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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Forest Management Plan. Having lived near the Colville National Forest for over 25 years, we utilize the forest for personal fire wood cutting and recreation. When disabled by an accident we were grateful for the spots with wheel chair access so I could assist my husband in visiting during a time of limited mobility. In our tiny mountain community the CNF used to provide the second largest portion of the local economy. Now, with no local mill, the portion of the economy it provides is even more essential to our community's survival: mainly the recreation side. However without a great increase in both general and focused management and restoration the CNF will not be viable for even recreation for long especially if we see more years of fire activity similar to 2015. It is therefore an even greater challenge to offer balanced and thoughtful comment on this plan.

During two plus decades here we have watched impenetrable thickets of dog hair trees take over the 1980's Sherman Pass fire area and elsewhere on the CNF making those areas essentially useless for wildlife, domestic grazing animals, and humans and totally useless for commercial logging. We have seen fires ravage parts of the CNF and while we understand fires essential role in the landscape what has occurred more recently is far more than that. We therefore hope to see concentration on general and focused restoration of the forest or else after multiple decades of chronic Congressional under funding soon there will be little of it left to restore. However, we recognize the ongoing struggle the U.S.F.S. has in developing a workable plan when facing ongoing budget constraints and continuing assaults from a number of ill-informed groups, including some politicians, who want to reduce our national forests into private for profit bits to sell off to the highest bidder.

While many portions of Alternative P appeal to us, such as restoring ecological resilience, reducing damaging roads (old forest roads constructed for a timber sale and then abandoned because there are no funds available to maintain them, regardless of how loudly some wish otherwise) improving aquatic habitat protections and connectivity, we have grave concern regarding points raised by The Washington State Department of Ecology in comments submitted by Mr. Mark Hicks on 6.8.16. to wit: "Our concerns are generally framed by the following three issues: 1. The need to make it very clear in the plan that projects need to provide protection, equal or better than that needed to meet the state's surface water quality standards. 2. The need to set more ambitious schedules for accomplishing road improvements. 3. The potential problem created by having vague and potentially lenient standards for the level of disturbance allowed within Riparian Management Area s (RMA)." ... and elsewhere in his comment document. In whatever alternative is chosen, high consideration must be given to all ecology says about water, especially considering our quite challenging climatic conditions.

With that in mind it is vital that restoration of a healthy, scenic AND productive forest is the goal. While we would never wish to return to the unrestricted, corporate logging that occurred in an almost totally unregulated manner during the 1950's, 60's and early 70's, it is vital to recognize that was largely responsible for the extreme swing to the other side in more recent decades; with every timber sale eliciting lawsuits, putting the CNF in the untenable position of going from excessive, "management", to almost no management at all. This has contributed to creating much of the dog hair conditions, insect and disease now ravaging the CNF. It is said it will take at least 3 generation of foresters to restore this forest to a healthy enough condition and age where any reasonable amount of timber can again be harvested. Essential to any plan for focused restoration is utilizing all the tools in the box including active pre commercial thinning, prescribed burns and other accepted management options in order to restore the forest AND make it productive for future generations. While even then we may never be able to return to previous harvest numbers it is clear that any serious plan will include making greater timber harvest a larger part of our local and regional economy again. Balancing that goal with protecting and preserving much of the high, steep slopes and other significant areas which are either not conducive to the types of logging widely available regionally, or better suited for recreational and scenic use now makes sense and provides something for all stakeholders who wish to see their particular vision of the Colville implemented.

Regarding that toolbox: Currently the Ferry County portion of the CNF does not contain wilderness areas; we support that portion of alternative P recommending wilderness in Ferry County as that is a tool in the tool box of our local economy that we do not now have; wilderness diversity in our tourism will capture more tourism dollars and thus we strongly support local areas of wilderness including at least the following roadless areas of the Kettle Crest: Profanity, Bald, Snow, Hoodoo and Thirteen Mile would provide that.

We put forth that if Congress could be convinced of the necessity to fully fund your monumental task, a sort of modern day version of the old Civilian Conservation Corp could occur on the CNF to greatly facilitate focused restoration: Those 18 and older could sign up for 2 or 3 seasons of pre commercial thinning on the CNF in exchange for a reduction or elimination of an agreed upon amount of tuition in a state college, university or vocational school. If such a plan could be implemented as part of whatever alternative is chosen, we might see real progress made on long term improvement of the health of the CNF.

We understand the constraints under which the U.S.F.S. must operate. If only we could convince Congress to fully fund the U.S.F.S, we might feel assured that you could fulfill the tasks of maintaining and managing the forest lands. We will end by endorsing Alternative P, with the hope that Congress actually decides to provide adequate funding.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions regarding this submission,  
Again, thank you,