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First name: Erin

Last name: Riccio

Organization: Gonzaga University Environmental Studies Parks, Forest, and Wildlife Class

Title: Student

Comments:

Erin Riccio, Emily Struzenburg, Ryan Pinza, Ben Stout, Skylar Tomisato

Students of Gonzaga University

Our main concern with the plan favored by the Forest Service (Alternative P) is that this plan does not propose enough wilderness. However, in the other plans that do offer greater acres of recommended wilderness, there is not enough emphasis on recreation, particularly non-motorized backcountry recreation. We would like the Forest Service to find a more balanced compromise between recommended wilderness and backcountry recreation in their finalized plan for the Colville National Forest. A few of our suggestions and concerns are as follows:

*Alternative P, the alternative favored by the Forest Service, does not adequately account for wilderness. While Alternative P recommends more than the No Action Alternative, only of that 6% of the forest land would be considered areas recommended for wilderness. Wilderness is a unique component of our American character and tradition and cannot be neglected in this planning process. Especially in area with a small population like Northeastern Washington, the opportunities for wilderness areas are much greater than in other more national forests near denser population. Therefore, it seems logical that the Forest Service would take this opportunity to propose as much wilderness as they could, recognizing that not all of this land will actually become wilderness, but that the agency ought to leave the option open.

*Alternative P also lowers road density, which presents an opportunity to expand wilderness areas under the "Roadless Rule." The Forest Service should capitalize on this opportunity for a reason similar to the aforementioned bullet point.

*Alternatives R and B both recommend the most acres of wilderness, yet neither of these options include satisfactory amounts of backcountry recreation, mechanized and motorized alike. As the population in Washington increases, so does the demand for outdoor recreation. According to the 2009 NVUM Report cited in the DEIS, viewing natural features and hiking are the two most popular forms of recreation that take place on Colville National Forest land (Table 189). These are two low-impact forms of recreation that can occur in the backcountry. It seems that neither of these alternatives properly emphasizes meeting the public's demands for backcountry recreation, which should be the driving goal of a public land management agency.

*One suggestion that we have is to leave the amount of backcountry access that is proposed in alternative P, but include a non motorized recreation component to that allotment, to make room for a higher percentage of wilderness in the preferred action plan. Rather than including "semi primitive recreation," include non-motorized "primitive recreation" as a aspect of the plan. (Lines 134-144 in DEIS)

*Alternative P plans to designate approximately 82,800 acres on Kettle Crest as a Special Interest Area. These areas would expand the amount of territory to be used for backcountry and motorized vehicle activities (Lines 20937-20939 DEIS). We think that designating the Kettle Crest area as a Special Interest Area has potential for both motorized and non motorized trail access. However, the motorized access on Kettle Crest could present some management issues. For example, there are seven jeep trails in the foothills of the Kettle Crest area.

These trails are primarily for intermediate level riders. Although there are seven trails in the area, the lack of connections with other motorized mixed-use trails forces riders to use roads illegally in order to get back to their starting points. There is also a number of non-motorized trails in the area. In fact, Kettle Crest, along with the Salmo-Priest Wilderness area, may contain 64 percent of the summer trail miles in the forest. This area also used for overnight hiking more than anywhere else in the forest (Lines 19725-19777 DEIS) What we would like to emphasized more is the Special Interest Area component is the opportunities for non-motorized backcountry recreation because it is lighter on the land, appeals to a wider demographic, and is more easily managed.

*We prefer that the Forest Service recommend as much wilderness as possible, while allowing mechanized, but not motorized, use to continue within it, as per Alternative P, line 1697, "until congressional action is [taken] or the area is released from consideration through a future plan (1698) amendment or revision. Existing

mechanized uses would be allowed to continue, but no new (1699) motorized or mechanized recreation opportunities would be allowed." Because most of the recommended wilderness would likely not be congressionally designated, it makes sense to recommend all areas meeting the criteria of wilderness character in order to protect as much land as possible, while making the implementation of a greater amount of recommended wilderness more palatable to existing mechanized users.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns.

Respectfully,
Erin, Emily, Ryan, Ben, and Skylar