



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Recreation Report

Colville National Forest Plan Revision

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

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Introduction

The Colville National Forest offers a variety of recreation opportunities that are consistent with the rolling to steep mountainous terrain typical of the Okanogan Highlands landform province and the Selkirk Mountains. Winter or summer, the forest offers easy road and trail access to a full suite of motorized and non-motorized recreational pursuits – from resort based downhill and cross-country skiing to snowmobiling and backcountry skiing; from developed campgrounds to quaint dispersed campsites tucked along one of the forest’s many creeks; from a variety of OHV trail systems to remarkable backcountry and wilderness settings rich with stock, mountain bike, and hiking trails that highlight many of the tallest peaks in northeast Washington. As a Forest with a limited amount of designated wilderness, but rich in undeveloped backcountry, the Colville experiences pressure from non-motorized and motorized recreation interest groups whose use of those backcountry areas overlaps. As a result, the distribution of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities on the Forest is of great interest to many of the visitors to the Colville National Forest, 89% of which travel 100 miles or less to visit the Forest. (NVUM 2012b) Backcountry and motorized recreation opportunities, as well as the many other recreation opportunities provided for on the Colville National Forest, contribute significantly to the local, county, and state economies and are a key component of the lifestyle and family customs of many northeast Washington residents.

Revision Topics Addressed in this Analysis

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation Use

The 1982 Planning Rule, Sec. 219.21 Recreation Resource, requires that a broad spectrum of forest and rangeland related outdoor recreation opportunities are provided for in each alternative developed during the forest plan revision process. It further states that the planning process identify: 1) the physical and biological characteristics that make land suitable for recreation opportunities, 2) the recreation preferences of user groups and the settings needed to provide quality recreation opportunities, and 3) recreation opportunities on National Forest system lands. In addition, the 1982 Planning Rule states that the supply of developed recreation facilities shall be appraised for adequacy to meet present and future demands, that recreation opportunities be responsive to current and anticipated user demands, that the impacts of proposed recreation activities on other recreation opportunities, uses, values, and quality of experience be examined, and that off-road vehicle use shall be planned and implemented to protect land and other resources.

Recreation opportunities on the forest are identified and managed through the Recreation Opportunity System (ROS). A recreation opportunity is defined as “the availability of a real choice for a user to participate in a preferred activity in a preferred setting, in order to realize desired experiences” (U.S. Forest Service 1982). The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a method used to categorize, evaluate, and monitor settings and opportunities based on the natural, managerial, and social environments. Six ROS classes currently apply to NFS lands: Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, Rural, and Urban (U.S. Forest Service 1982). In addition, the Colville National Forest used a sub-class of Roaded Natural, called Roaded Modified, during the development of its 1988 Forest Plan. These classes and sub-class are described in Appendix A.

An ROS inventory is helpful in establishing the baseline condition for recreation settings. It is a management tool used in forest and other broad-scale planning. ROS can be used to show the general effects of alternatives to recreation settings and opportunities over broad classes (U.S. Forest Service 2009a). Figure 1 below shows a generalization of the spectrum and its components. ROS current condition inventory information is not available for the Colville National Forest. Instead, the existing 1988 Forest Plan ROS Classifications would be used as the baseline for comparison of impacts to ROS settings by alternative throughout this report.

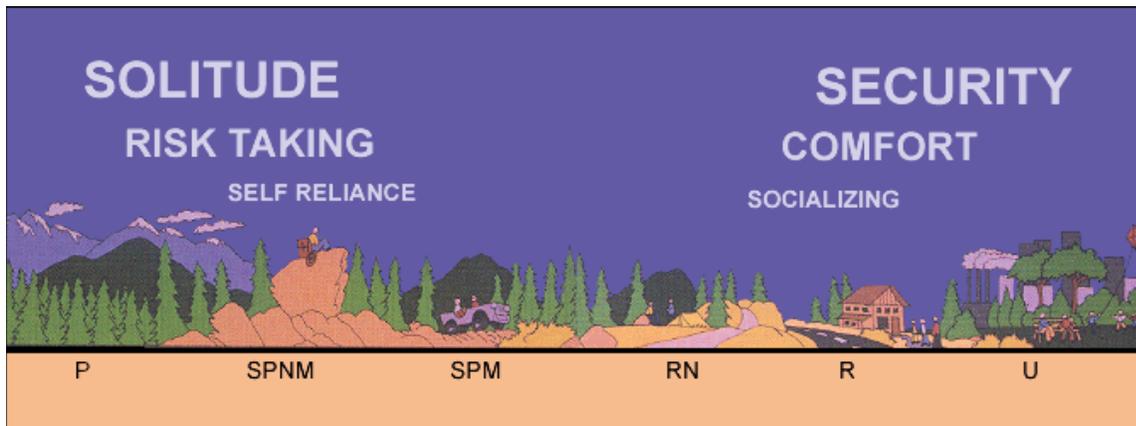


Figure 1. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (U.S. Forest Service 1990)

Another way to look at ROS is through the differences in the types of activities and facilities visitors can expect to find in each of the settings. For example, ATV riding would be an appropriate activity in Semi-Primitive Motorized through Rural ROS classes, but would not be consistent with Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings. Activities such as horseback riding or hiking may be acceptable in all ROS classes, but the trails available could vary greatly with the ROS class. Paved trails would not be found towards the Primitive end of the spectrum, but could be common at the more developed end.

Recommended wilderness, motorized recreation trails, and mechanized recreation trails were all identified through public comments as recreation opportunities where the recreation preferences of user groups varied. The effect to these opportunities as a result of implementing each of the six alternatives is addressed throughout this report. In addition, this report displays each management area within the six alternatives and identifies whether or not the management area is suitable for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation. This report also displays the number of acres per ROS class by alternative.

Motorized Recreation Trails

Public comments reflected different interests regarding motorized recreation opportunities, particularly the distribution and quantity of motorized trails. Some members of the public expressed concerns that the distribution and quantity of motorized trails negatively affects tourism and the local economy, while other stakeholders¹ said that they want fewer miles of motorized trails and that they don't like the resource damage, noise, and conflict associated with them.

¹ Stakeholders = members of the public that have an interest in use and management of the Colville National Forest.

This comment expresses concern about expanding motorized recreation opportunities:

“It is inappropriate to reward user groups that break the law (i.e., trespass into Wilderness), cause the greatest resource damage to trails and vegetation, and probably cause the greatest impact to wildlife with new expanded opportunities to do more of the same.”

Another comment expressed an opposing view:

“There are currently more wilderness trails available in Washington State alone than any one person could hike in a lifetime. By making trails non-motorized we only eliminate access to more tax paying citizens... Motorized trail users, for the most part, are organized and concerned citizens that are out to enjoy the wonders of our natural world just like the non-motorized users.”

The public also raised concerns about the distribution and number of motorized and non-motorized trails. Some stakeholders said that the distribution and number affect tourism and the local economy in the plan area.

“We strongly support the stated goal of having 5% of the trail system adjacent to communities... Creating additional trails for mountain bicycling and other non-motorized recreation, readily accessible from the edges of the rural communities, will provide significant recreation, health, and economic benefits for their residents.”

“Both Motorized and Non-Motorized recreation are important parts of how many users, like me, experience the Forest, from hunters and anglers to backcountry horsemen and ORV users... Making this change would make it impossible for people with limited mobility to visit these areas. It would also hamper backcountry emergency rescues, making them more difficult and expensive.”

Access

Some stakeholders expressed concern that the proposed action does not provide enough roads for recreation, grazing, fire suppression, timber harvest, and firewood collection. They commented that lack of access will have a negative impact on economic well-being. Other stakeholders expressed concern that the Forest Service does not have the capacity to maintain the current road network and that unmaintained roads damage wildlife, water, and fish.

The following comments express views that the proposed action does not provide enough roads for cost-effective resource production, fire suppression, and recreation:

“The road density constraints of 2-3 miles per square mile are inadequate to service commodity production, fire suppression or motorized recreation, and will make prescribed burning and pre-commercial thinning more expensive.”

“Many of these designations are done over existing grazing allotments that will result in loss of cattle and vegetation management as cattlemen are no longer able to maintain economic viability. Cattle activity has been stated as able to continue with management changes, but these changes are not economically viable, and the local economies must not be devastated by this proposed action.”

The following comments express concerns that the proposed action does not provide enough roads for recreation and firewood collection, among other things:

“It is vital to our citizens to keep the forest open for public access, for firewood cutting, food gathering activities, recreation and hunting, just to name a few.”

“[C]losing roads makes it harder if not impossible for volunteers to access the area to help maintain the trails and other resources.”

“The ability for local, regional, and national citizens to gain value from and develop a sense of connection to these national forests depends on their ability to get to the land and experience it first-hand. As such, we recommend that all alternatives of the Forest Plan incorporate increased access aimed at enhancing the quality of experiences available to a broad spectrum of recreational users.”

Other stakeholders said they are concerned that the Forest Service does not have the capacity to maintain its current roads, and that unmaintained roads negatively impact wildlife viability, water quality, and fish populations.

“The Forest has a vastly oversized and unmanageable road system. This road system presents a substantial risk to soil, water, and aquatic resources...In the context of ever-declining road maintenance budgets, the only appropriate management response is to reduce the number of roads.”

Recommended Wilderness

While forest plans may make a preliminary recommendation for additional wilderness, only Congress can designate wilderness. Some stakeholders are concerned that the proposed action recommends too much additional wilderness. They commented that more wilderness areas hurt the economy by limiting timber harvest, grazing, mountain biking, and motorized recreation. Members of the public also raised concerns about the increased cost of managing additional wilderness.

Other stakeholders said that the proposed action does not include enough additional wilderness areas; they want more. They said that they want to make sure that wilderness provides habitat connections for wildlife. Additionally, some members of the public are concerned about protecting the uniqueness of these areas, and they said that additional wilderness improves the local economy.

These comments express the concern that too much wilderness hurts the local economy by limiting recreation, timber harvest, and grazing:

“[M]y perception so far is that wilderness eliminates mountain bikes, mechanical trail maint., forest management, fire response ability, any form of motorized shared use, and doesn't seem to play well with the cattle grazers or other land users”

“Tourism by mountain bikers can help revitalize rural communities...we bring dollars to each community we visit; our recent stay in the Kettle Crest area saw us spending money on camping (North Lake RV Park & Campground), fuel, food (grocery stores and restaurants), liquor, maps and other bicycle-related items.”

Other members of the public said that wilderness provides economic benefits to local communities:

“all of these lands provide significant wilderness character and a wild, scenic backdrop for the area’s many scenic driving routes and communities that promote the region’s rustic, remote, backcountry as part of their growing recreational and tourism economy” and “non-motorized trails are very important for the attractiveness to the affluent (money-spending) hiking crowds of Spokane.”

Concerns were also raised about possible increases in overall wilderness management costs for the Forest:

“Trail work costs [substantially more] per mile than non-wilderness trail work. The USFS is funding trail work at a very reduced level, depending on volunteers. Wilderness trail maintenance is most always done with taxpayer monies, not volunteers. Wilderness trail work is the most time and labor intensive (thus most expensive) trail maintenance. (money that the USFS does not have.)” “The Forest Service cannot adequately manage the wilderness currently in the inventory. Money for trail and bridge construction/maintenance is in short supply and from all indications will be in shorter supply in the near and mid-term future.”

There were concerns that the recommendations did not include areas that may have outstanding wilderness character, and did not include areas that may contribute to habitat connectivity.

