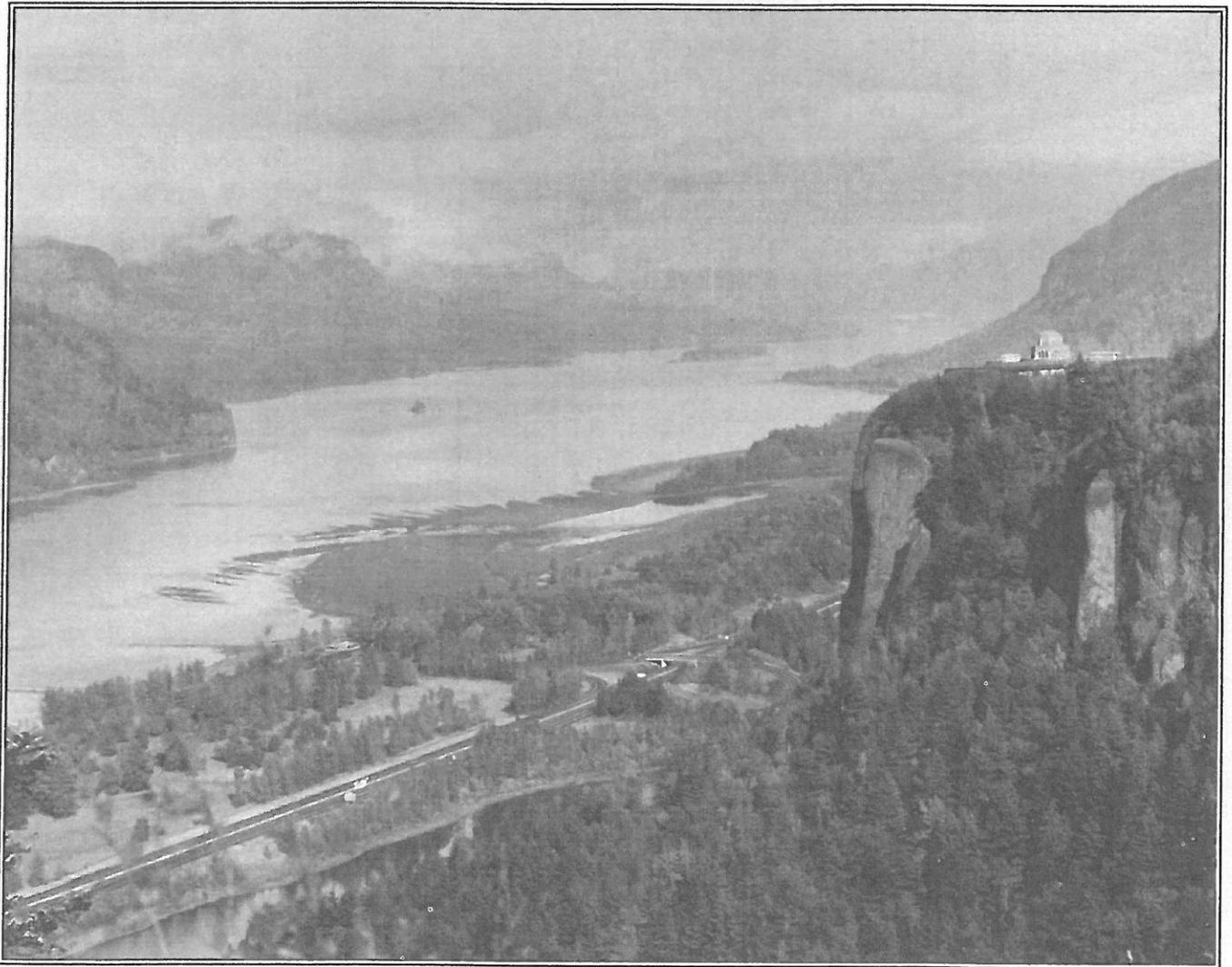


# MANAGEMENT PLAN

for the  
**Columbia River Gorge  
National Scenic Area**



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SEPTEMBER 1992

Management Plan  
for the  
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

Adopted by the  
Columbia River Gorge Commission  
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Concurrence by the  
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# Scenic Resources

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The Columbia Gorge is world renowned for its outstanding scenic beauty. The sea level chasm the Columbia River has cut through the Cascade Mountains, and the dramatic diverse landscapes it contains, create unparalleled grandeur. Within an hour's drive, one can witness towering cliffs and forests, orchards and farms, and sweeping grasslands. It is widely acknowledged that the need to protect the special scenic resources of the Gorge provided the major impetus for establishing the Scenic Area.

