



COLVILLE
NATIONAL FOREST

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COLLABORATIVE
WILDERNESS
EVALUATION
PROCESS

Progress Report

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Introduction

The Okanogan-Wenatchee and Colville National Forests began an integrated forest plan revision process in 2004. The forests have independently designed and implemented collaborative processes to engage stakeholders in the planning process. The collaborative processes on each forest address the same key planning questions; while the collaborative public processes are unique to each forest, they follow parallel paths/ or steps related to the planning effort. The two forests share an interdisciplinary planning team (IDT) and other staff resources.

In March 2006, the Colville National Forest (CNF) began an intensive collaborative forest plan revision process inclusive of the public at large. In March 2007, the process culminated in the identification of a number of areas of agreement¹ among those stakeholders who participated in the process. These agreements included management recommendations applicable across the entire forest. Due to time constraints, however, this group of stakeholders was unable to reach agreement on specific recommendations regarding management of most of the inventoried roadless areas on the CNF².

In order to address the need for Rick Brazell, Colville National Forest Supervisor, to determine whether to recommend any of the inventoried roadless areas as wilderness, the CNF decided to design and implement a collaborative process that would focus on the evaluation of each inventoried roadless areas for its potential for wilderness recommendation.

This progress report describes the collaborative wilderness evaluation process, results, observations and recommendations, as prepared by the neutral process facilitators, Susan Hayman (EnviroIssues) and Kathy Bond (KTB Decision Resources, Inc.). EnviroIssues (Boise, Idaho office) operated under contract with the Forest Service to provide services and support to all the stakeholders engaged in this collaborative process from July through November 2008.

Process

There were two phases in the 2008 collaborative wilderness evaluation process. **Phase 1** included an assessment of internal and external stakeholders that addressed prior experience with the CNF on collaborative processes, issues and concerns with the wilderness evaluation process, and potential opportunities and pitfalls for the upcoming process. Based on the results of the assessment, the Facilitation Team (Hayman and Bond) proposed a collaborative process that was refined at a meeting with the facilitators and several key Forest Service staff (hereafter referred to collectively as the Collaboration

¹ *Collaborative Agreement Talking Points, March 2007; Colville National Forest Plan Revision Collaboration Round-Up*

² There were three agreements relevant to the management of inventoried roadless areas that were reached during the 2006-2007 process. These will be identified and discussed in the “process” section of this report.

Team) on July 8, 2008 in Colville, Washington, and adopted by the CNF subsequent to that meeting. Appendix 1 contains a graphic depiction of the collaborative process road map and timeline.

Phase II represented the implementation of the collaboration plan, and included:

- Two introductory workshops (Colville and Spokane) to:
 1. Provide the context for inventoried roadless areas' (also known as "potential wilderness areas" or PWAs) evaluation and decision-making
 2. Review the 2006-2007 collaborative process information regarding potential wilderness area evaluation
 3. Discuss how to apply the Forest Service wilderness evaluation criteria, and identify additional public considerations
 4. Identify opportunities for public involvement throughout the evaluation process

Process notes: In the 3-hour introductory workshops, participants received information about the process and products, were provided a brief opportunity to ask questions, and were then asked (in small groups) to comment on/revise a set of "considerations" for the use of Forest Service evaluation criteria.

- Three community-based workshops Cusick (Pend Oreille County), Colville (Stevens County, and Republic (Ferry County) to:
 1. Understand the wilderness designation process and the public involvement opportunities associated with it;
 2. Evaluate a specific set of Inventoried Roadless Areas (referred to in this process as "potential wilderness areas" or "PWAs") for possible recommendation through the forest planning process.

Process notes: In the community workshops, participants received a brief process overview, and then spent most of their time in small groups selected on the basis of the color of a dot placed on their name badge. In a facilitated process, each small group focused on validating the Forest Service's evaluations of wilderness "availability"



and “need” for a pre-determined set of potential wilderness areas within proximity of the meeting location. Small group participants were then asked to use a set of management options (wilderness, backcountry motorized, backcountry non-motorized, recreation special interest area, and other³) as a frame of reference and identify which management option they would choose for a given potential wilderness area. (The question was framed: *If you were the Colville Forest Supervisor, which option would you choose. Why?*) The small groups then reconvened as a large group for a report out.

