

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/9/2016 1:54:26 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

As regards the USFS Colville National Forest, Republic District land, local citizens file this manifesto; (146 signatures)

This is public land, not the kings private domain, nor is it the private playground of environmental activists. Let's respect the public's rights to access and use its resources as Theodore Roosevelt originally intended. Times of economic downturn and stress are not the times to turn up the screws on law enforcement of area firewood restrictions. Too many laws and regulations create outlaws; too many closed roads lead to wood piracy.

We, the people who live in the local area where the public land exists, and are taxpaying citizens of the federal government, and in particular the people who make all or part of our living by harvesting firewood do make the following requests;

(1) More open roads in areas that actually have dead trees to harvest on them; not overcut mainlines or roads that are dominated by stands of small young trees. There are numerous closed roads with dead and dying, windfall or diseased trees on them. We would like to see at least one third of these now closed roads opened up, and left open for at least three years, with another one third opened up three years later. A rotation could be set up that not only would provide access to resources for woodcutters but also for trappers, berry pickers, the elderly and others wanting to make use of the roads. All roads not marked as closed on the firewood map or physically obstructed by the USFS should be considered open for woodcutters to explore and use.

(2) Less marking of dead trees for wildlife use (wildlife designated trees) within 200 feet of the road. There are thousands of dead trees beyond the 200 foot zone, and in the creek beds and watered areas that are now restricted from woodcutting. Marking trees inside the 200 foot zone places an undue temptation on woodcutters, and as the USFS knows, they are usually cut down anyway. It is a lose/lose situation for everybody.

(3) We would like to see law enforcement tactics and practices return to normalcy and civility on public lands. Most wood harvesters are from local families; they are not malicious or notorious and dangerous criminals. While a percentage of cutters are newly released offenders or drug users, they also have the right to harvest wood. Would you rather have them climbing in your windows at night, or cutting firewood? And as far as I know, no firewood cutter has ever threatened a ticketing officer with fire arms, or at least the incidents are few. We are not denying the officer or compliance person's right to self-defense as the situation warrants; but we would like to see woodcutters treated with the same respect and courtesy as a person receiving a ticket for speeding or other non-felony violations. Drunk drivers and speeders kill far more citizens than firewooders; we are not a source of danger to the public at large. Many firewooders are not rich or well to do, but a man's financial status should not render him unworthy of due respect or reduce his rights in front of a law enforcement officer. Aggressive and hostile methods and attitudes of law enforcement produce unwanted results; they escalate situations unnecessarily and could result in needless tragedy. Let's return to a more friendly and civil form of law enforcement.

(4) Stop the seizing of chainsaws. This places undue hardship on the economically depressed offender and may hurt his ability to feed his family and heat his own home, as well as earn some cash elsewhere. This procedure of law enforcement is overly harsh and unusual. Banning the repeat offender from federal lands for one or more seasons would be a better practice. Not everybody has a good job and not everyone can work for the government.

Let's show respect for all that use public lands, not just for the private interest groups or other outdoor

enthusiasts.

We are citizens and taxpayers and part of the Public and we are local. Give us the chance to use our public resources responsibly and without undue harassment from federal law enforcement due to and aggravated by over- restriction of access.

Respectfully; from the class of citizens that use the public lands for harvesting dead standing and fallen trees.