## SCENIC AREA ACT PROVISIONS

The Scenic Area Act's first purpose, as stated in Section 3(1), includes a mandate to protect and enhance scenic resources of the Columbia River Gorge. The Act directs the Gorge Commission to inventory the scenic resources of the Gorge and protect them by establishing guidelines and designating areas as open space. Open spaces, which the Gorge Commission is charged to protect and enhance [Section 6(d)], include: "scenic. . . areas; . . . outstanding scenic views and sites; . . . and Federal and State wild, scenic, and recreation waterways" [Section 2(1)].

## INVENTORIES AND STUDIES

Six maps were developed in the process of inventorying scenic resources. These maps are based on the Forest Service Visual Management System. They have been used to develop policies and guidelines that respond to the various levels of visual significance and sensitivity within the Gorge, and that highlight protection of landscapes seen by large numbers of people.

The first inventory map created, "Visual Attributes," identifies 12 predominant landscape types found in the Gorge, ranging from rural townscapes to cliffs.

The "Landscape Diversity" map gauges the variety of visual features in the landscape. A basic premise of the visual management system is that visual diversity is a key element of those landscapes people find most visually appealing and interesting. Much of the Gorge, with its steep landforms, forested slopes, waterfalls, pastoral areas, and rural townscapes, has outstanding visual diversity.

A "Seen Areas" map shows which areas are visible from key viewing areas. The key viewing areas are important public vantage points from which

Gorge landscapes are viewed. Scenic protection of lands seen from these vantage points has been emphasized since the inception of the Scenic Area planning process. The Management Plan continues this direction.

The "Landscape Significance" map combines the "Seen Areas" and "Landscape Diversity" maps, based on the concept that the most significant landscapes are those that are both visually diverse and seen from important viewpoints.

The "Visual Absorption Capability" map displays the relative ability of different Gorge landscapes to absorb change (through new development) without diminishing their scenic qualities. It is based primarily on the degree of slope and amount of vegetative cover.

"Landscape Sensitivity," the last of the six inventory maps, combines "Landscape Significance" with "Visual Absorption Capability," based on the assumption that the most visually sensitive lands are those that are both highly significant and most vulnerable to visual impacts from new development.

In addition to these inventory maps, a detailed visual inventory of the three major travel corridors in the Gorge (Interstate 84, Washington State Route 14, and the Historic Columbia River Highway) was undertaken. The "Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Corridor Visual Inventory," completed in April 1990, was an interagency study conducted by the Gorge Commission, the Forest Service, and the Departments of Transportation

of Oregon and Washington. It inventories different types of landscapes the corridors traverse, highly scenic features, discordant features and enhancement opportunities, places with opportunities for viewpoints and recreation sites, and other important visual aspects of the corridors' foregrounds. Specific recommendations developed during this inventory influenced the direction and substance of the "Scenic Travel Corridors" goals, objectives, and policies in the Management Plan. The landscape character types identified in the study were also an important source of information used in mapping and defining landscape settings. (Landscape settings definitions and mapping are described at the beginning of that section of this chapter.)

## KEY ISSUES

Several major issues had to be addressed in developing scenic resource protection provisions. One of the greatest challenges has been the need to establish guidelines to accommodate new development in a manner that protects Gorge scenic quality in the face of significant growth pressures for residences and related development. These pressures result from a number of factors, including substantial growth of the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area and the rapid development of the Gorge as the leading windsurfing area in North America, if not the world. The fact that the Gorge consists of many steep areas where development can be highly visible, combined with the desire for new residences with

panoramic views, poses major challenges. The need to develop provisions that address long-term, cumulative effects of new development on the character of existing landscapes is as crucial as measures addressing the impacts of individual developments.

Another issue involves meeting the Scenic Area Act's mandate to increase recreation river access while protecting scenic resources. Much of the shoreline area is both significant and sensitive from a scenic standpoint. This challenge required specific policies and guidelines that accommodate additional river-oriented recreation in a careful and sensitive manner.

## OVERVIEW OF SCENIC RESOURCES PROVISIONS

In response to these mandates and challenges, the Gorge Commission and Forest Service have developed specific programs to address protection of

scenic quality on lands seen from key viewing areas, maintenance of existing landscape settings, establishment of scenic travel corridors, and provisions for signage. The goals, objectives, policies and guidelines of this chapter provide a framework to guide actions of federal, state, and local agencies and private entities that may affect scenic resources of the Scenic Area. This chapter is divided into the following sections:

### GMA Provisions:

- Provisions For All New Development
- Key Viewing Areas
- Landscape Settings
- Scenic Travel Corridors
- Signs

### SMA Provisions:

This section includes SMA provisions for all scenic resources.