“We are concerned that several parts of the Kettle Crest were left outside the recommended wilderness boundary including Snow Peak, Jungle Hill and the Mt. Leona area. We recommend all of the Kettle Crest, north and south of Sherman Pass in the Profanity and Bald Snow areas, be included inside the recommended wilderness boundary...Hall Mountain and Grassy Top should be recommended for wilderness as they provide rugged terrain and are designated habitat for grizzly bears and woodland caribou. Quartzite with its old growth cedar grove would be the closest wilderness area to Spokane.”

“...when reviewing the documents describing the proposed additions I was quite surprised by how little of the lands that currently have wilderness characteristics are being recommended for the designation.”

Other stakeholders are concerned that some recommended wilderness areas do not meet the appropriate criteria for that designation:

“The recommended areas do not satisfy wilderness criteria. Wilderness areas should be areas that are untouched by human activity.”

“Within the boundaries of Abercrombie Hooknose PWA in Steven’s County, stumps, dozer thinning, clear-cut logging activity and roads are clearly visible within the proposed wilderness area. This leads us to believe that the Forest Service has not ground-truthed for wilderness characteristics within the boundaries of the Potential Wilderness Areas (PWA).”

“This review must look at boundary locations and ease of locating on the ground, eliminating cherry stems (like Profanity as an example), and exclude recognizable areas of logging and roading before you develop any alternatives for the final draft EIS.”

Commenters expressed concern that proposed direction may not maintain wilderness character prior to wilderness designation by Congress, which can be a lengthy process.

“The plan should also make clear the forest service's intent ... by including language in the plan that will protect the wilderness characteristics of all of the CNF Potential Wilderness Areas (PWAs), and not just the roadless areas covered under the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.”

“The PA fails to protect the wilderness character of recommend wilderness areas by allowing snowmobile use to continue in those recommended wilderness areas.”

The public also raised concerns about recreation in wilderness:

“... the following selected activities could continue to be authorized in Preliminary Administratively Recommend Wilderness Areas: Summer off-highway vehicle use ...; Winter

motorized use ...; and Vegetation management activities would not be authorized in Preliminary Administratively Recommend Wilderness Areas.’ The above statement makes the motorized community VERY nervous. First off, the draft Plan even highlights ‘could continue to be authorized.’ It doesn’t GUARANTEE continued use. Why not? Second, we have witnessed these areas managed as de-facto Wilderness on Montana Forests and see no reason why that wouldn’t happen here.”

Riparian and Aquatic Resource Management

Some members of the public expressed concern that the proposed action does not adequately protect riparian areas such as streams, lakes, wetlands, and rivers. They said that they want the Forest Service to limit the negative effects of roads, grazing, and off-highway vehicles in these areas. Other members of the public are concerned that the protection of these aquatic resources limits timber production, grazing, and recreation.

Public comments raised concerns that the proposed action does not provide watershed and aquatic resource protections that are as effective as current forest plan direction. Concerns centered on managing possible detrimental impacts of uses such as roads, livestock grazing, and motorized trails in riparian areas.

“The Forest has a vastly oversized and unmanageable road system. This road system presents a substantial risk to soil, water, and aquatic resources.”

“The Proposed Action should include and address the need for restoration of stream connectivity with floodplains, including restoration of off-channel habitats, particularly where roads are located within floodplains.”

“Many of these [grazing] allotments are co-located in sensitive areas with ESA listed fish and are degrading both aquatic and riparian habitat. The effects from livestock grazing are well documented both by the Forest Service and in scientific literature. It is clear that stricter standards and guidelines need to be implemented to minimize the effects of grazing on listed fish and their habitat.”

“Summer off-highway vehicle use and winter motorized use can be very detrimental to stream channels and stream habitat (especially ATVs, motorcycles, etc.). It is very difficult to enforce appropriate use when these vehicles are allowed in riparian areas. Safeguards are needed for effective protection of riparian habitats.”

Other stakeholders commented that there is a need to balance uses.

“I’m concerned this tact will be used as a way to eliminate road miles/access for no valid reason. We support changes to roads and trails to meet these goals but don’t believe elimination is ever the only viable solution.”

“Livestock grazing should be considered as a tool for vegetation management and rangeland health.”

“Enclosing pictures of a ‘restoration project’ in Ferry County, before and after. This project was supposedly to open up 2.5 miles of upland habitat to develop ‘connectivity’... As you can see from the before and after pictures this area was made a wasteland. Water is not flowing freely. There is no habitat connectivity. It did not improve water quality or aquatic/riparian habitat. It destroyed aquatic/riparian habitat. ICBEMP science put to use. Before ICBEMP and Eastside Screens, we had clean water, riparian habitat and fish in these streams. Now we do not.”

Another concern raised was potential impact of increased aquatic protection on ability to effectively manage grazing allotments.

“Watersheds are an important part of our Forest Service Grazing Allotments. The desired condition should provide for improved forage for livestock. All planning activities that have any effect on management or the number of AUM’s of the grazing allotments need to be coordinated with local cattlemen associations, local governments and grazing permit holders.”

However, increased management along riparian areas was supported by comments such as

“The effects from livestock grazing are well documented both by the Forest Service and in scientific literature. It is clear that stricter standards and guidelines need to be implemented to minimize the effects of grazing on listed fish and their habitat. Specifically, grazing in key watersheds should, at a minimum, lead to the improvement or restoration of riparian conditions.”

Issue Indicators for Recreation Resources

The following indicators are to be used to evaluate each recreation resource management issue and to develop the variations between the alternatives:

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation Use

Evaluation Criteria

- Evaluate the distribution of areas open to motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities and the corresponding recreation management setting.

Key Indicators:

- Recreation – acres of allocations for motorized/non-motorized use
- ROS – acres in each of the ROS Classes

Motorized Recreation Trails

Evaluation Criteria

The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between the alternatives:

- The distribution of motorized and non-motorized recreation trails and areas to assess contribution to motorized / non-motorized recreation opportunities
- The contribution of motorized recreation on the national forest to the local county economy

Key Indicators:

- Predicted output, uses and activity levels for motorized/non-motorized use
 - Recreation – location, trail miles and acres of allocation for motorized and non-motorized use

- Economic and social sustainability
 - Evaluation of access to motorized and non-motorized trails

Access

Evaluation Criteria

The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between the alternatives:

- Evaluate the effects of road density limits on roaded access for recreation use, wildfire suppression, and vegetation management activities, specifically commercial timber harvest.

Key Indicators:

- Predicted output, uses and activity levels
 - Location and amount of allocations suitable for roads
- Economic and social sustainability
 - Social impact related to recreation opportunities

Recommended Wilderness

Evaluation Criteria

The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between the alternatives:

- Whether Recommended Wilderness (RW) areas contribute to the need for wilderness
- The availability tradeoffs, especially summer and winter motorized uses.
- The market and non-market costs and benefits associated with wilderness.

Key Indicators:

- Predicted output, uses and activity levels
 - Location and amount of Recommended Wilderness
 - Miles of trail available for mechanized or motorized use

Relevant Laws, Regulations and Policy that Apply

Forest Service Organic Act of 1897: Authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate rules and regulations to regulate the use and occupancy of the national forests.

Granger-Thye Act of 1950 - Allows concessionaire fees for recreation facilities to be reduced for work performed to maintain and enhance those facilities.

Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 - States that the national forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes, and authorizes and directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop and administer the renewable surface resources of the national forests for the multiple use and sustained yield of the products and services obtained there from.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1964 - Provides a source of funding for the acquisition of land or interest in land for the benefit of all Americans. The main emphases of the fund are recreation and the protection of national natural treasures in the forms of parks and protected forest and wildlife areas.

Wilderness Act of 1964 – The Wilderness Act was created by Congress in 1964 (Public Law 88-577; 16 U.S.C. 1131-1136) to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System in order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, did not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.

Service Contract Act of 1965 - Allows concessionaire operation of recreation facilities.

National Trails System Act of 1968 - Establishes a national system of recreation, scenic, and historic trails by designating the initial components of the system and prescribing the methods and standards through which additional components may be added.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 – The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Act is notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection.

National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 - Directs all federal agencies to consider and report the potential environmental impacts of proposed federal actions, and established the Council on Environmental Quality.

National Forest Management Act of 1976 - Requires the provision for multiple use and sustained yield of products and services in accordance with the Multiple-Use, Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, and the coordination of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, fish, wilderness, and timber.

Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 - Requires public lands to be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values; that, where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use.

The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 - Requires access to facilities designed, built, altered, or leased with federal funds.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, as amended - Prohibits discrimination on the bases of a disability.

Executive Order 13443 - Provides direction for the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat as affected by public land management, outdoor recreation, and wildlife management.

Executive Order 11644 - Provides direction pertaining to the use of off-road vehicles on the public lands.

Title 36 CFR 212 - Provides direction for the administration of the forest transportation system; the designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use; and use by over-snow vehicles.

Title 36 CFR 251 - Provides overall direction for land uses, including miscellaneous land uses; special uses (Outfitter/Guides, for example); appeal of decisions relating to occupancy and use of USFS lands; and access to non-Federal lands.

Title 36 CFR 261 - Provides general prohibitions on USFS lands.

Title 36 CFR 291 - Provides direction for the occupancy and use of developed sites and areas of concentrated public use on USFS lands, including admission fees, recreation use fees, and reservation fees.

Title 36 CFR 293 - Provides direction for the administration and use of wilderness and primitive areas on USFS lands.

Title 36 CFR 294 - Provides direction for special areas, including recreation areas.

Title 36 CFR 297 - Provides direction for the administration of Wild and Scenic Rivers under Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, which provides for the protection of the free-flowing, scenic, and natural values of rivers designated as components or potential components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System from the effects of construction of any water resources project.

FSH 1909.12 - Land Management Planning Handbook, Chapter 70 - Wilderness Evaluation. Provides direction on the identification and evaluation of potential wilderness, the review and approval of wilderness recommendations, and required wilderness evaluation documentation.

FSH 2309.18 - Provides direction for designing, building, and maintaining USFS trails.

FSH 2709.11 - Provides direction for processing and administering special uses.

FSH 7309.11 - Provides direction for managing USFS facilities.

FSM 1900 - Provides direction for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act and Council on Environmental Quality regulations.

FSM 1923 – Provides Wilderness Evaluation direction during land management planning.

FSM 2300 - Provides direction for management and planning in relation to recreation, wilderness, and related resources.

FSM 2700 - Provides the legal framework for special uses on USFS lands.

FSM 7300 - Provides direction for planning, development, and managing facilities on USFS lands.

FSM 7400 - Provides direction for administration and managing drinking water systems, waste water systems, effluents, solid waste systems and food services.

FSM 7700 - Provides direction on forest transportation systems and management of motor vehicle use.

PL 98-339 – Washington State Wilderness Act of 1984: designates the Salmo-Priest Wilderness.

Affected Environment

In 2005, the Colville National Forest completed a Recreation Site Facility Master Plan (RSFMP) process to identify the Forest's recreation niche and identify actions that would move the Forest towards providing a quality, sustainable developed recreation site program. The RSFMP served as a framework from which the Forest prioritized investments and pursued changes in the operation and maintenance of developed recreation sites. Under the RSFMP, the Colville National Forests Recreation Niche was: *Rustic Recreation – A Dispersed Recreation Playground for Our Communities supported by rustic facilities scattered throughout the forest and connected by a network of scenic routes.* (U.S. Forest Service 2005)

By 2012, the Forest identified that the RSFMP Niche was becoming dated in its focus on developed recreation site infrastructure and that stakeholders through collaborative meetings associated with Proof of Concept (a unique budget model the Forest piloted from 2008-2012) and NEWSTART (a local recreation collaborative started in 2009 that focuses on sustainable recreation strategies) were asking the Forest to provide more through its recreation program than the RSFMP Niche could support.

