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Organization: Spokane Mountaineers

Title:

Comments: Amy Dillon, Forest Plan Revision Team

Colville National Forest, Colville Supervisor's Office

765 South Main. Colville, Washington 99114

Dear Ms. Dillon and the Forest Management Plan Revision team,

As a recent transplant from the east coast where there is very little federal land, I am very excited to be able to comment on this Forest Management Plan Revision.

I am an environmentalist, a hiker and a mountain biker and land designations are very critical to me. Because I engage in many different endeavors in the forests in Eastern WA, this revision affects me personally and it will determine my personal access to these lands for decades to come.

After learning about the Kettle Crest area, I was able to ride (mountain bike) the Sherman Peak Loop and the Jungle Hill area trails this past weekend on my mountain bike. I must say, these trails are a real treasure. In general they are well constructed, suitable for foot and for bicycle traffic and the riding experience in the Colville National Forest is simply stunning. As a new resident here in WA, I can say that there is nothing like this out east and would be hard to surpass anywhere else in WA.

I commend you for your thoughtful approach and thoroughness of the draft plan and preferred alternative. Alternative P is a good solution for non-motorized recreational access, ecological integrity, and regional economic resiliency.

However, two highly valued mountain bike trail systems would be lost due to proposed wilderness designations in Alternative P. For this reason, I strongly encourage you to implement the following two changes to the plan:

- The proposed Bald/Snow/White wilderness designation eliminates a contiguous Kettle Crest riding experience, as well as connection to Thirteen Mile Trail. Bald/Snow/White should be included in the SIA as backcountry, or another SIA. This unifies all of the Kettle Crest under one management designation and preserves the unique north-south Crest riding experience, as well as un-interrupted access to the Pacific Northwest Trail. This can be accomplished by changing the Coyote Mountain/Hoodoo roadless area to backcountry or wilderness.

- The Abercrombie Mountain and Silver Creek trails should be removed from recommended wilderness, and instead designated as backcountry, or another SIA. The Abercrombie and Silver Creek loop should be preserved for mountain bikers as this high alpine riding experience cannot be replicated elsewhere in WA.

With the above changes incorporated, I fully endorse Alternative P. It facilitates trail maintenance needs with chainsaws, allows the Kettle Crest to be designated as one uniform management designation, in turn making it easier to promote and market it as a MUST VISIT contiguous geological, ecological, and recreational destination!

The extensive trail networks in the Colville National Forest offer the key ingredients required for multi-day mountain bike riding experiences. The region as a whole has great potential to become a national riding destination. This promises low-impact non-motorized trail use and significant economic benefit for communities in Northeast Washington. The ecological and trail resources make this Forest a unique place to ride, and it is of utmost importance to me that mountain bike access is maintained and improved throughout the implementation

timeframe of the next Forest Management Plan.

Thank you again for your hard work and opportunity to voice my strong support for maintained mountain bike access to the awe-inspiring trails of the Colville National Forest.

Sincerely,
Jeff Mergler
Spokane, WA