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## GMA PROVISIONS

### OVERALL SCENIC PROVISIONS

This section includes overall scenic provisions that apply to all new proposed developments in the GMA regardless of whether other specific provisions related to key viewing areas, landscape settings, scenic travel corridors, or signs apply. Basic site plan requirements for all new development are included in this section.

#### GMA Goal

Protect and enhance the scenic resources of the Scenic Area.

#### GMA Objectives

1. Encourage the establishment of programs offering incentives and other means of implementing scenic resource enhancement objectives and policies for existing

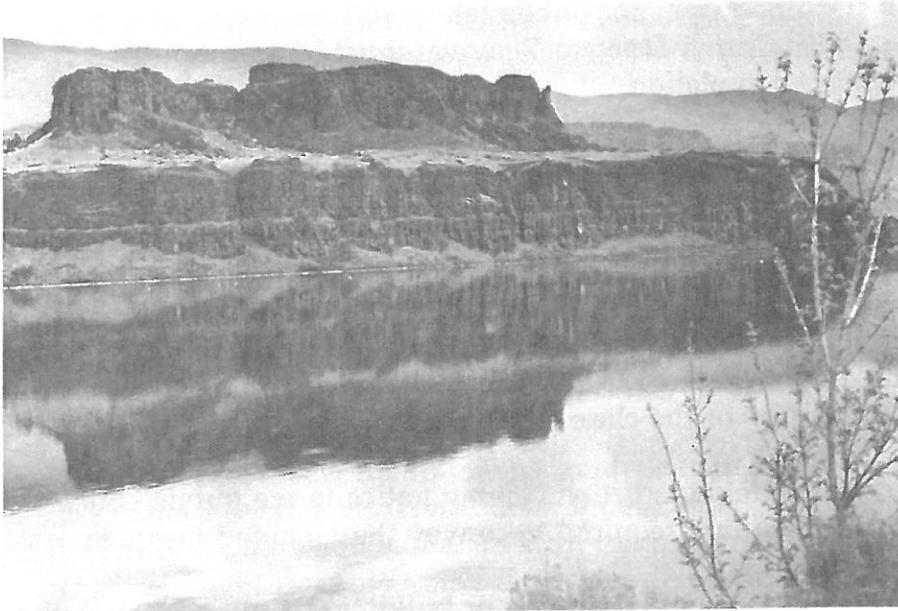
key viewing areas. The Gorge Commission shall initiate this objective by inventorying existing quarries visible from key viewing areas. Phase-out plans may require some additional quarrying for a limited time to best achieve contours that blend with surrounding landforms. Phase-out and reclamation plans for particular quarries shall include a specified time period for completion, not to exceed 5 years from the commencement of such plans.

3. Encourage mining reclamation methods and features that enhance wildlife habitat and wetlands, ameliorate visual impacts of existing quarries, and accelerate achievement of desired visual quality objectives.
4. Encourage use of planned unit developments, clustering, lot reconfiguration and consolidation, and other techniques to reduce visual impacts of new development on lands that are visible from key viewing areas and that possess high or critical visual sensitivity.
5. Encourage plantings of native species or species characteristic of the landscape setting to screen existing development that is not visually subordinate on lands that are visible from key viewing areas and that possess high or critical visual sensitivity.

### GMA Policies

1. Important public roads, parks, and other vantage points providing public scenic viewing opportunities shall be designated as key viewing areas, as identified in the glossary of the Management Plan.
2. Except for new production and/or development of mineral resources, new development on lands seen from key viewing areas shall be visually subordinate to its landscape setting. This policy shall not apply to specified developed settings that are not visually sensitive (as identified in the "Landscape Settings" section), rehabilitation or modifications to significant historic structures, shorelines on the main stem of the Columbia River that adjoin Urban Areas, or other developments expressly exempted from this requirement in this chapter.
3. New utility transmission lines, transportation and communication facilities, docks and piers, and repairs and maintenance of existing lines, roads and facilities shall be visually subordinate as seen from key viewing areas to the maximum extent practicable.
4. New buildings shall be prohibited on steeply sloping lands visible from key viewing areas.
5. Proposed projects involving substantial grading on moderately to steeply sloping lands visible from key viewing areas shall include a grading plan addressing

- C. Signs with moving elements.
- D. Portable or wheeled signs, or signs on parked vehicles where the sign is the primary use of the vehicle.



