because the issues are sufficiently important and the outcomes are sufficiently uncertain as to motivate meaningful participation.
- The parties have already or can build mutual trust and a working relationship.

c. Other Factors

- Adequate time and resources are available to support the process.
- There is an acceptable overall legal and political context for the process
- There is an effective mechanism for implementing a consensus agreement.

Below, is an assessment of these positive factors against the information received through the interview process.

2. THRESHOLD ISSUE

A threshold issue for the Commission will be deciding what to collaborate on – i.e., determining the subject matter or scope for a collaborative action. Despite a general commitment among the interviewees that collaboration could be a good thing, and an overall desire to change the status quo, interviewees and those they represent are diverse in their opinions about what the important issues are, what the goal of collaboration would be, and how to move forward with collaboration. The lack of critical mass for any one single issue as the priority for collaborative action makes identifying one issue or set of issues as the starting point for collaboration a difficult proposition. Narrowing in on an appropriate initial issue or set of issues and objectives as the potential subject matter for collaboration will require assessing whether the right parties are available and whether other factors related to the parties and the issues are present to support collaboration.

In this regard, the Commission could be instrumental in helping define the scope and objectives for collaboration. Developing a sequential approach to this process, beginning with small, narrowly-defined issues and using success on those to build capacity, credibility and a willingness to collaborate holds the most promise. The Commission might decide to proceed with initiation of actual collaboration using any of three possible approaches: 1) Select a relatively “easy” or “small” issue with limited contention, fewer parties, and/or a high likelihood of success, or 2) Specify a sub-component of a larger issue, such as preliminary fact-finding on the larger boundary adjustment issue, or 3) Begin with a general collaborative learning process which is focused on relationship building rather than outcomes. Any of these initial approaches can serve as springboards for additional, more robust, collaborative processes if they are successfully managed. Expectation management will be critical, and positive outcomes will be

more likely if the Commission seeks professional facilitation assistance.

3. COMMISSION LEADERSHIP AND PREPARATION

At this time, a key prerequisite to any collaborative approach to resolving management issues in the Gorge NSA that involves the broader community is that the Commission be collectively on-board and supportive of the effort. The Commission occupies a critical role – capable of defining the issues that are negotiable and instrumental in ensuring implementation of any outcomes from a successful collaboration – and must have the capacity to play that role effectively. The Commission will need to take some time to prepare and to build that internal capacity to lead a collaborative process. Furthermore, to effectively lead a collaborative effort, the Commission must be perceived by potential participants as having the capacity to lead that effort, so it will be crucial for the Commission to demonstrate that is prepared. This issue is discussed at greater length in the next section.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Assessment Team is in agreement that there *is potential* opportunity for collaborative action on issues regarding NSA management, but the Assessment Team also agrees that any collaborative process must be approached carefully and incrementally. There should be a start small and build iterative approach to collaboration. Rushing to a large scale, complex multi-issue, multi-party collaborative process would be premature and quite possibly counterproductive.

A. PREPARATION BY THE COMMISSION

There are important initial steps that need to be taken by the Commission and Commission staff before launching a collaborative process with interested parties, including substantial internal work on the part of the Commission. No matter what the eventual scope or subject of a collaborative process, the process will likely be launched with the intent of informing or advising the Commission on some aspect of its work in managing the Scenic Area. Indeed, the Commission has specifically asked for an assessment of the feasibility of a process to do just that. Consequently, before launching any such process, the Commission must be clear among its own membership as to exactly what it wants out of a collaborative process, and what it will do with the outcomes.

The Commission is a complex entity with significant new membership, and we recommend that it undertake some substantial preliminary work to ensure that it is collectively clear on (1) its mission and values, (2) what it wants from a collaborative effort with and among its stakeholders, (3) what type of process it is comfortable initiating, (4) its role in the process and in implementing any outcomes from that process, and 5) its willingness and authority to honor the outcomes of such a collaborative process. This is not an unusual situation for complex agencies, organizations, institutions, or even private entities that participate in a complex collaborative negotiation as a singular body.

1. TEAM BUILDING

The Commission is, in many respects, a very new group at the moment. Most of the current commissioners have been members for less than two years. The executive director is also new. Many interviewees pointed this out as a good thing and an opportunity for the Commission to take a fresh look at its mission and its work, and to build more open and constructive relationships with the diverse interests in the Gorge. That said, such a degree of turnover or renewal is a challenging situation for any organization and is even more challenging when the members of that organization are appointed by diverse political authorities and represent a large geographic and political landscape. In a dynamic situation such as this, team building can help build working relationships and a common understanding among the members about their individual roles, as well as their common mission.