In response, the Colville National Forest developed a sustainable recreation strategy to help guide its efforts and investments. The strategy addresses increasing recreation demands through integrating the recreation program with other resource areas to balance social, ecological and financial needs. The overarching goal is to focus on mission-driven priorities, connect recreation benefits to communities, provide for changing urban populations, and most importantly, provide balanced quality recreation opportunities while maintaining a functioning environment. The vision statement for the Forest's sustainable recreation strategy is: *The Colville National Forest is known for its pathways to discovery through a series of linked byways and trails which lead to high quality recreation opportunities, destinations and beyond.*

Goals were developed to describe the specific focus areas that would be implemented under the sustainable recreation strategy. These goals include:

1. Focused high quality: We strive to maintain and strategically enhance recreation opportunities and settings that are associated with key pathways instead of attempting to provide every opportunity everywhere.
2. Youth and Conservation through recreation: Conservation education emphasizing youth is focused on fun, creativity and a sense of wonder and excitement through discovery.

3. Innovative options: Recreation program capacity is enhanced by our culture of innovation and non-traditional approaches. (U.S. Forest Service, 2012a)

The Forest’s sustainable recreation strategy brings forward the RSFMPs idea of connecting to recreation through a network of scenic routes and takes it a step further to include all recreation opportunities. Since the sustainable recreation strategy is designed to balance social, ecological and financial needs and conditions, as any of these change (such as available funding) the strategy would evolve.

Analysis Area

The analysis area for this report includes all lands administered by the Colville National Forest.

²Survey, Trend, and Use Information

Demand for access to the Colville National Forest for recreation purposes has increased steadily over the past 26 years since the last forest plan was developed. During that same time, the growth in recreation in the Nation has been extraordinary. For example, participation in camping increased from about 47 million people in 1982-1983 to almost 89 million people in 2005-2009 (Cordell et al. 2009). Between 2000 and 2007, the total number of recreation activity days increased approximately 25 percent (Cordell et al. 2008). The activities of viewing and photographing birds, day hiking, backpacking, off-highway motor vehicle (OHV) driving, walking outdoors, and canoeing/kayaking have seen the greatest growth in the last two decades (Cordell et al. 2009).

Trend analysis in the 2013 Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) indicates similar findings to the studies by Cordell and points to a dramatic increase in participation in many nature-based activities. The 2013 SCORP report indicates the most intensive users of public facilities and lands participate in hiking, beachcombing, picnicking/BBQing/cooking out, wildlife viewing, and swimming in pools or natural waters. The report goes on to state that a third of Washington state residents participate in the following activities at a level lower than they would like: hiking, camping, fishing, walking, bicycling, off-road driving, and hunting. In addition, some activities have had a marked increase in ranking since the previous SCORP, including visiting a nature interpretive center, climbing or

² Trend data for this section was considered from the following sources: Hall, *Likely Trends in National Forest Recreation in Region Six (Draft)*, University of Idaho, 2005; Hall et al, *Understanding Recreation Trends in the Pacific Northwest: State of Knowledge and Manager’s Needs*, Draft 2004; USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, *2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation, Washington*, Revised March 2003 <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/01fhw/fhw01-wa.pdf>; Office of the Interagency Committee [IAC], 2002. Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation: *An assessment of outdoor recreation on Washington state—a State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning Document [SCORP] 2002-2007*. The Office of Interagency Committee, PO Box 40917, Olympia, WA. 98504-0917; Outdoor Industry Foundation, *Outdoor Recreation Participation Study, Seventh Edition, for year 2004*, 2005; Cordell, USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station, *Recreation Statistics Update Report Numbers 1-3*, 2004; Cordell et al, USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station, *Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation in the United States, Regions and States: A National report from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE)*, 2005; Cordell, H. Ken; Betz, Carter, J.; Butler, Brett J.; Bergstrom, John C. 2008. Trends in Forest-Based Recreation: Reports for the 2010 Montreal Process Indicators for the U.S.; [Cordell, H. Ken; Green, Gary T.; Betz, Carter J. 2009. Long-term National Trends in Outdoor Recreation Activity Participation---1980 to Now; Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. 2013. Outdoor Recreation in Washington, The 2013 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Olympia, Washington.](#)

mountaineering, firearms use (hunting or shooting), inner tubing or floating, and camping in a primitive location. Finally, the SCORP's assessment of the supply of outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities in Washington suggests that the supply of recreation is not completely meeting public demand, and meeting that demand is further challenged by the pressure of population growth and urbanization in Washington and that a major focus of recreation planning over the next 5 years should be in providing those nature-based activities for Washington residents while maintaining the integrity of the ecosystems upon which those recreational activities depend. (Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, 2013)

Because of the rising demand for recreation opportunities on public land and the increasing economic dependency of communities on that use, several studies have been conducted in the past decade to assess use and trends. Although studies vary in their results, there are several trends that are common in every study:

- The national population is growing and the amount of people recreating in the outdoors is increasing along with the growing population.
- Users are more diverse and more women are participating in outdoor recreation.
- The average age of people recreating is increasing.
- Interest in new recreation activities has grown significantly, although the most popular historical recreation activities (camping and hiking) have held steady and are still the most popular activities today.
- People are using National Forests for shorter durations. They prefer more weekend experiences rather than multi-week ventures.

According to Roper surveys in 2000, activities that are more strenuous start dropping off after age 65. However, more Americans are remaining active into their older years, and those who reach age 65 in the next 10-15 years would likely seek out more vigorous activities. (Hall, 2005) This prediction implies that with a generation of health-minded, active baby boomers retiring and having more leisure time, the demand for challenging experiences may remain steady.

Statewide, the population is expected to grow 16.5 percent between 2012 and 2027. (State of Washington Office of Financial Management, 2011) The Hispanic population is expected to increase substantially in Washington State and the Asian/Pacific Islander population is expected to increase almost as much, from about 425,000 in 2005 to 700,000 in 2025. (Hall, 2005) Surveys have shown that many Hispanic people prefer camping in a group atmosphere and enjoy activities that involve the whole family. There is very little known at this time about preferred outdoor activities for the Asian/Pacific Islander population. However, monitoring for satisfaction would continue, and future surveys may start to show trends in Asian/Pacific Islander activities.

To gain a better understanding of the recreation use, importance of, and satisfaction associated with National Forest recreation opportunities, the Forest Service embarked on the national visitor use monitoring project (NVUM) in the late 1990s. The Colville National Forest has conducted three rounds of surveys in fiscal years 2004, 2009, and 2014. Each survey is conducted over the course of one year (October 1 – September 30) and includes questions regarding visitor use (activities), expenditures on recreation activities, and user satisfaction associated with the activities, settings, and infrastructure used while visiting the Forest.

Without several years of survey data to consider, it is difficult to predict use trends from the Forest's NVUM data. However, the Forest can use the data most recently collected to help

determine existing use. The following table shows the most popular visitor activities according to the 2009 Colville NF NVUM report (the 2014 report has not been completed). This table shows both the main activity visitors engaged in and the participation percentage for all activities. For example, 18.5% of the visitors interviewed in 2009 were camping in developed campgrounds, but only 8.5% percent of them listed it as their main activity.

Table 1 – Percent Participation in Activities and Primary Activities of Colville NF Recreation Visitors based on 2009 NVUM Reports³

Activity	% Participation	% Main Activity	Average Hours doing Main Activity
Viewing Natural Features	30.7	12.0	3.9
Hiking / Walking	29.0	7.8	4.5
Relaxing	28.3	5.7	30.3
Downhill Skiing	24.0	23.3	4.8
Driving for Pleasure	21.9	2.0	2.9
Viewing Wildlife	20.9	0.4	2.4
Developed Camping	18.5	8.5	52.2
Gathering Forest Products	13.8	8.6	5.0
Fishing	13.6	5.5	6.5
Picnicking	13.3	0.4	13.2
Other Non-motorized	9.1	2.5	1.7
Motorized Trail Activity	8.3	4.3	3.5
Snowmobiling	7.7	7.2	4.4
OHV Use	6.6	1.4	3.1
Primitive Camping	6.0	1.7	64.7
Motorized Water Activities	6.0	2.2	4.3
Bicycling	5.1	1.0	7.6
Nature Study	4.9	0.7	1.1
Non-motorized Water	4.2	1.1	6.5
Hunting	3.6	1.6	12.2
Visiting Historic Sites	3.2	0.0	0.0
Nature Center Activities	3.1	0.0	1.0
Cross-country Skiing	2.6	1.6	3.7
Backpacking	2.5	0.4	15.9
Resort Use	2.0	0.0	12.8
Some Other Activity	1.3	0.4	3.3
Other Motorized Activity	0.8	0.7	1.0
Horseback Riding	0.7	0.1	10.3

In general, results from the 2009 NVUM survey indicate that most visitors to the Colville NF are satisfied, if not very satisfied, with the recreation experience they had while visiting the Forest (there were very few somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied experiences noted). In addition,

³ U.S. Forest Service. 2012. 2009 Visitor Use Report, Colville NF, National Visitor Use Monitoring Data Collected FY 2009.

most visitors did not feel overcrowded during their visit. There are, however, a few site-specific contradictions to this information connected with specific recreation areas and days (i.e. Memorial Day and July 4th weekends, opening day of hunting season, etc.). Overall, recreation managers on the Forest are still able to provide satisfying recreation experiences to the majority of Forest visitors in a relatively uncrowded setting.

Historically, people have enjoyed relatively easy access to a variety of recreation opportunities on federal public lands. Recreation management on National Forest System lands consists of providing a wide range of environmentally sustainable recreation opportunities in natural settings that meet the current and future needs and desires of Forest visitors at a level consistent with national budget trends. Forest recreation managers are charged with providing this wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities within the parameters of national direction, local resource conditions, and available budgets. Since the end of World War II, demand for outdoor recreation on public lands has grown immensely and is the fastest growing use on national forest system lands.

The Colville National Forest provides the majority of the nature-based mountain recreation opportunities in northeastern Washington. Key attractions include viewing natural features, hiking/walking, relaxing, downhill skiing, driving for pleasure, viewing wildlife, and developed camping. (NVUM 2012b) While some level of recreation activity occurs almost everywhere on the forest, the majority of summer use is concentrated near water (lakes, streams, and rivers), around campgrounds and day-use developed sites or along Forest System trails and roads. In the winter, many roads are managed as snowmobile trails and some roads are managed as cross-country ski trails. Ski areas, both downhill and cross-country, provide key winter destinations, where large seasonal concentrations of recreation use occur. While recreation visits are fewer in spring, there is no off-season here. Use is year-round, with visitor numbers peaking on holidays, weekends and during the first weeks of hunting and fishing seasons.

National forests provide a variety of opportunities for recreating, working, and practicing cultural and spiritual traditions. In turn, communities provide infrastructure and skills to support forest management. Sustainable social and economic opportunities are dependent on well-functioning and resilient ecological systems. Over the past 20 years, demographic and economic changes have altered how people use and access the national forests. There is a need for the Forests to contribute to predictable and sustained flows of economic and social benefits (e.g., ecosystem services) within the capability of the ecosystem. Social changes include an increasing demand, largely due to population growth, for a variety of recreation opportunities on public lands. New activities and modes of travel continue to appear; for example, mountain bicycles with over-snow tires and snowmobiles that resemble motorcycles. In addition, demand for recreation opportunities in 'front country' areas is greater than for backcountry areas.

Recreation in northeast Washington is rooted in local traditions, yet is constantly changing and posing new and increased challenges for agency managers. Forest Service identity is strong in the local communities. People who live in the area are concerned about forest management, have place attachments to the landscape, and are interested in management changes that could affect their lifestyle or livelihoods. Local lifestyles and economics are firmly linked to public land, with the majority of people who visit, influence, or are directly influenced by the Colville National Forest living within two-hours driving time of these lands. (NVUM 2012b) Recreation facilities, areas, and programs on Colville NF lands influence local economies by prompting business in the tourism and retail sectors. Regional and national tourism, along with local Forest recreation use, are factors in the viability of many small businesses in the area.