Workshops were held on Saturdays to allow for a broader participation. The Cusick meeting lasted 5.5 hours; feedback from the participants suggested that not enough time was allowed to accomplish the meeting’s objectives. In response to the feedback, the Colville and Republic community meetings were extended to 7.5 hours each. Workshop attendance was high, with approximately 80 participants in Cusick, 120 in Colville, and 100 in Republic.

- A closing integration workshop to:
 1. Identify *proposed* management direction that people can “live with” for some or all of the potential wilderness areas.
 2. Identify the sticking points for those potential wilderness areas where there is not agreement.

Process notes: Prior to the integration workshop, a subset of the Forest Service Forest Plan Revision Interdisciplinary Team synthesized the products from the community workshops, and developed a synthesis table which captured the key reasons

participants expressed for choosing one particular management option over another. In addition, the Facilitation Team developed “Option X”: A map of the Colville National Forest that graphically displayed one possible scenario of management options. Designed to provide a framework for discussion, Option X was developed from information in the synthesis table for the 14 potential wilderness areas under discussion that day. Following the opening overview presentation, the group divided into small groups. Participants discussed Option X and determined



³ The Forest Service developed these options to manage PWAs to provide for the roadless character as recommended during the 2006-07 collaboration process on the CNF.

where and why they agreed or disagreed with any or all of the management options and what they would change in this scenario and why. The purpose of the small group exercise was to see if there was any common ground for any of the potential wilderness areas. The Facilitation Team synthesized the small group products over lunch, and presented this information back to the full group after the noon break.

The 5-hour integration workshop was held on a Saturday to encourage participation. Again, the workshop was well attended, with approximately 90 participants.

Other Feedback

The public was invited to initiate field trips to any of the potential wilderness areas to gain a first-hand understanding of the areas prior to their evaluation. While the Forest Service would not initiate these trips, they did offer to participate if invited.

Throughout the process, the Forest Service maintained a robust Web site that contained detailed information on the process and products, including descriptions and maps of the potential wilderness areas. Workshop summaries were posted prior to each subsequent workshop. In addition, the public was invited to submit written comments electronically, by person, or by mail.

The collaboration process was evaluated and adapted throughout its duration. Evaluations were solicited at the close of each public workshop, and through debriefings with the Forest Service staff after each workshop. The Collaboration Team conducted regular conference calls to develop the process agenda and meeting products based on the collective feedback.

Results

Appendix 2 contains the summaries from each of the following public workshops:

- Kick-off Workshop: Colville, Washington – September 6, 2008
- Information Workshop: Spokane, Washington – September 12, 2008
- Pend Oreille County Community Workshop: Cusick, Washington – September 22, 2008
- Stevens County Community Workshop: Colville, Washington – October 4, 2008
- Ferry County Community Workshop: Republic, Washington – November 8, 2008
- Integration Workshop: Colville, Washington – November 22, 2008

The participants provided substantial information on the criteria of availability and need for the Forest Service to incorporate into their wilderness evaluations' write-ups. They also provided supportive information on their interests (the "why") as they identified their choice for the various management options. It is this interest-based information that will be most useful to the plan revision staff when developing additional scenarios of management options to apply to each of the potential wilderness areas, especially when the information is considered within the broader context of how the rest of the CNF (those areas not within potential wilderness areas) is proposed to be managed.

The synthesis table (Appendix 3), prepared by the Forest Service for the integration workshop, is an important first step in pulling together the substantial amount of information deliberated at the workshops into a usable form.

