



# COLVILLE NATIONAL FOREST FOREST PLAN REVISION UPDATE FALL 2015

## FOREST BRIEFS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ON FOREST PLANNING EFFORTS ONE STEP CLOSER TO PUBLIC REVIEW PHASE

It has been an extremely busy summer for our communities, tribes, agencies and emergency responders who have rallied to respond to multiple wildfires and impacts. Although it's been challenging, I am humbled to see how our communities have pulled together during the fire suppression effort; and also now as we turn our attentions to long term recovery and regular business at hand.

I'm thrilled to share that I have accepted the Forest Supervisor position for the Colville National Forest behind Laura Jo West, who transferred this past July to serve as Coconino National Forest Supervisor in Flagstaff, Arizona. We wish her well in her new role.



*Rodney Smoldon*

We are now refocusing on the forest's priority work, including efforts to release a draft revised forest plan and analysis document for public review. Despite the hectic season, our team continues to make progress in those efforts in partnership with our counterparts in our Pacific Northwest regional office, who have been reviewing the draft forest plan and draft environmental impact statement (draft EIS) this summer.

I have recently been holding study sessions with county commissioners from Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties to provide an overview of the draft plan and analysis. Our commissioners want to

ensure that the draft plan takes into consideration county plans, and also that the interests of their constituents are considered as the draft plan is developed.

The Plan Revision Team briefed Regional Forester Jim Peña on the draft plan and draft EIS alternatives in September. He gave us the green light to brief our agency leadership in Washington D.C. and the Department of Agriculture this coming December. If that goes well, we anticipate being able to release the draft plan and analysis documents for public comment in early 2016. As we progress towards that goal, we'll be sharing more information on how you can provide input or get involved.

It's been a substantial effort to reach this point. We'll need your continued interest to carry this plan across the finish line by working with us in determining the best strategies for managing the Colville National Forest into the future.



## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION APPROACH

The goal of public participation during the Colville National Forest plan revision process is to provide meaningful opportunities for people to become informed and provide comments about the proposed plan and environmental analysis. We also want to enhance long-term, positive relationships for future implementation and related decisions.

Our approach for public participation throughout the public comment period is diverse and extensive, providing opportunities for the public, special interest groups, cooperating agencies, and governments to engage with the Forest Service and the draft documents, both online and in person.

Plans for in-person meetings include meetings with communities of interest to discuss potential effects on specific forest uses, listening sessions to hear the public's perspective on the draft documents, and focused interest meetings by invitation from user and stakeholder groups. We also plan to attend community events that may be occurring during the comment period to provide information and receive comments.

Online opportunities will include an online open house, which provides traditional in-person open house materials in an easily accessible format, as well as digital technologies like an interactive map, online comment submittal, and material downloads. In addition to the online open house, stakeholders will also be able to participate in an online dialogue with other stakeholders and the Forest Service, as well as topic-specific online webinars.

The Forest Service is dedicated to enhancing public understanding of the forest plan revision process before, during, and after the public comment period. Please continue to follow the process for future engagement opportunities.



## SUBSCRIBE TO THE CONTACT LIST

To ensure that you remain on the contact list for updates or to update your information, please sign up for our new electronic messaging system:

[FS.USDA.GOV/GOTO/COLVILLE/PLAN](https://fs.usda.gov/goto/colville/plan)

We are shifting to the electronic message system and web postings to reduce printing and mailing costs. However, a limited number of hardcopy documents and newsletters will continue to be made available by request. We've been working for a number of months to make this transition. This will be the final hardcopy mailing sent out unless you have confirmed that you would like to remain on the contact list by returning the response postcard sent out August, or by e-mail or phone call. To remain on the hardcopy mailing list, or to receive a CD or hardcopy of the analysis and draft plan and ensure we have your current contact information, please contact Debbie Kelly (509-664-9247) or Franklin Pemberton (509-684-7177).

**This will be the final hardcopy mailing sent out—unless you have confirmed that you would like to remain on the contact list by returning response postcard sent in August or card enclosed, or by email or phone call.**

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### PROJECT WEB SITE

[WWW.FS.USDA.GOV/GOTO/COLVILLE/PLAN-REVISION](https://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/colville/plan-revision)

