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Organization: Washington State Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Title:

Comments: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Comments

Hello-

Please find the attached comments compiled by members of the Washington State Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Colville National Forest plan revision.

Bart George

WA State Board Member

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Rodney Smolden- Forest Supervisor Colville National Forest  
765 South Main Street Colville, WA 99144

June 29, 2016

Dear Mr. Smolden

The Washington Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit the following comments on the draft Colville National Forest (CNF) plan revision and associated draft environmental impact statement. BHA offers the following comments and concerns regarding the plan.

First, we want to ensure that the spirit of collaboration is followed and respected. The Northeast Washington Forest Collaborative (NEWFC) has been active for over a decade and has endeavored to reach out to groups to determine what values are most important to user groups. We recognize that industrial forest use is critically important to the vitality of the Northeast Washington economy. We support the NEWFC timber harvest guidelines.

We support increased ORV use where it is appropriate and recognize that there is a need for increased legal opportunities. Before any new trails or developments are created, there should be thoughtful collaboration with non-motorized user groups to determine locations that are appropriate and protect user interests and important habitats.

BHA supports the proposed alternative, with some minor amendments. We have attached a more detailed list of comments below to elaborate on our concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to comment; we hope you will honor the collaborative effort and consider our ideas.

Sincerely,

Bart George  
Washington State Board Member

1)The CNF Proposed Action sets the target timber volume lower than the collaborative groups and research have determined to be adequate to support healthy- sustainable forests and provide resources for an economically viable harvest. These collaborative agreements and scientific research show how and where timber management activities could occur on the CNF that can produce up to 80 million board feet annually.

2)Backcountry Hunters and Anglers supports wilderness recommendations made in the Proposed Action as part of a balanced forest plan that also included the increased timber volume goals previously referenced. Additional wilderness protection in Northeast Washington, including the Salmo adjacent, Abercrombie/Hooknose, and portions of the Kettle Crest will benefit the growing local tourism industry, provided we also maintain an active timber management industry with increased harvest goals on the CNF

3)Backcountry Hunters and Anglers conditionally supports efforts to improve and enhance legal ORV riding opportunities on the CNF. Prior to creating or expanding a well-planned, well connected network of ORV infrastructure that connects to communities, recreation facilities, scenic attractions, and local businesses we feel that an active trail monitoring program needs to be developed to protect those areas from potential resource damage from illegal ORV use associated with the development. Any new trails or development should be created with fish and wildlife habitat protection in mind.

4)We support the collaborative agreement reached during the Summit process regarding maintaining the wilderness characteristics of all roadless areas. While there was not unanimous support for wilderness recommendations for these areas at the Summit meetings, there was near unanimous support for maintaining wilderness characteristics, which included maintaining access on existing roads and non-motorized trails, but would prohibit new road construction. Roadless backcountry lands provide high quality, connected habitat for a multitude of fish and wildlife species by providing significant blocks of connected habitat and movement corridors. Efforts should be made to protect the wild characteristics of these lands.