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*Horsethief Butte  
and Horsethief  
Lake in  
Washington*

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## SMA PROVISIONS

### SMA Goal

Protect and enhance scenic resources.

### SMA Policies

1. The following landscape settings shall be protected:

A. Pastoral

(Same land use, landform, and vegetation descriptions as GMA)

B. Coniferous Woodland

(Same land use, landform, and vegetation descriptions as GMA)

C. Oak-Pine Woodland

(Same land use, landform, and vegetation descriptions as GMA)

D. Residential

(Same land use, landform, and vegetation descriptions as GMA)

E. River Bottomlands

(Same land use, landform, and vegetation descriptions as GMA)

F. Gorge Walls, Canyonlands, and Wildlands

(Same land use, landform, and vegetation descriptions as GMA)

2. The existing appearance and character of the identified landscape setting shall be maintained.
3. New developments and land uses shall maintain the visual character of the landscape setting in which the development is located.
4. The Forest Service Visual Quality Objective (VQO) system shall be used to evaluate all new developments and land uses. Each landscape setting will be assigned visual quality objectives.
5. For National Forest lands, the VQOs identified in the Mt. Hood and Gifford Pinchot National Forest Plans shall be used.
6. Where appropriate, scenic easements or fee purchase by the federal government shall be used to protect and perpetuate certain landscape settings.
7. Size, scale, shape, color, texture, siting, height, building materials, lighting, or other visual aspects shall be regulated to protect the scenic resources.
8. New developments and land uses occurring in the foreground of key viewing areas shall protect scenic values.
9. Rehabilitation or modification of historic structures on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places may be exempt from the above policies if such modification is in compliance with the National Register of Historic Places guidelines.
10. The Historic Columbia River Highway, Washington State Route 14, Interstate 84, the Larch Mountain Road, the Wyeth Bench Road, and Klickitat County Road 1230 shall be managed as scenic routes.

### SMA Guidelines

1. New developments and land uses shall be evaluated to ensure that scenic resources are not adversely affected, including cumulative effects, based on visibility from key viewing areas.
2. All new developments and land uses immediately adjacent to scenic routes shall be in conformance with state or county scenic route guidelines.
3. New land uses or developments shall comply with the following design guidelines:
  - A. Pastoral: Pastoral areas shall retain the overall appearance of an agricultural landscape.
    - (1) New developments and forest practices shall meet the VQO of partial retention.
    - (2) The use of plant species common to the landscape setting shall be encouraged. The use of plant species in rows, as commonly found in the landscape setting, is encouraged.
    - (3) The exteriors of structures shall be earth-tone colors that will result in low contrast with the surrounding landscape.
    - (4) The exteriors of structures may be white (except for the roof) only in the Mt. Pleasant and Dodson-Warrendale areas where other white structures are evident in the setting.
  - B. Coniferous Woodland and Oak-Pine Woodland: Woodland areas shall retain the overall appearance of a woodland landscape. New developments and land uses shall retain the overall visual character of the natural appearance of the Coniferous Woodland and Oak-Pine Woodland landscape.
    - (1) New developments and land uses in lands designated Federal Forest or Open Space (see land use designations in Part II) shall meet the VQO of retention; all other land use designations shall meet the VQO of partial retention as seen from key viewing areas.
    - (2) Forest practices on National Forest lands included in the Mt. Hood and Gifford Pinchot National Forest Plans shall meet the VQO identified for those lands in those plans.
    - (3) Buildings shall be encouraged to have a vertical overall appearance in the Coniferous Woodland landscape setting and a horizontal overall appearance in the Oak-Pine Woodland landscape setting.

- (4) Use of plant species native to the landscape setting shall be encouraged. Where non-native plants are used, they shall have native-appearing characteristics.
- (5) The exteriors of structures in the Coniferous Woodland landscape setting shall be dark earth-tone colors that will result in low contrast with the surrounding landscape as seen from key viewing areas.
- (6) The exteriors of structures in the Oak-Pine Woodland landscape setting shall be earth-tone colors that will result in low contrast with the surrounding landscape as seen from key viewing areas.

C. Residential: The Residential setting is characterized by concentrations of dwellings.

- (1) New developments and land uses shall meet the VQO of partial retention.
- (2) At Rowena Dell, new buildings shall have a rustic appearance and use natural materials and earth-tone colors.
- (3) At Latourell Falls, new buildings shall have an appearance consistent with the predominant historical architectural style.
- (4) Use of plant species native to the landscape setting shall be encouraged. Where non-native plants are used, they shall have native-appearing characteristics.