*Photo courtesy of the
Columbia River Gorge Commission*

2. VISION AND SIDEBOARDS

In particular, the Commission needs to try to reach common understanding with respect to its vision and responsibilities for addressing the purposes of the NSA Act. Even if Commissioners are not of one mind on the entire landscape of issues, they should at least define those areas where they can act in concert. In addition, the Commission members should be clear about how they as individuals and the Commission as a whole communicate regarding the Commission's legal and political constraints. All members should be clear about what the Commission can and cannot do under the Act and, within those legal boundaries, what it is politically willing or unwilling to do as a Commission.

If the Commission does decide to move forward with some sort of process, it will also need to reach agreement on how it will participate. For example, who will represent the Commission in the collaborative process - the executive director, the Commission chair, a subcommittee of the Commission or some other form of representation?

3. COMMUNICATION AND COMMITMENT

The Commission will need to clearly communicate a vision and intent for a collaborative process to the parties. Perhaps most importantly, the Commission will need to decide for itself and commit clearly to the involved parties and the public exactly what it will do with the outcomes of the process. This will be crucial both to obtaining buy-in and to managing expectations about the process from the parties and the public. To create false expectation or later fail to follow through on a commitment to use the outcomes of the process could do damage to the Commission's ability to work with the involved parties. It bears noting that the Commission's prior efforts at outreach have been well received (e.g., listening sessions associated with the Future Forum and the Vital Signs Indicators); similar efforts in the future

might be helpful.

B. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SHARED INFORMATION

The sense of expectation and anticipation expressed by many interviewees regarding the new Commission creates an opportunity for the Commission to clearly embrace the role of convener, and that opportunity should be seized. Creating an environment where parties can share interests and concerns, learn about each other, and create a common base of information without significant risk is both needed and a mechanism for substantially improving the reputation of the Commission and the management environment in the Gorge. Processes or events, convened by the Commission, which allow the creation of collaborative learning experiences and build the habit of collaborative action among parties, will serve as the foundation for any collaborative approach to thorny management issues.

C. MOVING FORWARD WITH COLLABORATION

The Assessment Team's assessment from the interviews is that there are three reasonably achievable approaches which might be chosen to initiate a collaborative effort after the development of internal Commission capacity

- A consensus-based collaborative process involving multiple participants working towards consensus on one or more specific issues selected because they carry less risk to the parties.
- An iterative collaborative process more focused on developing relationships and sharing information, which does not depend on reaching consensus.
- Building a successful spirit of collaboration through a less formal process – public involvement, outreach efforts, forums or listening sessions or information-sharing sessions. Some favorably mentioned as an example the outreach efforts that the Commission conducted as part of a visioning process during development of the Vital Signs indicators.

From the issues identified by the interviews and discussed above, it should be possible to identify some that might be fruitful as starting points for initiation of collaboration (e.g., issues involving relatively clear issues and parties, without fundamental value differences among the interested stakeholders, and not confounded by unresolved legal issues). A capstone effort in the initial process of board preparation and capacity building could be the application of the factors identified in Section V above to these issues to develop a prioritization of issues for application of the iterative, sequenced, developmental process recommended.

D. PROCESS SUGGESTIONS

In order to improve the likelihood of success should the Gorge Commission choose to move forward with a collaborative process as outlined above, the Assessment Team offers the following recommendations and suggestions for implementing that process.

1. ITERATIVE PROCESS

The Assessment Team recommends an iterative process design that would include preparatory work and a strategy to explore and develop collaborative potential. Appendix C. contains a more detailed outline of the key components of such a process design. However, key elements of the approach should be highlighted:

- The Commission should begin with an expert-assisted board development process which allows the Commission members to work together on the development of an updated vision for the Commission and the NSA.
- That process should also provide the Commission an opportunity to learn about, acquire essential skills in, and practice the application of collaborative process principles. This capacity-building process should be capped by a prioritization of the issues facing the NSA and selection of one or more as an initial starting point for the engagement of external parties and stakeholders.
- The Commission should then deliberately and transparently adopt and implement a sequenced process of external engagement which begins with issues that are low-risk and processes designed to maximize inclusion and participation so as to build trust and familiarity with the process of collaboration across the NSA.
- The Commission must commit to support, honor, and implement the process and any solutions developed thereby.
- The board must be willing to invest the time, effort and funding necessary to develop capacity and process support before tackling more complex and challenging issues. At that point the Commission will have the necessary capacity and credibility and should advance to tackling those more challenging issues as well.