Need for Change

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation

National Forest System lands are generally suitable for a variety of uses, including recreation. The Responsible Official, as appropriate, shall utilize existing laws, regulation, and policy, as well as social, economic, and ecological considerations to identify suitability of areas within a National Forest System unit. Land use specifically excluded by law, regulation or policy; or use that would result in substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land; or use that is incompatible with the desired conditions for the relevant portion of the analysis area would not be authorized.

The identification of an area as suitable for various uses is *guidance* for project and activity decision making, and is *not a resource commitment or final decision* approving projects and activities. Final decisions on resource commitments are made at the project level.

- **Areas suitable for a particular use** – the particular use on these lands is compatible with the desired condition in the forest plan. This does not mean that the use would occur over the entire area.
- **Areas not suitable for a particular use** – the particular use on these areas is not compatible with the desired conditions of the forest plan. This does not mean that the use would not occur in specific areas.

Lands suitable for recreation use are those lands not restricted from recreation use by Presidential, Congressional or administrative constraints. The compatibility of these lands with Forest Plan desired conditions, objectives, and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes provide the basis for determining whether a use is suitable for a particular area. The starting point for the identification of lands as suitable is the existing suitability determination carried forward from current Forest Plan. Recreation suitability in the 1982 planning rule is based on the idea that uses are generally suitable unless determined otherwise. This is consistent with the basic philosophy that these are the people’s lands, and therefore it is appropriate to have a presumption that lands are suitable for a variety of uses.

The following table reflects whether the management areas associated with each action alternative is suitable for summer or winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.

Table 2. Management Areas Suitable for Summer and Winter Motorized and Non-Motorized Recreation Opportunities by Action Alternative

Management Area – revised LMP	Summer Motorized	Summer Non-Motorized	Winter Motorized	Winter Non-Motorized
Backcountry – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action ⁴	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable

⁴ The Backcountry MA aligns with the No Action’s Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation MA.

Management Area – revised LMP	Summer Motorized	Summer Non-Motorized	Winter Motorized	Winter Non-Motorized
Backcountry Motorized – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action ⁵	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable – Limited by wildlife habitat restrictions	Suitable
Focused Restoration – Alternatives P and Proposed Action	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable
General Restoration – Alternatives R, P and Proposed Action	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable
Late Forest Structure – Alternative R	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable
Administrative and Recreation Sites – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action	Suitable – site specific decision	Suitable	Suitable – site specific decision	Suitable
Riparian – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable
National Scenic Trails – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not suitable	Suitable
National Recreation Trails – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action	Suitable – if consistent with the purpose of the trail	Suitable	Suitable – if consistent with the purpose of the trail	Suitable
Research Natural Areas – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable
Scenic Byways – Alternatives	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable

⁵ The Backcountry Motorized MA aligns with the No Action’s Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation MA.

Management Area – revised LMP	Summer Motorized	Summer Non-Motorized	Winter Motorized	Winter Non-Motorized
R,P,B,O and Proposed Action				
Special Interest Area – Alternatives P,O	Suitable - if Consistent with the emphasis Of The SIA	Suitable	Suitable - if consistent with the emphasis of the SIA.	Suitable
Wild & Scenic Rivers – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action	Not Suitable - Wild Segment	Suitable	Not Suitable - wild segment	Suitable
Wilderness – Alternatives R,P,B,O, Proposed Action and No Action	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not suitable	Suitable
Recommended Wilderness – Alternatives R,P,B,O and Proposed Action	Suitable – if motorized use occurred prior to identification as recommended wilderness	Suitable	Suitable - if motorized use occurred prior to identification as recommended wilderness	Suitable
Old Growth Dependent Species Habitat – No Action Alternative	Suitable – if habitat integrity is maintained	Suitable	Suitable – if habitat integrity is maintained	Suitable
Caribou Habitat – No Action Alternative	Suitable – if habitat integrity is maintained	Suitable	Suitable – if habitat integrity is maintained	Suitable
Recreation – No Action Alternative	Suitable in MA 3A and 3C; Not suitable in MA 3B	Suitable	Suitable in MA 3A and 3C; Not suitable in MA 3B	Suitable
Scenic/Timber –	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable

Management Area – revised LMP	Summer Motorized	Summer Non-Motorized	Winter Motorized	Winter Non-Motorized
No Action Alternative				
Scenic/Winter Range – No Action Alternative	Suitable – seasonal closures may be implemented	Suitable	Suitable – seasonal closures may be implemented	Suitable
Wood/Forage – No Action Alternative	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable
Winter Range – No Action Alternative	Suitable – seasonal closures may be implemented	Suitable	Suitable – seasonal closures may be implemented	Suitable

Motorized Recreation Trails

The Colville National Forest offers a mixture of summer and winter motorized trail opportunities in a variety of recreation settings. Motorized uses associated with both seasons are bound by direction in the current Forest Plan, the 2005 Travel Management Rule, and wilderness regulations that prohibit all motorized use in designated wilderness areas. Current Forest Plan language identifies where motorized recreation use may not be authorized or may be limited for the protection of aquatic, plant and wildlife habitats. In addition, summer motorized recreation use is also restricted to those routes (roads and trails) identified on the Forest’s current-year Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) which was developed in response to Subpart B of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. An over-snow vehicle use map, pursuant to Subpart C of the 2005 Travel Management Rule has not been completed on the Forest. At this time, no motorized cross-country travel is allowed on the Colville National Forest except for over-snow vehicle travel, which is open to all areas not closed for resource protection or for the protection of wilderness settings.

Existing routes on the Colville’s MVUM were identified through numerous collaborative public meetings that included pro-motorized, neutral, and non-motorized interests. Many routes identified by motorized users during the public meeting process were not opened to motorized use with the publishing of the first MVUM in 2008 since many non-motorized users felt the routes would lead to additional noise and resource damage and were opposed to their inclusion on the map. As a result, the system of roads identified in 2008 for use by OHVs on the Forest was disjointed, provided few loop riding opportunities, very few connections between the Forest and tourism dependent communities, and included numerous short out-and-back rides that have been seldom used. To date, the system of OHV routes identified in 2008 remains unchanged across much of the forest except in the South End planning area (includes national forest lands between U.S. Highway 395 and State Highway 20, generally south of the Little Pend

Oreille Wildlife Refuge and north of the forest's southern border) where a recent decision has improved opportunities for OHV loop rides and connecting OHV users with communities and camping opportunities. Many community members and county commissioners believe that a more cohesive OHV route system on the Forest would bolster local economies through tourism income associated with motorized recreation. The split between motorized and non-motorized interest groups is present not only in discussions involving the National Forest, but also in discussions surrounding community trail systems.

The Forest currently offers 181 miles of summer motorized trails. Approximately 97% (177 miles) of those motorized trail miles are located on the Newport and Three Rivers Ranger Districts; 1.4 miles are located on the Republic District and approximately three miles are located on the Sullivan Lake District. Summer motorized trails make up 36% of the total summer trail miles on the Forest, with motorcycle trails accounting for 66% of all motorized trail miles.

OHV use is allowed on designated routes (mixed-use roads and trails) across approximately 82% of the Forest. Mixed-use roads open to OHV use includes 684 miles (31%) out of the 2,206 miles of road that are open to highway legal vehicles across the forest. OHV use on trails located in a motorized backcountry setting is allowed on approximately 5% of the Forest, which equals 22% of the Forest's total (including motorized and non-motorized) backcountry acres. No cross-country OHV use is allowed on the Forest. Three motorized mixed-use roads connect with the Little Pend Oreille OHV trail system which provides some additional loop riding opportunities. No motorized mixed-use roads connect with the Owl Mountain, Thompson Ridge, Mack King, Twin Sisters, US Mountain, Batey-Bould, Middle Fork Calispell, or South Huckleberry OHV trail systems.

Trails designed specifically for motorcycle use are centered on the Little Pend Oreille and Batey-Bould ORV areas. Both of these systems are popular with intermediate to advanced riders and offer limited terrain for beginners. The Forest supports two small ATV trail systems that do not meet the desired riding distance and loop requirements of most ATV users. These trails are typically used by nearby campers and local residents looking for short beginner rides. In addition, the Forest has seven jeep trails located in the eastern foothills of the Kettle Crest that are open to all vehicles. These trails are popular with intermediate to advanced drivers. However, their use is limited because they are not part of a legal loop riding opportunity for non-highway legal vehicles. These trails do not connect with motorized mixed-use roads, so trail users are required to go out and back or return to their starting points illegally on roads open to highway legal vehicles only. Unlike the majority of the motorcycle and ATV trails which meander through the working front-country terrain of the Forest, these jeep trails traverse through the higher elevation ridgelines of four of the Forest's potential wilderness areas. As a result, these jeep trails provide motorized access into some of the best unaltered and roadless landscapes the Colville National Forest has to offer and their presence in these potential wilderness areas has resulted in conflict between motorized users and wilderness proponents.

The Forest offers a groomed winter over-snow vehicle trail system that can be used by riders of all skill levels. This system of groomed trails has been scaled back over the past ten to fifteen years as a result of decreased funding at both the Forest and State levels. Snowmobile trails can be found on every District of the Forest and are located almost exclusively on existing Forest System roads. These trails are maintained and groomed through partnerships with local grooming councils which include representatives from the local Counties, snowmobile clubs, and contracted groomer operators. Funding for grooming is provided through State grants.

Winter trails are also limited to those routes and areas that are not closed for the protection of aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitats or for the protection of wilderness settings. Cross-country over-snow vehicle use is currently allowed across the forest except in wilderness, semi-primitive non-motorized management areas, research natural areas, and designated winter range. In a few key areas, such as the power line corridor over Sherman Pass, increased use by backcountry skiers and snowmobilers has resulted in some conflict between the two groups of users.

Non-Motorized Trails

According to the Forest's 2009 NVUM survey data, non-motorized trail use is still one of the most popular recreational activities on the Forest with survey respondents indicating that just over 37% participated in hiking/walking, bicycling, backpacking, horseback riding or a combination of these activities. These activities are listed in order of popularity on the Forest. In addition, data reflected in the 2002 Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning report shows that walking and hiking are the most popular recreation activities in the state and that over 50% of the people who responded prefer mountain-forest trails over city sidewalks.

Non-motorized trails (approximately 319 miles) make up 64% of summer trail miles on the Forest and accommodate uses such as hiking, mountain biking, and stock use. Most of the Forest's non-motorized trail miles can be found along the Kettle Crest and within the Salmo-Priest Wilderness Area. The remaining trails are scattered around various recreational lakes and in backcountry settings located across the Forest. Most of these trails are located in mid to high elevation terrain, which generally limits their use to the summer and fall months. However, there are a couple of lower elevation trail systems located just outside of Newport and Republic that are popular in the spring and late fall due to their easy access and limited snow cover.

Trail use on the Forest is dominated by day-hikers. Those overnight hikers the Forest does receive tend to use the trail systems along the Kettle Crest and those within the Salmo-Priest Wilderness. There are few non-motorized loop trails on the Forest. As a result, those trails that do create a loop tend to receive much higher use than those trails that are simple out-and-backs or require a shuttle vehicle. This can lead to the perception of crowding on some trails during summer weekends.

Most non-motorized trails on the Forest (81%) were designed for pack and saddle stock use and continue to be maintained for that use. Only 3% of the trail system is designed and managed for mountain bikes with the remaining 16% designed and managed for hikers. Most of the Forest's summer non-motorized trails are open to all types of users which has led to some conflict between mountain bikers and equestrian users, but generally, the two groups tend to get along and have partnered in trail maintenance projects in the past. However, for safety reasons, interpretive trails, trails entering or leaving developed campgrounds, and some lakeshore trails are only open to hikers.

