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First name: William

Last name: Stone

Organization: Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance Eastern WA Chapter

Title: President

Comments: Dear Rodney and crew at the Colville NF -

First and foremost I'd like to commend you and your staff on the tremendous effort you've expended on the draft forest plan! The time you've put in to this plan really shows, and is very much appreciated.

I've been a heavy user of the Colville NF for the better part of two decades, my folks having bought a place on the Pend Oreille river adjacent to NF land in 98(now full time residents). I've enjoyed snowmobiling, hiking, foraging, and mostly mountain biking on forest lands for quite some time. I also worked as an electrical engineer out of Colville for two years with many of the industries in the area -specifically logging(and some ranchers). I work for Avista as my day job, so also understand the effort required working within a regulated environment. I can certainly appreciate the diverse user group you're trying to please here!

Having grown upon multiple iterations of the plan, I believe the current preferred alternative P reflects a balanced approach to best manage the uses and needs of all concerned - human and non-human alike. It's difficult at times to reconcile the need to maintain access for recreation (motorized and not), sustainable commercial use for forestry and grazing, and the desire to preserve the rugged natural characteristic of this incredible ecosystem.

I've been a mountain biker since I moved to the northwest from Illinois, where there are no mountains to speak of. The terrain we have available here is a large part of what's kept me in the region. Mountain bikers are strong advocates for preserving our wild places, as for many that's the best place to ride. As currently enforced though, protection of land via congressionally designated Wilderness excludes use via bikes. That said, I would recommend two primary alterations to the plan as proposed.

The two areas of concern under alternative P are the recommended Wilderness south of the Snow Peak cabin, and the Abercrombie Mountain area. I've ridden and enjoyed these areas on my mountain bike, and would hate to see that access gone for myself and others. Since these areas are suitable for proposed Wilderness, it's my feeling that mountain biking as a non-conforming use under the Wilderness act has not degraded the area and so should be allowed to continue. Anecdotal evidence certainly exists in that I've seldom seen other users out on the trail system, so conflict is effectively nonexistent. In fact, the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance has worked with many of the other user groups in the area - WTA, Backcountry Horsemen, and the Northeast WA Trailblazers to name a few in maintaining and improving the trail system in the Colville NF for years.

I would hope you can consider revising the plan by excluding the recommended Bald Snow Wilderness area and instead protecting it by extending the recreational SIA further south. If this puts the SIA at odds with the maximum acreage limit, I'd recommend perhaps trimming some of the eastern portions of the IRA area off and instead designating them as backcountry non-motorized. This would allow for continued bike use of the trail system north to south while still preserving the characteristic of the land. It would also allow continued bike use on this section of the PNW National Scenic trail.

I would also request that a boundary change be made at Abercrombie Mountain to allow continued bike access to the Abercrombie trail and Silver Creek trail. This loop gains one of the highest peaks in the area, and is an incredible ride down to the Silver Creek trailhead through some fantastic scenery and ecosystem. There's really not anything quite like it - it's irreplaceable. Designating a wedge or corridor around these trails as backcountry non-motorized would still maintain the desired preservation state.

I appreciate the chance to provide comments, and very much appreciate the time you all took in meeting with

Yvonne Kraus and I as we were in the area meeting with various groups and agencies on this plan.

I sincerely hope you can accept my proposed alterations as they fit within the boundaries of some of the other alternatives, and hope to continue riding my bike throughout the Colville for many years to come.

Thanks

Will Stone

President, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance Eastern WA Chapter