Making this investment in capacity, process and trust will maximize the opportunity to successfully engage collaboratively within the NSA, meet the expectations identified during this assessment, and resolve the pressing management issues which face the NSA.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Commission should recognize and capitalize on a unique situation. The new membership on the Commission has created a cautious optimism among external parties, interests and stakeholders. They are open to the Commission's creation of a new reputation and a new willingness to engage with others. They are dissatisfied with the status quo and pessimistic about the utility of conventional adversarial, regulatory or political approaches to resolving NSA management issues. This creates an opportunity for the Commission.

In order to maximize that opportunity, the Commission should first engage in internal development work, which should culminate in a clear sense of common purpose, stated vision, and credible willingness to engage. The Commission should then convene opportunities for shared development of a common base of information, and the development of a habit of collaboration which builds trust and commitment among the various interests to working together in situations of reduced risk. Given such work on the part of the Commission, there is

reason to believe that a collaborative process, if thoughtfully designed, convened, and facilitated, could be helpful in addressing issues related to management of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.



APPENDIX A

CONTACT/INTERVIEW LIST

The Ruckelshaus Center and Oregon Consensus contacted, interviewed, or otherwise obtained input from the following entities in preparing this report:

- 1000 Friends of Oregon
- City of Bingen
- City of Cascade Locks
- City of Hood River
- City of Mosier
- City of North Bonneville
- City of The Dalles
- City of Troutdale
- Columbia Land Trust
- Columbia Riverkeepers
- Columbia River Gorge Commission
- Columbia River Gorge Community College
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Gorge Landowners United
- Hood River County
- Hood River County Chamber of Commerce
- Hood River Valley Residents Committee
- Klickitat County
- Mid-Columbia Council of Governments
- Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
- Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
- Multnomah County

- Nez Perce Tribe
- NOAA Fisheries
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development
- Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation
- Oregon Department of Transportation Historic Highway Advisory Committee
- Oregon Governor's Office
- Oregon Investment Board
- Pacific States Marine Fisheries Council
- Port of Cascade Locks
- Port of Hood River
- Port of Klickitat
- Port of The Dalles
- Port of Skamania
- Skamania County
- Skamania County Chamber of Commerce
- Skamania County Economic Development Council
- The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce
- Underwood Community
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Forest Service
- Wasco County
- Washington Department of Commerce/Growth Management Division
- Washington Department of Ecology
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Governor's Office
- Washington State University Extension: Clark, Klickitat & Skamania Counties
- Washington Trails Association
- West Columbia Gorge Chamber of Commerce



- West Columbia Gorge Consortium
- Yakama Nation



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PREAMBLE:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. The Oregon Center and the William D. Ruckelshaus Center have been contracted by the Gorge Commission to undertake a project to assess the opportunities for collaborative engagement among the many stakeholders interested in the management of the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. We would like to hear your thoughts on the issues involved in management of the area, and the potential for collaborative approaches to those issues. Once our assessment project is finished, we will provide a report to the Commission which will furnish an overview of our findings and our recommendations regarding the possibility of collaborative action.

QUESTIONS:

1. Tell us about yourself (job title, roles/responsibilities) and your interest in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.
2. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Act was passed to: 1) protect, and enhance the scenic, cultural, recreational and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge and 2) protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development consistent with resource protection.
 - 2a What do you believe is the appropriate balance between these two purposes?
 - 2b Do you believe that the Gorge Commission's is currently supporting that balance?
3. Recognizing the Commission's need to both protect resources and support the economy of the Gorge, what are the key issues that need to be addressed
4. How would you rank the key issues you have identified in order of priority? Why?
 - 4a Are there barriers to addressing these key issues? If so, how might they be overcome?
- 5 In a typical collaborative process, stakeholders are brought together as a group to share perspectives, define issues, identify interests and common ground, generate options and processed for addressing issues and seek agreement.
 - 5a. Do you feel there is potential for using a collaborative process to address any of these issues?

6. If the issues that you've identified as highest priority are not resolved in a collaborative process, how do you think they could be resolved?
7. If at the conclusion of this assessment a recommendation were made to develop a collaborative process to address key issues, should the Gorge Commission convene the process? If yes, why? If no, who should convene the process?
 - 7a. Who would need to be involved?
 - 7b. Would you be willing to participate in a collaborative process? Why or why not?
8. Are there other people we should be talking with about these issues?
9. What other questions should we be asking as a part of these interviews?
10. Do you have any questions for us?



APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Stage 1: Pre-Collaboration Actions

In this stage, the objective is to identify the Commission's expectations of the collaborative process and to develop a preliminary roadmap of the process that reflects the Commission's intentions. This ensures Commission members are clear about the purpose and goals of the collaborative process and how it might be organized and implemented. At the end of this stage, a provisional statement of purpose is created to be used as a communication and outreach piece to engage potential participants in the collaborative process.

a. Identify an Issue for Process Initiation

Identify an issue that is manageable, and has the potential to benefit from a collaborative process that will encourage relationship building and common understanding, as discussed above. As many issues are interrelated, tackling one with a greater likelihood of success first can spark action toward resolving others and builds collaborative potential to address more contentious issues. Specific issues related to recreation and tourism might be appropriate starting points for a Commission shift towards collaborative approaches. A collaborative process to enhance coordination with tribal government might also be amenable to early inclusion.

b. Clarify the Purpose

Come to a common understanding or agreement about the scope and focus of any collaborative process the Commission might intend to initiate. At the outset, the Commission should confirm their understanding that there is a broad spectrum of collaborative processes from which they might choose. "Collaborative" processes range from simple *information-sharing processes* to somewhat more engaging *public involvement processes* to truly complex *consensus-based collaboration*. The Commission must be extremely clear both with itself and with the stakeholders and the public about just what sort of process they are willing to convene, how they will participate, and what they will do with the outcomes. If there is to be a true consensus-based process, all Commission members should be supportive of the process (or at least willing to live with the outcomes). The Commission must clarify the vision or purpose that motivates the proposed process, expectations regarding resources required, time commitments, and outputs, and expected outcomes before any move is made to initiate a public/stakeholder process.

Stage 2: Build Support

In this stage, the objective is to build support among participants who will be involved in the collaborative process or impacted by the issue. Building support involves conversations with potential participants to communicate the purpose of the collaborative process and will likely involve additional exploration and scoping of the issue to ensure understanding of participant

perspectives and interest in participating in a collaborative process on the specific issue.

a. Communication and Commitment

Along with seeking some degree of clarity within itself on its overall vision and its intent in terms of a collaborative process, the Commission will need to clearly communicate that vision and intent to the stakeholder community. Perhaps most importantly, the Commission will need to decide for itself – and commit clearly to the stakeholders and the public – exactly what it will do with the outcomes of the process. This will be crucial both to obtaining buy-in from the stakeholder community and to managing expectations about the process from stakeholders and the public. To create false expectation or later fail to follow through on a commitment to use the outcomes of the process could do irreparable damage to the Commission's ability to work with its stakeholders. It bears noting that the Commission's prior efforts at outreach have been well received (e.g., listening sessions associated with the Future Forum and the Vital Signs Indicators), and similar efforts in the future might be helpful.

At this stage, it is important to stay flexible. If support is not forthcoming, explore whether or not the purpose of collaborating on the issue is being communicated effectively, the timing is right, or an alternate communication strategy is needed. If there is not sufficient support, be prepared to table the issue and/or explore alternatives.

Stage 3: Process Design

If the decision is made to go forth with a collaborative process, then the goal of this stage is to create a process plan that includes vision and purpose, group structure, meeting design and frequency, process activities, outputs and possible outcomes, timelines, and funding and logistical needs. Developing this information involves creating many of the materials participants will review and revise during their first meetings, which aids in creating a collaborative vision amongst participants.

a. Identify Convener(s)

The convener's role is to identify and bring all key participants to the table. The convener may be one of the stakeholders, a local leader, a neutral third party, or a government entity or representative. At a minimum, a convener (individual or team) needs to be someone accepted by all parties as being neutral and unbiased. A convener is even more valuable when, through their involvement in the process, they lend authority, importance, prestige, or security to the perception of the process by the full range of stakeholder interests. In some cases the decision-making authority may be an appropriate convener if it is capable of bringing all the parties to the table in good faith and secure in their perception that the process will be unbiased. However, if the deciding authority is perceived as being biased toward one or another set of stakeholders or if there is a significant lack of trust in that authority as the potential convener, the authority may need to demonstrate the neutrality of the table by engaging either a separate convener or strong neutral third party facilitation – or both.

b. Third Party Neutral Facilitation

A "Facilitator" refers to a neutral third party who assists people to engage effectively to reach specific goals. Facilitation is an important component of successful collaborative processes.

Many of the agencies or entities that might otherwise be in a position to convene and facilitate have a significant stake or interest in the outcome and/or are responsible for its implementation. This makes it very difficult to provide a neutral forum for discussion in a context where there are already some challenged relationships and trust issues.