Winter non-motorized trail use is concentrated around the five cross-country ski trail systems that are located across every District on the Forest except for Sullivan Lake. The five trail systems receive regular grooming through either a private contractor or Forest Service personnel. Funding for grooming is provided primarily through State grants. The permit holder for the 49 Degrees North Mountain Resort is responsible for grooming their Nordic ski trail system. Winter trails are limited on the Colville National Forest due to lynx habitat in the higher elevations (no additional groomed routes are allowed in designated lynx habitat) and

inconsistent snow conditions in the lower foothills and valleys. The Forest's five cross-country ski areas are located in a variety of settings including high elevation ridgelines, lake basins, and rolling forested foothills. These areas experience moderate use when snow conditions are good. Due to the availability of cross country ski areas closer to Spokane, the Forest's trail system is primarily used by local residents, which keeps crowding to a minimum given the limited amount of trail miles (40) the Forest has to offer.

Access

Three broad concerns drove the need to address road density: 1) the Forest is no longer able to afford to properly maintain its road system at current operational maintenance levels, 2) the current road system is not aligned with current and future resource management objectives, and 3) the existing road management direction is confusing and difficult to follow because it is scattered throughout the current Forest plan, forest plan amendments (Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment #2 [Eastside Screens], Interim Inland Native Fish Strategy for the Intermountain, Northern, and Pacific Northwest Regions [INFish, USDA Forest Service 1994c and 1995], national level decisions (the Roadless Rule), and interim policy (e.g., Grizzly Bear No-Net-Loss, Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy, The Interior Columbia Basin Strategy).

The Forest's open road network is critical to the recreational use of National Forest system lands. Regardless of the type of recreation activity being sought, nearly all forest users access that activity with a vehicle. Therefore, each time a road is closed or decommissioned due to a lack of funding or for the benefit of other resource areas (i.e. fisheries or water quality); there is a potential loss of motorized access to a variety of recreation opportunities and settings. Likewise, most roads heavily used for recreation on the Forest are also located along some of the more sensitive riparian areas within the Forest which can lead to complicated decisions with tradeoffs between social needs and resource needs.

In order to provide the public with a spectrum of high quality, nature-based recreational settings and opportunities that access the various biological, geological, scenic, cultural, and experiential resources of the Forest, the Forest must first provide a safe and appropriate level of motorized access to those opportunities and settings. As part of the process in determining what an appropriate road system might look like on the Colville National Forest, the Forest developed a Travel Analysis Report pursuant to Subpart A of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. This process required Forest recreation managers to rank each authorized road on the Forest according to its value to the recreation program. Likewise, other resource specialists (such as wildfire suppression, range management, fisheries, wildlife, soil, plant, and hydrology) also provided a ranking on each road. The Forest's Travel Analysis would be utilized to help inform decision makers of potential trade-offs associated with all future road planning decisions on the Forest. The Travel Analysis Report does not consider unauthorized roads or user created routes. These routes are currently closed to use through the MVUM and can be decommissioned as funding allows.

The Colville National Forest's existing road system currently provides adequate access to the Forest's numerous recreational opportunities. With the new Forest plan, there is a need to ensure that the Forest continues to have an access system of authorized roads that is safe, affordable, and environmentally sound, that meets obligations to private cooperators, is efficient to manage, and provides adequate access to recreation settings and opportunities.

Dispersed Recreation

Dispersed recreation includes a variety of activities that occur in almost every type of setting available on the Forest. Primary activities include camping at undeveloped campsites, berry and mushroom picking, hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife viewing and sightseeing. Generally, these activities require little in the form of management other than quality signing, physical barriers where needed to limit motorized use, and a system of roads (see previous discussion) that provides adequate access into and through the forest. One exception is the need for fishing and boat docks where lake terrain makes access to a quality opportunity difficult. In recent years, the Forest has invested in several new boat and fishing docks to improve the access to and use of several lakes across the Forest.

Most dispersed camping on the Forest occurs in riparian areas along lakeshores, streams and rivers. Many of the most popular dispersed campsites have been used for generations and are important to the families that have camped there for years; the campsite, activities, and setting are part of their custom and history. However, many of these sites are showing signs of resource degradation due to overuse. The Forest needs to continue to provide dispersed camping opportunities in their traditional settings while correcting existing resource damage and protecting these sites into the future.

Recommended Wilderness

When a forest plan is revised, the 1984 Washington State Wilderness Act requires the Forest Service to review, evaluate and determine whether inventoried roadless areas should be submitted to Congress for consideration as recommended wilderness.

In the summer of 2005, the forest plan revision team for the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests began the process of evaluating inventoried roadless areas with the help of interested members of the public. Although inventoried roadless areas are evaluated for potential wilderness, it does not necessarily mean that the inventoried roadless area would automatically become (or not become) a new wilderness area. It is an evaluation process, not a final decision on designation. Only Congress can designate additional wilderness.

The forest plan revision team for the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests used inventory criteria from the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70) to evaluate roadless areas for potential wilderness. In order to qualify for placement on the potential wilderness inventory, an inventoried roadless area has to meet either criteria 1 and 3, or criteria 2 and 3 below:

1. Areas contain 5,000 acres or more.
2. Areas contain less than 5,000 acres, but can meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - a. Areas can be preserved due to physical terrain and natural conditions.
 - b. Areas are self-contained ecosystems, such as an island, that can be effectively managed as a separate unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
 - c. Areas are contiguous to existing wilderness, primitive areas, Administration-endorsed wilderness, or potential wilderness in other Federal ownership, regardless of their size.

3. Areas do not contain forest roads (36 CFR 212.1) or other permanently authorized roads.

The first step the forest plan revision team took in the evaluation process was to use the inventory criteria to validate the boundaries of the 2001 Roadless Rule inventory of roadless areas. Beginning in the summer of 2005, the forest plan revision team asked the public to participate in the review of inventoried roadless area boundaries through a series of public meetings, web site postings, and electronic and hard copy mailings/newsletters. The public provided the forest plan revision team with input, which the Forest Service validated. Then the forest plan team made adjustments to the inventoried roadless area boundaries based on a given area's current condition.

After the 2001 Roadless Rule inventory of roadless areas was validated, the forest plan revision team worked to identify if any additional roadless areas existed on the Forest that were not part of the 2001 Roadless Rule inventory. In 2008, the forest plan revision team asked the public to participate in a series of public meetings to help identify additional roadless areas. The public once again provided the forest plan revision team with input that resulted in seven areas being identified that met the criteria in FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70 for placement on the potential wilderness inventory. The forest plan revision team continues to collect input from the public on potential boundary additions and deletions to the Forest's PWAs. Prior to the release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Colville Forest Plan, the boundaries for the PWAs that would be taken forward as recommended wilderness in the Preferred Alternative would be ground verified and adjusted in the Forest's Geographic Information System.

The second step the forest plan revision team took in the evaluation process was to carefully evaluate each validated roadless area as additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System. An area recommended as suitable for wilderness *must meet the tests of capability, availability, and need*. In addition to the inherent wilderness quality it possesses, an area must provide opportunities and experiences that are dependent upon or enhanced by a wilderness environment and the Forest Service should have the ability to manage the area as wilderness.

The result of this two-step process was an individual wilderness evaluation report for all twenty-one PWAs located on the Forest detailing each PWA's contribution to the evaluation factors of capability, availability, and need. All of the PWAs were determined capable of meeting the handbook definition of wilderness, though on a sliding scale. Wilderness capability was impacted by existing developments, vague boundaries, geographic shape, and impacts from sights and sounds of human activities. Availability as wilderness was influenced by existing recreational activities that would be displaced, existing mineral interests, the wildland urban interface, and the need for ecosystem maintenance. Analysis determined the greater Spokane metropolitan area is under-served for wilderness recreation due to not having any wilderness within a 1-2 hour drive and that several PWAs on the Forest offer high contributions to the wilderness system based on the Need factors (recreation, refugia, and preserving landform and underrepresented ecosystems) given in the handbook.(U.S. Forest Service, 2010)

The project file for the Colville National Forest plan revision contains the wilderness evaluation reports for each potential wilderness area identified on the Forest.

Any potential wilderness area recommended to Congress is managed to preserve those wilderness characteristics that made it a candidate for wilderness until Congress chooses to take action.

Currently, there is no existing recommended wilderness on the Forest. The evaluation for possible wilderness recommendation identified twenty-one Potential Wilderness Areas (PWAs) on the Colville National Forest that covers an additional twenty-one percent of the Forest's land base. Several of these PWAs contain low-standard roads and signs of past timber harvest. In addition, the Profanity PWA contains an historic fire lookout while the Bald-Snow PWA contains a recreation rental cabin. (Wilderness Evaluations, 2009b)

The evaluation process for identifying PWAs indicated that designated wilderness was under-represented in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion on National Forest System lands in Region 6. The Okanogan Highlands ecoregion is a landform province characterized by moderate slopes with broad rounded summits resulting from repeated continental glaciation and the broader valley bottoms are characterized by outwashed terraces. (Wilderness Evaluations, 2009b) All of the PWAs on the Forest are located in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion. The wilderness evaluation process also identified that trade-offs exist between the recreation need for additional wilderness and the public's desire to maintain existing backcountry motorized and mechanized recreation opportunities and the use of an existing backcountry rental cabin and an historic fire lookout.

Developed Recreation

Developed recreation areas on the Colville National Forest include a suite of opportunities and locations such as: interpretive and historic sites, scenic overlooks, information centers, trailheads, improved dispersed camping areas, rental cabins and lookouts, sno-parks, boat launches, picnic areas, campgrounds, and designated swim areas. In general, a developed recreation site is any place on the forest where funds have been spent to improve the site for the visitor's convenience and to protect the natural resources associated with the site. The Colville National Forest offers all of the above types of recreation sites, with many of them located along primary Scenic Byways or recreation lakes.

Many of the Forest's developed recreation sites have been upgraded (new toilets, tables, grills, and signs) over the past 10-15 years. However, the majority of sites are not fully accessible for those visitors with mobility impairments and only about half can easily accommodate modern recreational vehicles due to limited road widths and turning radii or restricted parking area widths and lengths. Some existing sites are past their predicted life expectancy and are in need of rehabilitation and in some cases, reconstruction. In addition, the only developed group camping opportunities on the Forest are located the furthest (Sullivan Lake and Republic) from northeast Washington's primary population center of Spokane. Regardless of these shortcomings, most visitors to the Forest use one or multiple developed recreation sites during their stay. While some sites (campgrounds and day-use areas) can be full on certain summer weekends, typically, use is adequately being met across the Forest with the current number of existing developed recreation sites. Based on changing demographics, there may be a need to develop additional group use sites, day-use areas, and trailheads closer to Spokane over the next 10-20 years.

Recreation Special Use Permits

The Colville National Forest administers a variety of permits for recreation special uses including recreation residences, ski areas, recreation events, outfitter/guides and campground concessionaires. Permit activities are located across the Forest and occur throughout the year.

The Forest's recreation residence program is centered around four tracts of homes located on Sullivan Lake. An isolated single cabin is also located on Bead Lake. These cabins are privately owned and are situated on leased lots located on National Forest System Lands. Appraisals and consistency reviews were completed on these permits in the mid to late 2000 era along with the requirements contained in the Cabin User Fee Fairness Act of 2000. As a result, new 20-year permits have been recently issued to the owners of these cabins which should extend well into the next Forest Plan implementation cycle.

