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First name: Luke

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Organization: Spokane Mountaineers

Title: Chair, Conservation Committee

Comments: RE: Colville National Forest Management Plan

To Forest Supervisor Rodney Smolden and Regional Forester Jim Pena,

The Spokane Mountaineers is the largest non-motorized recreation club in Eastern Washington with over 700 members who enjoy human-powered outdoor recreation. A core value of our club is Conservation and our members have a long history advocating for protection of wild land in the Colville National Forest. I am writing as Chair of the Conservation Committee, on behalf of those club members who are active in Conservation. This committee is made up of hikers, backpackers, backcountry skiers and nordic skiers, and we frequently recreate in the Colville National Forest. This committee has passed a resolution in support of forest plan "Alternative B" for the Colville National Forest.

While we advocate for all inventoried roadless areas to be recommended for wilderness designation, at a minimum, the Grassy Top, Profanity, Cougar to Thirteenmile, Bald-Snow, Hoodoo, Abercrombie-Hooknose and Salmo Additions areas must be included as recommended wilderness in any future management plan. A member spotted wolverine tracks within the Grassy Top area, a testament to its wild nature.

Less than 3% of the CNF is presently designated as wilderness - the least of any national forest in Region 6. Adding all these areas would raise that amount to about 15%, still below the national average of 19% and far less than a reasonable balance for a western national forest. The local (and national) economic benefits of wilderness are well established, including in a report about this specific area. The Pacific Northwest Scenic Trail runs through several areas that should be designated wilderness and such a designation would increase the attractiveness of through-hiking the PNT. Hikers are drawn to wilderness areas and bring economic benefit as a result.

The Forest Plan must not increase motorized use of the CNF due to the adverse effects that it has on the environment and experience shared by non-motorized users. Illegal use such as "mudding" has only increased over the years, and additional motorized areas will only encourage further resource destruction. During the winter non-motorized, backcountry experiences should be prioritized as well. The Sherman Pass area could become a national destination for backcountry skiers and other winter recreationalists.

The Colville National Forest's own Forest Planning Summit ending in 2007 found strong support among stakeholders for retaining the wilderness quality of these areas. Notable is the relative absence of conflict with regard to timber management in these PWA's, which historically has been among the most challenging issues related to wilderness.

The Spokane Mountaineers Conservation Committee appreciates the opportunity to provide support for expanded wilderness designation within the Colville National Forest.

Sincerely,

Luke Bakken, Chair

Spokane Mountaineers Conservation Committee

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