A third party neutral allows every organization to focus on representing its interests and not on managing the process. The third party neutral can also assist the parties having difficult discussions by helping them build trust and working relationships. For example, the neutral can help ensure that as the discussion moves forward, the parties stay focused on interests and do not slip into positional negotiation. A third party neutral is critical in making sure all participants have an equal opportunity to be heard. They neutral can also be very effective in propelling a process forward and in keeping diverse participants on task in situations where many of the participants already have busy schedules and demands on their time.

c. Draft Operating Principles

An important component of collaborative processes is the establishment of a set of working agreements or operating principles. Such a set of operating protocols describes the purpose and objectives of the group along with agreed-upon rules about how the members will work together. Provisions would include rules about membership and participation, communication protocols (to ensure transparency), the role of a third party neutral in managing the process, meeting logistics and ground rules, and the group's decision-making protocols. Operating principles should clearly articulate what the objective of the group is, what issues they will take on, and what sideboards there will be around the group's work. Developing draft operating principles for the participants to discuss at their first meeting can be done by the Commission, or by the neutral facilitator if being used.

Stage 4: Convene

It is important to convene the collaboration participants in a way that makes everyone feel welcomed, clarifies that each interest at the table has legitimacy and builds participant commitment of the process. An important first step is to ensure all participants support the decision and/or selection of a neutral facilitator, if used. This is the first agreement of the group and often an important indicator of the participants' ability to work together and reach an agreement. The initial meetings of the group will lay the foundation for the work ahead. A strong foundation depends on the group's commitment to the purpose, goals, and scope of the collaboration.

a. Introduce the Process and Participants

The first meeting should provide the opportunity for participants to discuss the intentions of the process, share information about the issues, explore needs and expectations, and begin building trust by agreeing on the purpose and operating principles. The first meeting should also provide time and activities for participants to get to know one another.

b. Agree on the Purpose

While the Commission has developed a statement of purpose of the collaborative process, such a statement may not be fully supported by the group. Reaching agreement on the purpose

helps ensure that participants understand what it is they are being asked to do. Participants often have different understandings about the nature of a collaborative effort. A lack of agreement on the purpose for convening the process may result in confusion about the scope of work for the group.

c. Agree on Operating Principles

This is an important tool for the group to help build trust in the process and in each other. While the Commission or neutral facilitator has developed a draft set of operating principles, participants should work together on revising and agreeing on how the group will operate – providing them with an opportunity to practice collaboration and consensus building before digging into the more challenging issues. Agreement on operating principles often takes time and should not be overlooked. This is another important indicator of the participants' ability to work together and reach an agreement. Operating principles generally should contain the following:

- Background on the issue
- Purpose of the group and ground rules
- Time frame for the process
- Role of participants in the process, attendance at meetings, designation of alternates, group leadership, how to add parties and how to proceed if parties leave the table
- Responsibilities of participants, including rules of behavior and respect of other participants;
- Decision-making process, including a definition
- Role and responsibilities of the convener
- Role and responsibilities of the neutral third party facilitator
- How meetings will be run, including agendas, meeting notes, and attendance by the public
- Confidentiality, admissibility and disclosure provisions
- Communication with the press and other media

Stage 5: Explore and Develop Options

The purpose of this stage is to ensure there is a comprehensive understanding among participants about the issue and the cause that led to convening a collaborative process. Participants come with their own perceptions (sometime conflicting) of the causes of an issue and the most effective ways to address it. Once participants arrive at a shared definition of the issue and have shared their perspectives, they can then begin problem solving and execution of whatever strategy they develop.

a. Understand the Issue

The first task is to identify the information needed to address the issue and how this

information will be obtained. Sometimes this simply involves educating each other about information that each member brings to the discussion. Other times information needs to be collected and technical analysis is needed. A process sometimes called “joint fact-finding” can be helpful in getting participants to reach agreement among disputing parties over the nature or interpretation of available information and avert “dueling data” debates later in the process.

b. Develop a Shared Definition of the Issue

Once participants’ are educated on the issue, they can develop a shared set of assumptions about the issue and a shared definition of the problem. This also involves discussing and identifying participants underlying needs or concerns they need to have satisfied in order to reach agreement.

c. Identify Options

At this step, participants work together to identify ways the problem statement can be addressed in a way that meets their interests. At the beginning, participants agree that all ideas presented do not commit the participants to anything and will not be criticized or evaluated - the purpose is to produce as many ideas as possible for solving the problem. Once options are listed, participants decide on the criteria against which the options will be evaluated and select an option to implement together.

Stage 6: Implement Plan of Action

The final stage is to develop a plan of action for implementing whatever decision the group develops. This includes addressing specific strategies, activities, a timeline, and responsible parties for carrying out actions – how outcomes will be achieved.