The Forest administers one ski resort permit. This permit includes groomed downhill as well as cross country skiing and a limited amount of summer uses such as mountain biking, huckleberry picking and other special events. The resort has recently opened a new lift and summit and is in the process of implementing its current master development plan. A new master development plan may need to be developed for the resort during the next 5-10 years to keep up with changing trends in summer and winter use.

Recreation event permits are issued to private organizations that choose to utilize the national forest for one-time or recurring activities. On the Colville National Forest, these activities frequently include trail rides, both motorized and non-motorized as well as summer and winter, but have also been associated with foot races and triathlons. These types of special uses are expected to continue into the future with slight fluctuations in the number and type of events from year-to-year.

The Colville National Forest has only recently begun to administer outfitter/guide (O/G) special use permits. The first temporary special use permit for outfitting and guiding was signed in 2009. The Forest currently has six O/G permits that provide services including archery and rifle hunting, kayaking, snow shoeing/cross country skiing, and horse riding on back-country trails. The Forest has recently completed the environmental analysis to add motorized and overnight uses to the list of services provided by our outfitter/guides. It is anticipated, based on requests by our current outfitters, that snowmobiling, OHV riding, and overnight stock camps would all become authorized uses in the near future. Additional requests for unknown and unique outfitter or guide opportunities may also be received in response to changing public recreational interests in the future. In general, the Forest expects to see growth in the number of authorized O/G permits as well as the number and complexity of activities authorized by those permits over the next 10-20 years.

One campground concessionaire permit is administered on the Forest that includes fee campgrounds on the Newport and Sullivan Lake Ranger Districts as well as the four campgrounds located on the Little Pend Oreille Chain of Lakes on the Three Rivers Ranger District. This permit allows a private company to operate and maintain fee-based recreation sites on the Forest in exchange for retaining all fees collected at those sites. The current 5-year permit was issued in 2013 and is renewable for an additional 5-year term in 2018 if the operation and maintenance standards required by the permit are met and fees to the government are paid in a timely manner by the management company. Administration of campground concessionaire permits is unlikely to change over the next 5-10 years and the Forest does not expect to add sites to the existing concessionaire permit.

Wilderness

Wilderness areas are managed according to the Wilderness Act of 1964 which protects their wilderness values. Wilderness areas provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or a

primitive and unconfined type of recreation. They also provide wildlife habitat and a variety of natural resource and social values. Motorized and mechanical equipment use is prohibited in wilderness. Livestock grazing is allowed in wilderness areas, unless specifically excluded by the law designating the area.

The 43,348 acre **Salmo-Priest Wilderness** (31,400 acres of which is located on the Colville National Forest) was designated by Congress in 1984 as part of Public Law 98-339, The Washington State Wilderness Act of 1984. The Salmo-Priest is the only designated wilderness area located in the State of Washington east of the Cascade Mountains and is located entirely in Washington State. However, only 72% of the wilderness is managed by the Colville National Forest; the remaining 28% (the far eastern side – part of the Kaniksu National Forest) is administered by the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. The Salmo-Priest Wilderness also contains the Salmo and Roundtop Research Natural Areas. Grazing is not allowed in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness because no authorized grazing was permitted in the area at the time it was designated.

The Salmo-Priest Wilderness is a narrow (generally 2-3 miles wide) U-shaped body of land that borders Idaho and British Columbia, Canada. The area receives considerable precipitation (50+ inches annually) which helps support the largest growth of virgin forest left in eastern Washington including western red cedar, western hemlock, Douglas fir, grand fir and larch. In addition, the Salmo-Priest Wilderness supports a variety of wildlife, including the threatened and endangered woodland caribou, grizzly bear and gray wolves.

The Salmo-Priest is easily accessed by roads that lead to eight trailheads located on land administered by the Colville National Forest. Feeder trails access the two predominant ridge trails that traverse through the wilderness along both the west and east ridgelines. Visitor use in the Salmo-Priest is generally light, with peak use occurring on weekends between mid-July and Labor Day weekend.

Nationally Designated Roads and Trails

The Colville National Forest is accessed by three Scenic Byways including the Sherman Pass Scenic Byway, the North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway, and the International Selkirk Loop. Access deeper into the Forest can be accomplished through the congressionally designated Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail and four National Recreation Trails including the Kettle Crest, Lakeshore, Pass Creek-Grassy Top, and Shedroof Divide National Recreation Trails. These designations help draw a national and international audience to the Forest. In many cases, these designated roads and trails receive some of the heaviest recreation use on the forest.

The Sherman Pass Scenic Byway was designated as a Washington State Scenic Byway in 1967 and as a National Forest Scenic Byway in 1990. Between 2002 and 2009, over \$2 million was invested in new and existing recreation facilities along the Byway, including a Regional Information Center located in Kettle Falls. All of the Byway amenities are managed by the Forest Service except for the West (City of Republic) and East (Sherman Creek Wildlife Recreation Area) Gateways and the Kettle Falls Regional Information Center.

The North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway was designated as a Washington State Scenic Byway in 1993. The Byway corridor is managed by the Washington State Department of Transportation and provides excellent access to Colville National Forest recreation opportunities located along the Pend Oreille River, Sullivan Lake, and within the Selkirk Mountains including numerous backcountry trail and wildlife viewing opportunities.

The International Selkirk Loop was designated as an All-American Road in 2005, making it one of only thirty-one National Scenic Byways in the United States (as of 2010) to receive that designation. This 280-mile loop (including state highways in Idaho and Washington and provincial highways in British Columbia, Canada) around the Selkirk Mountains provides easy access to the numerous National Forest recreation opportunities on the Newport and Sullivan Lake Ranger Districts. Several side loops off the main Selkirk Loop provides additional opportunities to explore less traveled portions of the Forest. This Byway provides visitors with excellent opportunities for year-round recreation access to the Forest.

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT) was designated by Congress in the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act and extends 1,200 miles from Glacier National Park in Montana to the Pacific Ocean. Approximately 197 miles of the PNT runs through the Colville National Forest and private lands from the Washington/Idaho border west to the Forest's boundary with the Okanogan/Wenatchee National Forest. Several sections of the PNT use existing trails on the Forest, such as the Kettle Crest National Recreation Trail, the Abercrombie Mountain Trail, and the Shedroof Divide National Recreation Trail. In some areas, the Congressionally designated location for this non-motorized trail overlays State, County and Forest System roads, undeveloped areas where no current trail exists, as well as areas where minor route refinements may be necessary due to other considerations (such as the crossing of the Pend Oreille River at Boundary Dam.)

The Forest Service is the lead agency for administration of the PNT and is currently in the process of assembling a planning team comprised of agency personnel and an advisory council made up of interested members of the public that would work together collaboratively to develop the Comprehensive Plan for the PNT. The final location of the PNT would be determined when its legislatively mandated Comprehensive Plan is finalized (estimated completion date of 2018). Therefore, sections of the PNT (as shown on the alternative maps) are likely to change upon completion of the PNT's Comprehensive Plan. Forest Plan direction for the National Scenic Trail Corridor management area would apply to the most current location of the trail as determined by the Comprehensive Plan and published in the Federal Register.

Once the Comprehensive Plan for the trail is complete, work would start to identify trail routes where none exist and to move the trail off its existing road alignments. The trail is open to non-motorized uses. However, mountain bikes are not allowed on sections of the trail where their use is otherwise prohibited, such as in designated wilderness. In addition, motorized uses are allowed on the sections of trail currently located on open national forest system roads.

The Kettle Crest National Recreation Trail is a 44-mile trail located along the top of the Kettle River Range Mountains and traverses through the Bald-Snow and Profanity Potential Wilderness Areas. This non-motorized trail was designated in 1979 and provides access to outstanding regional views, an historic fire lookout, a backcountry cabin, and excellent winter cross-country touring opportunities. Primary users include hikers, stock, mountain bikers, and skiers.

The Lakeshore National Recreation Trail extends 4.3 miles along the shoreline of Sullivan Lake between two popular campgrounds. The trail was designated in 1978 and provides excellent views of the lake and opportunities for wildlife observation, including resident bighorn sheep from April through mid-June. The trail is open to all non-motorized uses.

The Pass Creek-Grassy Top National Recreation Trail extends just under eight miles along the hydrologic divide between the Colville National Forest and the Kaniksu National Forest, which is administered by the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. The trail was designated in 1981 and

passes through numerous alpine meadows on the way up to the top of Grassy Top Mountain, which provides excellent views into north Idaho and eastern Washington. The trail is open to all non-motorized uses.

The Shedroof Divide National Recreation Trail extends over 29 miles (22 miles on the Forest) through the heart of the Salmo-Priest Wilderness. The trail was designated in 1981 and offers spectacular views of the wilderness and Selkirk Crest. The trail is well-suited to overnight trips and is open to non-motorized and non-mechanized modes of travel.

Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers

Eligible rivers were identified during the planning effort associated with the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The existing Colville Forest Plan initially identified one eligible river – the Kettle River. An appeal of the 1988 Plan by American Rivers, Inc. was filed based on the Forest's failure to document the process that was used to evaluate rivers for Wild and Scenic River eligibility during the development of the 1988 forest plan. In order to meet the legal requirements and terms of the Forest's agreement with American Rivers, the Colville National Forest assembled an interdisciplinary team in 1990 to reexamine all rivers on the Forest and clearly document the process it used for screening and evaluating Wild and Scenic River eligibility. Direction for the assessment process came from the Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning Handbook Section 8.2 (dated July 1987) and a draft Preliminary River Value Identification Process Paper date November 22, 1989. All documentation on the process can be found in the project file located in the Colville National Forest's Supervisor's Office located in Colville, Washington.

The following process was used to identify rivers that would be assessed for wild and scenic river eligibility:

1. It was first determined that the entire forest was located within the "Columbia River and Tributaries" region which includes all of eastern Washington and a southern portion of western Washington. The watersheds within the forest were then divided according to their water resource council hydrologic unit codes.
2. In each watershed, all class 1 and 2 streams and a few of the larger class 3 streams were selected for further evaluation. Most class 3 and all class 4 streams were not included due to factors such as low flows, intermittent flow and short length.
3. All stream segments left the forest boundary as named streams. For instance, if a north and south fork of a stream joined within the forest, they could be evaluated together. If two forks entered the forest separately, they were evaluated separately.

After the initial screening process was completed, the remaining rivers were assessed by a core team of resource specialists that included a wildlife biologist, silviculturist, hydrologist, archaeologist, landscape architect, soil scientist, recreation planner, ecologist, planning team leader, resource forester, district ranger, resource assistant, and forestry technician. The team was comprised of Forest specialists and at least one representative from each ranger district. The recreation planner met with each resource specialist individually to gather information on the value of each river resource specifically identified for assessment in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act including: scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, pre-historic and other similar values (botanic, ecological and hydrologic). Once the river resource values were identified, the team met several times over a four month period to assess the ratings, reach

consensus on the ratings, and document the basis for which each specific river was dropped from consideration. Additional input was solicited from the Kalispel, Colville, Spokane, and Kootenai Tribes, the State Historic Preservation Office, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Washington Department of Wildlife.

The result of this secondary assessment was that a five-mile stretch of the South Fork Salmo River was determined to be eligible for classification as a wild river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. No changes have occurred to the free-flowing nature or outstandingly remarkable values associated with the Kettle and South Fork Salmo Rivers since being identified as eligible wild and scenic rivers in 1988 and 1990 respectively.

Suitability studies have not been undertaken on either of the two rivers eligible for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River system.