D. River Bottomlands: River Bottomlands shall retain the overall visual character of a floodplain and associated islands.

- (1) New developments and land uses shall meet the VQO of partial retention, except in areas designated Open Space, where they shall meet the VQO of retention.
- (2) Buildings shall have an overall horizontal appearance in areas with little tree cover.
- (3) Use of plant species native to the landscape setting shall be encouraged. Where non-native plants are used, they shall have native-appearing characteristics.
- (4) The exteriors of structures shall be earth-tone or water-tone colors that will result in low contrast with the surrounding landscape.

- E. Gorge Walls, Canyonlands, and Wildlands: New developments and land uses shall retain the overall visual character of the natural-appearing landscape.
- (1) New developments and land uses shall meet the VQO of retention as seen from key viewing areas.
  - (2) Structures, including signs, shall have a rustic appearance, use nonreflective materials, have low contrast with the surrounding landscape, and be of a Cascadian architectural style.
  - (3) Temporary roads shall be promptly closed and revegetated.
  - (4) New utilities shall be below ground surface, where feasible.
  - (5) Use of plant species non-native to the Columbia River Gorge shall not be allowed.
  - (6) The exteriors of structures shall be dark earth tones that will result in the structure having low contrast with the surrounding landscape.
4. For forest practices, the following guidelines shall apply:
- A. Forest practices shall meet the design guidelines and VQO for the landscape setting designated for the management area.
  - B. Not more than 16 percent of each total ownership within a viewshed shall be in created openings at any one time. The viewshed boundaries shall be delineated by the Forest Service.
  - C. Size, shape, and dispersal of created openings shall maintain the natural patterns in the landscape.
  - D. The maximum size of any created opening shall be 15 acres. In the foreground of key viewing areas, the maximum size of created openings shall be 5 acres.
  - E. Clearcutting shall not be used as a harvest practice on land designated Federal Forest.
  - F. Created openings shall not create a break or opening in the vegetation in the skyline as viewed from a key viewing area.
  - G. Created openings shall be dispersed to maintain at least 400 feet of closed canopy between openings. Closed canopy shall be at least 20 feet tall.
5. The following design standards shall be applied to all new land uses and developments, regardless of location or landscape setting:

- A. Proposed developments shall not protrude above the line of a bluff, cliff, or skyline as seen from key viewing areas.
- B. Size, scale, shape, color, texture, siting, height, building materials, lighting, or other features of a proposed structure shall be visually subordinate in the landscape and have low contrast in the landscape.
- C. Colors shall be used in a manner so that developments are visually subordinate to the natural and cultural patterns in the landscape setting. Colors for structures and signs should be slightly darker than the surrounding background.
- D. Structure height shall remain below the average tree canopy height of the natural vegetation adjacent to the structure, except if it has been demonstrated that meeting this guideline is not feasible considering the function of the structure.
- E. Proposed developments or land use shall be aligned, designed, and sited to fit the natural topography and to take advantage of vegetation and landform screening, and to minimize visible grading or other modifications of landforms, vegetation cover, and natural characteristics.
- F. Any exterior lighting shall be sited, limited in intensity, shielded, or hooded in a manner that prevents lights from being highly visible from key viewing areas and from noticeably contrasting with the surrounding landscape setting, except for road lighting necessary for safety purposes.
- G. Seasonal lighting displays shall be permitted on a temporary basis, not to exceed 3 months.
- H. Reflectivity of structures and site improvements shall be minimized.
- I. Right-of-way vegetation shall be managed to minimize visual impacts of clearing and other vegetation removal as seen from key viewing areas. Roadside vegetation management (vista clearing, planting, etc.) should enhance views from the highway.
- J. Screening from key viewing areas shall be encouraged for existing and required for new road maintenance, warehouse, and stockpile areas.

## REFERENCES

The following sources of information were used in mapping landscape settings.

- National Scenic Area land use inventory, 1988. Cascade Planning Associates.
- Aerial photography (color and black and white), 1988. U.S. Forest Service, National Scenic Area Office.
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- Visual monitoring station photographs, 1988-89. U.S. Forest Service, National Scenic Area Office.
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- Landscape character units, as identified in the *National Scenic Area Corridor Visual Inventory*, 1990. U.S. Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge Commission, Oregon Department of Transportation, and Washington Department of Transportation.
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- U.S. Geological Survey topographic quadrangle maps, various dates.
- Preliminary land use designations, General Management Area, 1989. Columbia River Gorge Commission.