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First name: Holly

Last name: Weiler

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

To whom it may concern:

I received an error message when trying to use the online comment form, so am sending my comment letter an email attachment instead.

Thank you,

Holly Weiler
7318 N. Adams Rd.
Spokane, WA 99217

July 5, 2016

Forest Plan Revision Team, Colville National Forest
Colville Supervisor's Office
765 South Main
Colville, Washington 99114

RE: Colville National Forest Management Plan

To Forest Supervisor Rodney Smolden and Regional Forester Jim Pena,

I am writing as a person who regularly camps, hikes and backpacks throughout the Pacific Northwest, including extensive travel within the Colville National Forest. I actively seek out even the shortest of interpretive trails (like the Log Flume trail along Hwy 20, or the Mill Pond historic site), as well as the longest trails in PWAs and designated wilderness (the entirety of the Kettle Crest, the entirety of the Shedroof Divide). I have family ties to Stevens County logging and I understand that logging must and should continue on the Colville; I also believe that conservation values and wildlife protection should not be sacrificed in the process.

While I appreciate the need to balance conservation values with working forest needs, along with a wide variety of recreation desires, I find that the Forest Service's preferred alternative (P) is lacking in this balance. The Forest Service's own report finds the Colville NF is underserved in designated wilderness, with just 3% of the forest currently designated, yet the preferred alternative includes only three additional recommendations for wilderness designation, which if so designated would bring the total to just 6% of the forest. This is well below the national average of designated wilderness on Forest Service land and does not adequately address the fact that northeast Washington is underserved for congressionally designated wilderness areas ("Analysis determined the greater Spokane metropolitan area is under-served for wilderness recreation due to not having any wilderness within a 1-2 hour drive..."). At the same time, the preferred alternative would allow for scheduled timber production on 60% of the forest, and would allow for an increase in the number of acres open to motorized recreation by 400%--an unbalanced approach indeed.

Alternative P includes wilderness designation for Salmo Adjacent, Abercrombie/Hooknose, and Bald/Snow, which are all worthy of designation, but leaves out other important Inventoried Roadless Areas that have high value for both wildlife habitat and non-mechanized forms of nonmotorized recreation use. The idea of a Special

Interest Area for the Kettle Crest is interesting, but it does not hold the same level of protection that wilderness designation would afford. I find the Recreation Report mention of "an historic fire lookout" as grounds for dismissal of the Profanity IRA laughable; this can only mean the Columbia Mountain cabin, a historically accurate replica of the 1914 log cabin that was recently restored as part of a Passports in Time project (I met the crew rebuilding the cabin in 2009); all that remains of the 1912 stone shelter is a dilapidated fireplace, and the 16' pole live-in tower is long-gone. I am also confused by the mention that some PWAs "would not meet the minimum acreage requirements necessary to be recommended for wilderness recommendation...." I am unaware of minimum acreage requirements; the smallest designated wilderness in the US is a mere 5 acres (Pelican Island).

I strongly advocate for the inclusion of all PWAs for wilderness designation, but at a minimum, Bald/Snow, Abercrombie/Hooknose, Salmo Priest Adjacent, Thirteen Mile, Cougar Mountain, Grassy Top, Hall Mountain, Quartzite, and Hoodoo Canyon deserve this highest form of protection. These areas should also be managed in such a way as to preserve their wild character, which includes excluding all activities that are inconsistent with wilderness. Motorized uses should be confined to existing motorized routes and designated OHV areas; illegal off-road/off-trail travel and its accompanying resource damage is becoming more of an issue each year. This spring I even observed "mudding" damage within the historic Gypsy Meadows, a place that is officially closed to dirt bikes and 4-wheelers. To open 400% more acres to motorized use without adding 400% more enforcement officers will create additional problems while at the same time displacing non-motorized recreation use. To say (as the Recreation Report does) that motorized use is allowed on 79% of the forest while non-motorized use is allowed on 100% of the forest misses a key point: most non-motorized users seek recreation areas far from the noise, stink, and danger that accompanies motorized use.

Additionally, I am concerned about the plan's lack of protection for non-motorized winter recreation and winter wildlife habitat. According to table 192, over-snow vehicle travel is allowed on a majority of the forest regardless of alternative. Over-snow vehicles are incompatible with non-motorized winter recreation, and they cause undue stress on wildlife.

Sincerely,

Holly M. Weiler
7318 N. Adams Rd.
Spokane, WA 99217