Table 3. Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers on the Colville National Forest

River Name	Outstandingly Remarkable Values	Recommended Classification	Length in Miles	Eligible or Suitable Status
South Fork Salmo River	Fishery Ecological	Wild	5	Eligible
Kettle River	Recreation Scenery	Recreational	3	Eligible

Environmental Consequences

Methodology

Assumptions

- Assume that recreation budget levels would continue along current trend lines, excluding fiscal years (FY) 2008-2013 when the Forest's recreation budget was increased under the Proof of Concept budget model (FY13 was increased by the RO as part of a 3-year phase-in of the SBO budget model) by 21% over the average of fiscal years 05-06 and by 44% over the average of fiscal years 07 and 14. Future budget levels may vary by 20 percent plus or minus in addition to the 21%-44% reduction which has already occurred as a result of switching from the Proof of Concept budget model to the Region's Strategic Budget Objectives budget model.
- The effects for RW are based on the assumption that the RW areas would be designated as wilderness by Congress.
- Assume that trails leading directly into RW would not be open to motorized or mechanized uses if the RW was designated as wilderness.

- Assume that motorized trails located in RW areas would be converted to non-motorized trails.
- Assume that based on predicted budget levels, trail and recreation site construction and reconstruction could be limited over the life of this plan.
- Roads open to various forms of motorized recreation (motorized mixed-use) under the current year Motor Vehicle Use Map would continue to be open to those uses. For purposes of analysis, these routes were not considered to be part of the Forest's motorized trail system. Only the trails listed in the INFRA database were considered when completing the analysis for effect to motorized trails.
- Motorized trail use would not be allowed in backcountry management areas, research natural areas, or designated wilderness areas. Motorized trail use would only be allowed in RW management areas (Jackknife, Lost Creek, Owl Mountain, South Huckleberry, and Twin Sisters) where motorized trail use currently exists under the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- Most dispersed camping occurs within close proximity of forest system roads, lakes, and streams.
- In spite of the large expanse of undeveloped area available for dispersed recreation use (both motorized and non-motorized), not every acre is suitable for every use.
- All acreage figures are approximate. They were calculated using the most current data available in the Colville National Forest's Geographic Information System (GIS) database.
- The acres shown as suitable for future consideration of motorized use areas and motorized trail development do not reflect site-specific resource concerns such as slope, soils, heritage resources, etc. that would be addressed in project-level analyses.
- The acres shown as suitable for future consideration of mechanized and non-motorized travel do not reflect site-specific resource concerns such as slope, soils, heritage resources, etc. that would be addressed in project-level analyses.

Visitors to the forest have different preferences for their recreation setting and the activities in which they want to participate. These differences and preferences range from highly intensive uses that have lasting effects on resources to benign uses that are barely discernible on the ground. Recognizing the differences in user preferences, the primary goal of managing outdoor recreation is to provide an environment or opportunity in which visitors can have a satisfying experience, while protecting the natural and cultural resources integral to that experience. Because user preferences are so diverse, it is assumed that not all user preferences can be accommodated on every acre of the Colville NF.

- Recreation demand on the Colville NF is tied to population changes in the communities and larger metropolitan areas of northeast Washington, northern Idaho, and southern British Columbia, Canada.
- Wilderness, backcountry (semi-primitive non-motorized), research natural areas, big-game winter range, RW, National Scenic Trail, and special interest area (except for the Kettle Crest SIA) management areas were used to identify those acres under each alternative that were closed or could be closed to over-snow vehicle use. For winter range, the entire management area was considered to be closed to over-snow vehicle use regardless of the percentage of the area that was closed to use by gates or Forest closure orders.

Methods of Analysis

Analysis was completed utilizing information contained in the Forest's GIS and INFRA databases, current field data & literature.

Incomplete and Unavailable Information

No incomplete or unavailable information was identified relating to recreation resources during the writing of this report.

Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis

The affected environment for effects includes the lands administered by the Colville National Forest. This analysis covers the life of the forest plan, which is 10-15 years.

Past, Present, and Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis

The affected environment for cumulative effects includes those lands covered by the management plans for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Kalispel Indian Reservation lands, lands administered by the Okanogan-Wenatchee and Idaho Panhandle National Forests, other Federal and State lands, and lands of other ownerships both within and adjacent to the Colville National Forest boundary. Recreation management of adjacent forests and other lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest is expected to continue unchanged from current management practices. As a result, there are no past, present, or reasonably foreseeable major changes in recreation management on lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest that would contribute to cumulative effects.

Summary of Effects Common to All Alternatives

Winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities on groomed and non-groomed designated routes would remain the same across all alternatives. Designated groomed and non-groomed over-snow vehicle trail opportunities would not change as a result of the number of acres associated with RW, backcountry, or backcountry motorized management areas since the Forest's existing over-snow vehicle designated groomed and non-groomed trail system is located almost entirely on National Forest System roads, outside of these management area boundaries. Where management activities, specifically vegetation treatments, must occur during the winter months, short to intermediate closures of designated trails may occur to allow for winter haul. This would result in localized displacement of over-snow vehicle users to other trails located on the forest or to trails located on neighboring forests. However, thinned areas may attract additional over-snow vehicle users when treatments are complete because the stand openness could result in better off trail riding opportunities.

Although the proposed riparian and aquatic resource management direction differs between the six alternatives, the effect to the recreation resource would be very similar across all alternatives. Whether the alternative implements INFISH, ARCS, or ARCS+ as described in the aquatic resource report, the following management direction (objectives and guidelines) would generally apply to recreation resources with some differences in terminology between the alternatives:

- New facilities and infrastructure should not be placed within long-term channel migration zones. If facilities must be located within the riparian management area (i.e. boat launches), locate them to minimize impacts on riparian conditions.
- Consider relocating existing facilities that are causing unacceptable impacts within the riparian area.
- Adjust trail management, dispersed and developed recreation practices that retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or disrupt natural hydrologic processes using practices such as education, use limitations, traffic control devices, facility relocation, and site specific closures.
- Hazard trees may be felled and generally retained on-site to enhance aquatic and riparian resources.

In all six alternatives, the above riparian and aquatic resource objectives and guidelines would require corrective actions be taken on recreation resources that are impairing proper hydrologic function or causing unacceptable impacts within the riparian management area (RMA). The recreation management tools available to implement changes within the RMA would be the same across all alternatives.

Under all alternatives, recreation management direction specific to developed and dispersed recreation would remain the same. Management activities, specifically vegetation treatments (both mechanical and prescribed fire), may result in short or intermediate length closures of developed and dispersed recreation sites for public safety which would result in the displacement of users to other recreation sites across the Forest or onto neighboring Forests. Longer-term displacements could occur if the recreation site character is altered beyond what is acceptable to the user. For example, thinning trees in a camping area (developed or dispersed) may reduce vegetative screening between campsites and the road, which may affect the sense of privacy and result in increased noise and dust. The length of displacement would vary by treatment type, the amount of slash and debris piles, the time required to regrow vegetation, and the overall scenic quality of the area that exists after management action are complete.

Management direction for Nationally Designated Trails and Roads would remain the same across all alternatives. No new scenic byways, or national recreation trails are proposed under any alternative. These special designation areas would continue to be managed to protect the values for which they were designated. Direction specific to the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT) developed through the PNT's trail Comprehensive plan would be incorporated into the new forest plan when completed in 2018-2019.

Wild and Scenic River and Wilderness management direction would remain the same under all alternatives. Both eligible wild and scenic river segments (Kettle and South Fork Salmo Rivers) on the Forest would be managed to ensure their future eligibility by protecting the values for which they were found eligible based on national direction and law. No new eligible wild and scenic river segments are proposed under any of the alternatives. Additional recommended wilderness is discussed under each alternative.

Management of Recreation Special Uses would remain the same under all alternatives and be based on national direction and law. All existing recreation special uses would continue to occur on the forest. However, it is possible that the land base used by a permittee could change based on the alternative. For example, backcountry areas selected as RW could result in

changes to where a mountain bike or OHV outfitter could operate, resulting in changes to the authorized trails and areas permitted for use by each operator. At this time, no changes to permits are expected based on the types of uses currently authorized by permit on the forest.

Management of motor vehicle use of roads (off-highway and highway legal vehicles) would remain the same under all alternatives and be managed per the Forest's current-year motor vehicle use map, pursuant to the 2005 Travel Management Rule. Changes in the management of motor vehicle use of roads would continue to be made on a project-by-project basis based on the desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines contained in the new forest plan.

Alternative – No Action

The No Action Alternative reflects the Colville National Forest's current land management plan as amended. Major amendments for the Colville NF Land and Resource Management Plan include INFISH, the Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment #2 (Eastside Screens), and the Regional Invasive Plant amendment.

Summary of Effects

The following summarizes the effects to recreation resources associated with the implementation of the No Action Alternative. Issues analyzed include the identification of lands suitable for recreation use, motorized recreation trails, access, and recommended wilderness.

Under the No Action Alternative, the recreation suitability determinations and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum mapping completed as part of the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities would be retained. The number of summer motorized recreation trail miles and the acres of backcountry motorized recreation would remain unchanged from the existing condition. This alternative would provide the greatest number of summer motorized trail miles (along with Alternatives P, O, and the Proposed Action) and the third fewest (of the six alternatives) acres managed for backcountry motorized recreation. Access for recreation would continue to be affected through project specific decisions based on improving resource and habitat conditions. Road decommissioning would be expected to continue at a rate similar to recent years across the Forest and should result in little or no change in the public's ability to participate in a variety of summer and winter dispersed and developed recreation opportunities across the Forest. The existing number of Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) management area acres would be retained at a level that ranks third lowest amongst the alternatives. No recommended wilderness is proposed under this alternative. All backcountry recreation opportunities would continue across the Forest. The miles of trail open to mountain biking would not change from the existing condition. The No Action Alternative provides the greatest number of trail miles open to mountain biking of all the alternatives. Motorized equipment for trail maintenance and reconstruction would be allowed on all trails except for those in designated wilderness. Opportunities for over-snow vehicle recreation would be retained across the Forest with no change in the number of acres open to this form of recreation when compared to the existing condition. The No Action Alternative supports the largest number of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities of the six alternatives.

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation Use

The No Action Alternative retains the recreation suitability determinations made in the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended) for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. All of the recreation activities and opportunities provided for in the 1988 Plan would continue to be available under the No Action Alternative and there would be no effect to the lands identified as suitable for recreation under the 1988 Colville Forest Plan. For a comparison between alternatives of management areas suitable for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, see Table 2.

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to the Forest’s existing Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) mapping would occur. Recreation opportunities would still be available in a variety of ROS classes including semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, roaded modified and rural, representing a broad array of natural settings, managerial, and social environments in which users could participate in their preferred activities.

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would provide the greatest number of total Forest acres open to both winter and summer motorized recreation opportunities when compared to the action alternatives. Total Forest acres open to non-motorized recreation opportunities remains fairly consistent (within 3,000 acres) among all the alternatives. Table 4 compares the number of management area acres closed to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative and shows the total number of acres open to over-snow vehicles by alternative. For a comparison of the number of acres open to summer motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 6.

Table 4. Management Area Acres* Closed to Over-Snow Vehicle Recreation Opportunities by Alternative. Total Acres Open to Over-Snow Vehicles by Alternative.

