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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Colville National Forest Proposed Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. My husband and I operate a ranch in Ferry County, Washington and have grazing permits for four Forest Service grazing allotments which provide summer pasture for our livestock. We live in Ferry County near Republic and care deeply about not only our ability to graze livestock on the national forest, but also the resources of the Forest such as clean water, forage, timber, wildlife and the opportunities to enjoy these unique settings.

Please consider the following comments on this Draft Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

1. It is concerning in the Draft Plan that the Colville National Forest would require maintaining at least 6 to 8 inches of riparian residual stubble height in grazing allotments. Having this amount of residual stubble is concerning for the following reasons: It is 150-200% of the amount currently required on our grazing allotments and I believe our riparian areas look good and are healthy and resilient; I know that some grass species do not have the ability to grow to 8 inches, so how can the amounts of stubble be attained; Precipitation and soils vary widely across the Colville National Forest and therefore the potential to achieve and maintain 6-8 inches of riparian stubble height varies and; These stubble height requirements will significantly shorten our grazing season and cause economic harm to ranching, agriculture and our communities.

2. I am concerned with the statement seen in lines 936 to 940 of the draft plan where grazing must be changed to allow for completion of threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species annual life cycle and development and dispersal of reproductive materials like seed and spores. Again, this is only something that should be assessed and is known at the allotment level. This broad, sweeping language found in the Forest Plan is overly restrictive as there is no specific knowledge as to what effects grazing has on these species. Grazing can enhance conditions for some plants and having these statements in the Draft Plan only shows a bias against grazing rather than responsible management.

3. Access needs to be maintained on the Forest in order to be responsible and responsive managers. It is concerning to see limits of 1-2 miles of road per square mile identified in the forest plan, when roads are needed to manage timber and grazing and provide the public access to the national forest. These desired conditions are going to have negative consequences to forest management and grazing permittee's ability to manage our allotments. Without adequate roads, it will be more difficult to maintain troughs, fences and place salt. All of these things are needed to protect the resources on the Forest while it is being grazed.

It is very important to manage timber on the Colville National Forest through logging. When forests are overstocked they are unhealthy and prone to large wildfires. I would like to see more logging on the Colville National Forest in the future (under the new plan) as compared to the current levels of harvest. Logging creates transitory rangelands and they are needed to have enough open grassy areas for livestock and wildlife to graze. I worry that logging will be restricted, and therefore grazing, if there isn't enough roads to properly manage the National Forest.

4. I am pleased to see that the majority of the potential wilderness areas in the Kettle crest range are not being recommended for wilderness in alternative P and the draft plan. Wilderness places hardships on grazing and grazing permittees and I appreciate the Kettle crest being managed as something besides wilderness. I need to have the ability to maintain trails, fences and water troughs in the back country with motorized and mechanized means as I have done in the past and currently do and wilderness does not allow for that. It would be desirable to not recommend wilderness in any area that lies within a grazing allotment since there would be impacts to grazing through various restrictions. Perhaps management, other than recommending wilderness, could be considered for the Bald-Snow and Abercrombie/Hooknose PWAs also, while maintaining their characteristics.

5. I feel strongly that decisions made on allotments regarding grass heights, riparian areas and such should be made during the annual meeting and throughout the grazing season between the permittees and the Forest Service Range Specialist. This would allow action to be taken on site specific areas.

6. I would also like to state that these forest plan documents are very complex and use terms and language that is not easily understood. I would encourage the Forest Service to do a better job in making these documents easier to understand, so that all can better understand what is being proposed and what the effects are.

7. I'd like to give an example to put things into perspective: We have several acres of hay and pasture ground that spreads from Republic to the Canadian Border, we take soil samples yearly to see what each property needs for fertilizer in order to be productive. It's surprising that no two are the same each piece requires a different mixture. Why would our Forest be any different? Each Forest allotment is unique in its own way, from the topography, grass types and types of usage. A productive forest is a healthy one. We need balance, which includes grazing, logging, thinning, prescribed burning and recreation. Wilderness in my opinion would not only limit but eliminate the above mentioned uses with the exception of some types of recreation. We need a managed forest, if we continue to limit the use and access to the resources the national forest provides, it will continue to be unhealthy and the fires that we experienced last year will get worse and be more frequent.

Kevin & Rhonda Dal Balcon