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Comments: Comments from the Wildlife group: Gonzaga University

Global climate change is/will push the Canada Lynx into higher elevation habitat with snowy, cold winters. Therefore, the action that is chosen needs to include management of Canada Lynx habitat by maintaining and restoring important corridors so the survival of the species is ensured, especially since the species are wide ranging.

There is going to need to be more land with coniferous forests designated to the Canada Lynx where disturbances to the species are limited such as timber harvest, vehicular traffic, and recreation. The limit on disturbances will, also, allow the snowshoe hare, main prey of the Canada Lynx, populations to abundant.

It is not enough to simply do nothing to existing roads as a way to limit Canada Lynx mortality. Roads need to be blocked off until the species is removed from the Endangered Species List because with climate change the Canada Lynx are having to move much more between habitats.

Much of the discussion with regard to threatened and endangered species is repetitive and vague as to how the alternatives will impact the specific species; therefore, since there is insufficient information it is hard to say which alternative or which part of the alternatives are best for wildlife.

The current plan emphasizes habitat for deer and elk through guidelines for human access, retention of thermal cover, and retention of forage. Research has shown management should be focused more on availability of forage on summer and fall habitats rather than of winter. Elk and deer have relatively low vulnerability, however, they are influenced by motorized access and the influence of livestock grazing. A forest management plan needs to focus on restoration of landscape pattern and functions while reducing effects of roads on deer and elk summer and winter habitats to support species resilience. Both the proposed action and alternative P use dynamic landscape management, a good direction to take the National Forest in regarding all wildlife. Management in alternative P to improve key habitats and grazing is preferred to benefit deer and elk populations. Alternative R's focus on aiding recovery of range conditions as well as habitat effectiveness for deer and elk on summer and winter ranges is great, but this alternative does not thoroughly take into account habitat connectivity. I believe that both alternatives B and O do not take into account science related to wildlife recovery and for these reasons, should not be chosen to manage the Colville National Forest.

Woodland Caribou are highly vulnerable to climate change, so a management plan will be needed where caribou habitat will need to be preserved in order to protect the small population. One needs to take into account how the distribution of the caribou population will effect predator/prey relations.

A lot is mentioned about balancing winter recreation activities and maintaining winter caribou habitat, but how exactly will winter recreation be balanced alongside maintaining habitat? More information is needed when describing how to limit winter recreational activities. Caribou can easily be displaced by certain recreational

opportunities, so choosing the ones that will effect the land and caribou in a minimal way becomes crucial.

It's hard to say which management plan will be successful when it comes to talking about woodland caribou, since each management plan will not vary much between the alternatives. Each alternative becomes repetitive, so it becomes difficult to choose a specific alternative. It seems that woodland caribou almost become an after thought.

The current plan is largely silent on grizzly bear management other than to offer that management does not differ among alternatives. Grizzly bears are sensitive to displacement and increasing road construction for timber production puts stress on an already declining population. Moreover, simply maintaining the current motorized vehicle restrictions falls short of a comprehensive plan for grizzly bear augmentation. I believe alternative R is correct in recommending the reduction of approximately 30 miles of summer-motorized trails. I would actually go as far as to recommend a larger reduction in motorized vehicle access because of the negative impact on grizzly bear populations. Increased wilderness areas, specifically offered in alternative R and B, helps to address the need for corridors and maintaining populations in light of climate change. Alternative O does little to mitigate the collective effects of human access and development on wildlife habitats, thus should not be considered. Overall, the final plan needs to emphasize and prioritize increased viability for wildlife in a practical pragmatic detail oriented fashion.