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To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Plan Amendment Request for Disaster Recovery Comment
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Suggested changes to the Gorge Commission rules

1. Replacement of like with like:

In a situation of catastrophic house loss due to an act of God, such as a fire, there should be, in it's most straightforward simple form, an easy and quick system for those planning a straightforward replication of the preexisting, previously county and Gorge approved use and structures. That is what was previously approved, what was legally there, and without the fire....what would still, legally, be there.

There should be exceptions for safety....fire-resistant roofing, siding, and non-combustible zones around the structures. Damaged or inadequate septic systems should be upgraded. But as long as there is no substantial change in the size, use, or outward appearance of the damage/destroyed structures, there should be a simple 1-2 page form which reviews exactly what was there and what size, appearance, and use of the proposed replacements will be. If it was approved, legal and acceptable when it was put there.....is should not be made illegal for no reason other than an "act of God". All of the various entities can be covered with a few directed questions and sworn to by the landowner. If within the framework of "no substantial change from preapproved and preexisting" then approval for replication should be simple, quick, and cheap. Any substantial changes would trigger a complete review such as now exists.

If this system existed on June 12th, my exact replica replacement manufactured home would be being sited on the exact same foundation right now.

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My house was in the Tooley Terraces subdivision. That subdivision was county approved in 1967. The lots are small and the housing density is high. My neighbor's house to the south is/was 18 feet from my house. To the north the distance is/was 20 feet. My house setback from Simonelli Rd was 28 feet. The house directly across the street was only 50 feet from my house. My house existed on a paved road, with a community water supply. I could only control my own property and was at the mercy of what my neighbors chose to do. By any measure EXCEPT incorporation this is an "urban" existence in a dense housing community that preexisted Scenic status, and has not grown further (due partly because of scenic restrictions). The destroyed ratio of houses was very high in Tooley Terraces BECAUSE of 1) the density/proximity of the houses and 2) the encouragement and protective status of big trees and vegetation for "screening" purposes.

I am lucky in that I had fire insurance for the house and "contents", but the financial loss is still huge. I am assuming that for my new home fire insurance will be either

prohibitively expensive or completely unavailable. I believe that the money and energy to replace my lost house and unreimbursed contents is my one and only chance to get this right and create a fire-protected environment. Another burnout and I am out. I am fully supportive of the fire-protecting regulations and efforts to keep the housing visually unobtrusive, but even a 50' combustible free distance, when we are talking about Ponderosa pines outside my property line that are 100 feet tall, is not the best insurance. During the previous fire 7 years ago the field below me (towards the river) burned (and is likely to burn again) up to my property line. The flames and radiant heat from those flames based 100' way caused damage up to the level of my house. I am now encouraged (and have planned) to plant trees for "screening purposes" on the narrow 10' strip below my 50' non-combustible zone. Those trees will be less than 10' from a burning field and will certainly be ignited by the next fire.....and that much closer to my house. My compliance with the color mandates, which I freely support, has my replacement house looking, as did the previous house, like a brown turd. In the 30 years of my dark brown (replacing PINK) house I was never able to see it from the road on the Washington side of the river. When I am (and will be) fully compliant with the color mandates when does the additional "screening mandate" add little to the visual issue at the increased risk of another catastrophe?

Giving an "urban" classification to those few unincorporated subdivisions pre-existing the Scenic designation while adhering to the color mandates would allow more flexibility to fire preventive vegetation control for those living in the small enclaves of vulnerable, dense housing without expanding urban boundaries or allowing new development. The scenic impact would be somewhere between arguable to minimal

3) Deterrent fire control measures

From roughly the Hood River bridge going east to The Dalles the vegetation and topography of the Gorge changes dramatically from dense forest to, east of The Dalles, treeless desert. In that shift to low, sparse vegetation and exposed underlying basalt formations, the burn-path of a wildfire gets channeled into narrow paths of fuel (dry vegetation) between ridges of solid basalt. The June 11th fire was driven by an unusually strong westerly wind, a constant 40 mph with gusts above 50. There have been previously 3 fires in my memory of the hillside from Rowena Crest east to the golf course.....without invading the Tooley Terrace area. Previous fires had stopped on a basaltic ridge descending the slope on the west edge of the Terrace....and a predictable back wind swirl creating a common and predictable easterly wind through the Terrace to that ridge . Seven years ago that fire that burned to my property line invaded the Terrace area by circling over and around the high ridge and down along the west strip between the golf course and the the basalt through a narrow 20 foot wide strip along the old highway that was unappreciated as a possibility and undefended. The June fire with the unusual wind appears to me to have burned through straight from the west, but in two narrow strips similarly channeled between otherwise unburnable rock.

My point is that zone east of the Hood River bridge to The Dalles represents a high fire zone because of the meteorological transition to desert....and global warming/drought. But on both sides of the river the exposure of basalt formations actually creates burn channels in some places quite narrow and predictable that could, with study, be managed in such a way as to become fire breaks instead of fuses to the next patch of fuel. I believe that with further study of the last two fires'

burn paths the vulnerability of the Terrace area, as an example, could be greatly reduced. This is, I suspect generally true on both sides of the river between Hood River and The Dalles.

This is not the Gorge Commission's responsibility, but actually doing something preventive to the landscape to reduce the vulnerability to long running continuous burn overs would directly fall into the lap of the Gorge Commission. There is now archaeological evidence to suggest that with the warming after the last ice age, and possibly all ice ages, the cycle creates a progressive drought resulting in a major burn over cycle of much of the West vastly altering the landscape.....and what we are seeing throughout the West right now is completely consistent with that.....plus man made global warming. The hillside from Rowena Crest to the golf course in terms of trees has been and will be more visibly altered by the last two fires. This may be the desert encroaching, burn by burn. Keeping the Gorge looking like the Gorge we know and have known and "letting nature take it's own path" may be mutually exclusive.

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