## Timeframes Milestones and Next Steps to a Revised Forest Plan

<p><b>2003-2011</b></p>	<p>The Forest identified a need for change and developed the Proposed Action with collaborative input from interested public, counties, tribes and partner agencies. Initial public outreach and pre-scoping efforts were accomplished in conjunction with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.</p> <p>Public engagement with interested citizens, tribes, counties and state/federal agencies began in 2004, and included focused public collaboration workshops between 2006 and 2009, which helped in the development of the proposed action. Formal scoping began with the release of the Proposed Action in June 2011 for public comment. Public meetings were held, comments gathered and analyzed.</p>
<p><b>2012-2015</b></p>	<p>Revision team considers scoping comments and identifies issues. Alternatives to the Proposed Action are developed using the issues identified from scoping conducted in 2011. Issues and range of alternatives approved by regional forester. Effects to social, economic, and natural resources are analyzed. The Colville and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests separate their plan revision efforts in 2014.</p>
<p><b>Early 2016</b></p>	<p>Draft EIS and Proposed Revised Colville Forest Plan released for public comment; a 90 day comment period and information sessions are planned. All comments received during the comment period will be analyzed and considered when finalizing the Forest Plans and draft EIS. Engagement with interested parties, other agencies, Tribes, and public continues.</p>
<p><b>2016-2017</b></p>	<p>Following release of the draft DEIS (once comments and any potential changes are considered or incorporated), a Notice of Availability for the Final EIS, and Forest Plan and Objection Process Begins. Once resolution of Objections has been reached, a Record of Decision will be signed.</p>



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**What is a forest plan?** A “forest plan” provides broad guidance and a strategic framework for the planning of projects and activities on a national forest. The plan itself does not compel any action or authorize any use. However, the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires that national forests and grasslands have a plan that may be amended as necessary, and revised every 15 years.

**How does the Forest Service use a land management plan in regular, day-to-day business?** We use the forest plan to guide the planning of site-specific projects that are being evaluated for implementation on the Forest. For example, when preparing for new projects that may require ground disturbance, resource specialists and planners look to the forest plan to ensure that they are in compliance and following requirements. Staff must also follow guidance found in Forest Service directives, guidelines, laws and regulations when implementing programs and projects (and revising a forest plan). It can be complex work and our hope is to develop a plan that clarifies and streamlines those planning processes for both the public and forest service employees.

**How long has the Colville Forest been operating under the current land management plan?** The current plan was signed in 1988. The current forest plan (as amended) will serve as the “no action” alternative in the draft EIS.

**Why is the plan being updated?** The 1988 forest plan has been amended 39 times. Those minor amendments allowed the Forest to conduct National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis to address specific conditions or resource needs on specific projects where guidance had not been identified in the current forest plan. There have been other regional amendments that also may need to be incorporated. In addition, as part of the analysis report, several “Need for Change” issues were identified through early public involvement efforts- including availability of new science, data, changing forest conditions and evolving adaptive forest management approaches. The public and forest resource specialists will also consider lessons learned from over twenty years of managing the Colville National Forest.

### **Why is a draft environmental impact statement (draft EIS) needed to revise the forest plan?**

NEPA requires federal agencies to consider and assess environmental impact of actions that could affect environment, and disclose anticipated effects of these actions to the public. The broad scale (forest-wide) and longer time frame (approximately 15 to 20 years) that is covered by a forest plan could result in long-term impacts in how resources are managed. A draft EIS provides a method to disclose those potential effects to both the public and the Forest Service responsible official that will select one of the alternatives.

**How do forest plan decisions differ from project-level decisions?** The forest plan provides a broad framework that guides project-level decisions but does not authorize, fund, or carry out any project-level activities. The forest plan establishes limitations on what actions may be authorized and what conditions must be met, or progressed towards, during project-level decision making.

**What types of decisions are included in a forest plan revision?** Decisions include management goals (identified as desired conditions), objectives, standards, guidelines, management area allocations (such as research natural areas or general restoration), suitability (such as where it is suitable to graze domestic livestock), and monitoring. Collectively, these elements are called plan components.

### **What were the significant issues identified by the public regarding the Proposed Action released in 2011?**

- Old Forest (Late-Successional) Management (including timber production and related local, social-economic impact considerations identified as part of the refined issues for the Colville National Forest)
- Access
- Motorized Recreation (Trails)
- Recommended Wilderness Areas
- Wildlife
- Riparian and Aquatic Resource Management

**How were these key issues used to identify the range of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS?** These six significant issues (see above) led to the development of multiple approaches, or alternatives, for revising the plan. A summary of these alternatives as well as analysis of the environmental consequences they pose are the focus of the upcoming draft EIS.

The Colville National Forest is preparing to release two documents, a Draft Revised Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), for public review within the next few months.

If you wish to receive information about the comment period, please select how you would like to receive information. Reports will be available online or on CD. Paper copies of draft reports will be available at local Forest Service offices and area public libraries for viewing. A very limited number of printed copies will be made available by special request only.

To help reduce printing costs we invite you to receive updates via Forest Service electronic messaging system.

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or here for Okanogan-Wenatchee project:

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