In the 2006-2007 collaboration process, there was general agreement that: 1) the Lost Creek PWA would not be suitable for wilderness recommendation; 2) the Salmo-Priest Adjacent PWA would be suitable for wilderness recommendation; and, 3) any PWA not recommended for wilderness should be managed to retain its primitive/undeveloped character. While the participants in the 2008 wilderness evaluation process generally did not object to the findings for these two specific PWAs (Lost Creek and Salmo-Priest Adjacent), concern was raised at each workshop about the Forest Service's commitment to retain the primitive/undeveloped character of any PWA not recommended for wilderness. Some participants were adamant that all areas of the forest should be managed under "multiple use," which generally translated to allowing timber harvest and road building to occur to meet economic and fuels reduction objectives. While Forest Supervisor Rick Brazell spoke to his commitment to honor the general agreement of the previous collaborative process, (including managing any PWA to maintain its primitive/undeveloped character if it was not recommended for wilderness), this point of discussion was not resolved to satisfaction with many of the participants at the community workshops.

The summary of the integration workshop contained in Appendix 2 contains a listing, recorded by the small group facilitators, of those features of Option X that people agreed with, those features of Option X that they would change, and the "sticking points" to reaching common ground. Because they are important points to consider as the process moves forward, the following are key excerpts from the sticking points to reaching common ground:

- Backcountry non-motorized is not a permanent protection (e.g. administrative, rather than congressionally-designated). There would be much more room for common ground on this management option if it was.
- The discussion of management options for the PWAs needs to be within the context of the management for all other areas of the forest (i.e. non-PWA).
- There is still concern for the manner in which roads are defined and the effect this has on the inventory of roadless areas.
- There is inconsistency with management options in Option X for PWAs and county-wide fire plans for Owl, Jackknife, Hoodoo, South Huckleberry, Bald Snow and Cougar).
- It is too constraining to have only four management options to choose from for potential wilderness areas (i.e. backcountry non-motorized, back-county motorized, wilderness, recreation special interest areas).
- The management options for potential wilderness areas do not provide for the ability to manage for fuels reduction or fire suppression.

An interest-based concept to provide, essentially, “wilderness-like” protection to many of the PWAs--while not constraining the use of mechanized and motorized tools (e.g. chainsaws, limited ATV use for livestock grazing and other permit holders, etc.)--was one of the potential options discussed by a number of integration workshop participants. At the end of the integration meeting, Forest Supervisor Brazell made a commitment to explore the appropriate application of “special interest areas” to see if there might be some opportunity to create a more permanent type of designation that would meet these interests.

Process Observations and Recommendations

It was clear after the first workshop that many more people were interested in rolling up their sleeves and participating in this intensive process than anticipated during the planning session. Process challenges included the unpredictable (but always increasing) number of participants, ensuring adequate facilitation staff, the relative complexity of the topic and the turnover of people from workshop to workshop (although a significant number of people attended all the Saturday workshops). Small group facilitators were challenged by the sheer size of their discussion groups, the constraints of space inherent in small town venues, and by the sometimes positional approaches of some of the participants. Without exception, however, the tenor and quality of the conversations improved with every workshop. There were also challenges with meeting differing Forest



Service expectations for the outcomes of the workshops. Some of the staff supported a process that sought to identify the greatest amount of agreement possible within a set amount of time, while others felt that the goal should be to reach consensus with a certain percentage of the public, and that the agency should dedicate the time and resources

required to reach that goal. These different perspectives on the ultimate goal of the collaboration resulted in some challenges for selecting the appropriate process. Any process determined from this point forward should be anchored around a common, established collaboration goal.

During the integration meeting, a portion of the participants remained committed to either seeing all or none of the potential wilderness areas recommended for wilderness, despite Forest Supervisor Brazell's remarks at the beginning of the workshop that "all or none" was not a useful option. Numerous comments from integration workshop participants indicated that the expression of these polarized positions did not contribute positively to the small group discussions for finding common ground among the diversity of interests at the table.

It is clear to us that finding common ground is possible through an adjunct process where a representative group of diverse stakeholders are able to collaborate within the context of forest plan revision. Participants in this process would be selected on the basis of their commitment to working together to find common ground. In our opinion, outcomes from this adjunct process would receive broad based support from other citizens and would help inform the decision making process for wilderness evaluation/recommendation in the forest plan.

There is a great deal of accomplishment to build upon. We wish all the stakeholders in this process great success as you move forward with your forest plan revision process on the Colville National Forest.

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