	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action Alternative	Alternative R	Alternative P	Alternative B	Alternative O
Active Management Area	0	0	0	0	132,526	0
Backcountry	0	90,846	19,035	123,105	4,835	174,311
Backcountry Motorized	0	9,522	755	4,835	755	4,832
Focused Restoration	0	51,367	0	57,478	0	0
General Restoration	0	121,813	62,450	120,422	0	0
Late Forest Structure	0	0	117,522	0	0	0
Recommended Wilderness	0	101,385	207,862	68,300	220,330	15,955
Research Natural Area	4,707	5,694	5,694	5,690	5,692	5,701
Responsible Management Area	0	0	0	0	0	116,935
Restoration Area	0	0	0	0	46,760	61,074
Scenic Byways	0	5,999	5,652	5,656	5,644	5,654
Semi-Primitive Non-	86,880	0	0	0	0	0

	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action Alternative	Alternative R	Alternative P	Alternative B	Alternative O
Motorized						
Special Interest Areas (Does not include the Kettle Crest SIA)	0	1,165	0	0	0	0
Scenic/Winter Range	76,128	0	0	0	0	0
Winter Range	126,207	0	0	0	0	0
Wilderness**	31,450	31,428	31,424	31,425	31,402	31,423
Total Acres by Alternative	1,103,237	1,103,668	1,101,717	1,101,891	1,101,880	1,101,372
Total Acres Closed to Over-snow Vehicle Recreation Opportunities	325,372	419,221	450,393	416,951	447,934	415,885
Total Acres Open to Over-snow Vehicle Recreation Opportunities	777,865	684,447	651,324	684,940	653,946	685,487

*Acres are approximate and vary by alternative due to the GIS methodology used to count boundary areas.

**The congressionally designated acreage for the Salmo-Priest Wilderness does not actually change by alternative.

Motorized Recreation Trails

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would maintain the existing number of motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities currently available across the Forest. Under this alternative, approximately 181 miles of summer trail would be managed for summer motorized recreation opportunities and 342 miles of summer trail would be managed for summer non-motorized recreation opportunities. For a comparison of summer motorized and non-motorized recreation trail miles between alternatives, see Table 5. Trails managed for summer motorized recreation would continue to provide opportunities for ATVs, motorcycles, and four wheel drives greater than 50 inches wide (jeep trails). Trails managed for summer non-motorized recreation would continue to provide opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and pack and saddle stock use. Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no change in the number of miles or the types of managed summer motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities on the Forest.

Table 5. Comparison of Summer Motorized and Non-Motorized Trail Miles by Alternative

	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action Alternative	Alternative R	Alternative P	Alternative B	Alternative O
Miles of Summer Motorized Trail	181	181	142	181	142	181
Miles of Summer Non-motorized Trail	342	342	382	342	382	342

The No Action Alternative would maintain the spatial distribution of existing summer motorized trail opportunities across the Forest and would continue to provide the existing mix of motorized and non-motorized trail systems within each of the three counties in which the

Colville National Forest is located. Likewise, this alternative would maintain the number of backcountry acres managed for summer motorized recreation trail use at 13,571 (1% of the Forest) acres as designated in the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as semi-primitive motorized recreation management areas. The number of semi-primitive motorized acres available in the No Action Alternative represents the third fewest acres available for backcountry motorized recreation trails of all the alternatives. Overall, summer motorized recreation trail opportunities would be allowed on 904,561 acres (82% of the Forest) across the Forest. Summer non-motorized recreation trail opportunities would be allowed on nearly 100% of the Forest's land base (except for research natural areas), of which 118,330 acres (11%) would provide for summer non-motorized recreation trail opportunities in a non-motorized setting (includes semi-primitive non-motorized recreation and wilderness management areas). For a comparison of management area acres open to motorized and non-motorized use, see Table 6.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be a greater opportunity to access summer non-motorized recreation trails than summer motorized recreation trails for several reasons. First, the number of non-motorized trail miles would outnumber motorized trail miles by nearly two to one. Second, the acres available for summer backcountry non-motorized trail opportunities would outnumber the acres available for summer backcountry motorized trail opportunities by 104,759 acres. Third, additional non-motorized trails could be constructed anywhere on the Forest (except research natural areas) under the Proposed Action, while summer motorized recreation trails could only be located outside of old growth dependent species habitat, caribou habitat, recreation/wildlife, research natural area, wilderness management, and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation management areas, which reduces the potential Forest acreage available for new summer motorized trail opportunities by 18% as compared to new non-motorized trail opportunities. Fourth, the summer motorized trail opportunities in the No Action Alternative are geographically limited to remote areas of eastern Ferry County and the border between Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties while summer non-motorized trail opportunities are located evenly across the Forest, with many of them easily accessible by passenger vehicle from communities adjacent to the Forest.

Table 6. Acres* Managed For Summer Backcountry Motorized and Backcountry Non-Motorized Trail Opportunities and Total Forest Acres, by Alternative.

	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action Alternative	Alternative R	Alternative P	Alternative B	Alternative O
Acres Managed for Backcountry Motorized Trail Opportunities	13,571	61,725	6,698	54,577	6,606	53,734
Acres Managed for Backcountry Non-motorized Trail Opportunities, excluding Wilderness	86,880	90,846	20,230	123,105	4,835	174,311
Forest Acres Managed for Backcountry Non-motorized Trail Opportunities, Including Wilderness and Recommended Wilderness	118,330	223,668	259,529	222,870	256,602	221,702

Total Forest Acres Open to Motorized Trail Opportunities	904,561	872,338	836,483	873,331	839,565	873,957
Total Forest Acres Open to Non-motorized Trail Opportunities	1,098,530	1,097,965	1,096,013	1,096,184	1,096,167	1,095,660
Total Forest Acres	1,103,237	1,103,668	1,101,717	1,101,891	1,101,880	1,101,372

*Acres are approximate and vary by alternative due to the GIS methodology used to count boundary areas.

Access

Under the No Action Alternative, desired conditions for road density are based on the specific habitat needs of various wildlife species such as caribou and grizzly bear. Road management decisions would be based on the need for public access, safety, forest management and resource needs. Decisions on road decommissioning would be made at the project level based on information provided by resource specialists and recommendations contained in the Forest's most recent Travel Analysis Report pursuant to subpart A of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. During these project level discussions, reductions in road density could be proposed to meet resource needs that would reduce roaded access for recreation uses. The level of effect associated with reducing road density would be dependent on the length of open system roads that would be proposed for decommissioning – the greater the length, the greater the potential reduction in roaded recreation access. However, if Maintenance Level 1 roads – those roads already closed to vehicle use by the public – are selected for decommissioning instead of open system roads, then there would be a corresponding reduction in the potential loss of open road access for recreation use. Similarly, roads decommissioned in riparian areas would have a greater impact on roaded access for recreation use than those located in upland areas since most recreation use on the Forest occurs in riparian areas associated with lakeshores, rivers, and streams. A reduction in open road density would reduce access to dispersed recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, driving for pleasure, and gathering of forest products. However, since most dispersed recreation activities can be enjoyed throughout the Forest, localized road decommissioning would likely result in users shifting their dispersed recreation access needs to nearby roads in order to participate in the same dispersed recreation activities resulting in little to no reduction in the public's participation in or access to dispersed recreation opportunities on the Forest.

Under the No Action Alternative, a reduction in roaded access for trail and developed site recreation opportunities would not be anticipated since these opportunities are generally located along major travel routes. These major travel routes would typically be improved or rerouted (instead of decommissioned) to correct resource concerns in order to ensure continued access to the Forest's developed recreation infrastructure.

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would likely result in fewer impacts to roaded access for recreation than Alternatives R and P which have a desired condition for road density of 1-2 miles per square mile and could result in a greater reduction in system roads, especially in key watersheds and watersheds where the existing road densities are above the desired condition. The No Action Alternative would have similar effects on roaded access for recreation as the Proposed Action which has a desired condition for road density of 2-3 miles per square mile which is close to the existing condition (at the Forest scale) for most watersheds. The No Action Alternative would have a similar effect on roaded access for recreation as Alternatives B and O, which do not have a desired condition for road density and would cap the road miles across the forest at the level of the existing condition.

Recommended Wilderness

The No Action Alternative contains no recommended wilderness and would not contribute to the need to adequately represent underrepresented ecosystems (identified during the wilderness evaluation process) by providing additional wilderness in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion. Management of backcountry areas would continue to be covered under direction contained in the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for semi-primitive, motorized recreation (SPM) and semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation (SPNM).

This alternative maintains the existing condition for SPM and SPNM recreation opportunities and does not provide an option to increase wilderness based recreation opportunities on the Forest. The No Action Alternative retains 13,571 (1% of the Forest) SPM acres for backcountry motorized recreation opportunities and an additional 86,880 (8% of the Forest) SPNM acres of backcountry for non-motorized recreation opportunities. A comparison of SPM (Backcountry Motorized in the Action Alternatives) and SPNM (Backcountry in the Action Alternatives) management area acres by alternative can be found in Table 6.

Under this alternative, the Forest's only backcountry recreation rental cabin would continue to be located in a SPNM management area. Therefore, the cabin would remain available to the public for recreational lodging and access to the cabin would continue through non-motorized modes of transportation.

Existing motorized trail systems located in SPM management areas, including Owl Mountain, Jackknife, Twin Sisters, and South Huckleberry would continue to be managed for motorized use. As a result, there would be no change in existing summer backcountry motorized recreation opportunities if the No Action Alternative is implemented.

Likewise, there would be no change in the number of mountain bike trail miles that are located in SPM and SPNM management areas. All trails currently open to mountain bikes would continue to be open to that use under the No Action Alternative.

Table 7. Backcountry Acres Open to Mountain Bike Trails and Miles of Existing Trail that would be Open to Mountain Bikes by Alternative.

	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action Alternative	Alternative R	Alternative P	Alternative B	Alternative O
Backcountry Acres Open to Mountain Bike Trails	100,451	152,572	26,929	177,682	11,441	228,045
Miles of Non-motorized Trail Open to Mountain Bike Use	301	151	88	223	80	272

The number of trail miles that are open to motorized trail maintenance and reconstruction equipment across the Forest would remain the same. Therefore, the average number of hours and people needed to complete annual maintenance tasks should not change. As a result, trail maintenance and reconstruction costs would not be expected to change as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative.

Over-snow vehicle opportunities on the Forest would continue to be available at a level consistent with the existing condition. Existing SPNM, RNA, Winter Range, and wilderness

management areas would continue to be closed to over-snow vehicle use. Implementation of the No Action alternative would result in no change in legal over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities across the Forest.

Cumulative Effects

No major changes in recreation management on lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest were identified that would contribute to cumulative effects.

Alternative – Proposed Action

The Proposed Action, which addresses the need for change outlined in Chapter 1, was released to the public in June 2011 and has not changed.

The Proposed Action provides direction that reflects current management policies of the Forest and meets the intent of recovery plans for terrestrial and aquatic threatened and endangered species, based on evolving science. It emphasizes management that applies landscape ecology concepts to provide for ecological resilience, including the effects of climate change.

Direction is integrated from the current plan and other resources to provide a comprehensive core set of plan components to maintain and restore the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems across the Forest. The proposed action puts more emphasis on desired conditions than the current forest plan.

The Proposed Action provides for a balanced mix of wilderness, motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities to address the increases in visitor uses due to population growth, and changing demographics. It offers a range of recreation settings by designating and distributing management areas in both the front and back country to accommodate how people use and access the Forest. It allows for the existing level of authorized road access with approximately 74 percent of the Forest in a roaded recreation setting (same as the current plan).

Summary of Effects

The following summarizes the effects to recreation resources associated with the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative. Issues analyzed include the identification of lands suitable for recreation use, motorized recreation trails, access, and recommended wilderness.

The Proposed Action retains the recreation suitability determinations completed as part of the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect increases in Semi-Primitive Motorized and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness, Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized Management Areas) and to reflect the increase in the Roaded Natural ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the Roaded Natural ROS classification in the Revised Forest Plan. The number of summer motorized recreation trail miles would remain the same and the acres of backcountry motorized recreation management areas would increase by nearly 50,000 acres when compared to the existing condition. This alternative would provide the greatest number of summer motorized trail miles (along with Alternatives P, O, and the No Action) and the most acres managed for backcountry

motorized recreation. Road access to dispersed recreation opportunities, especially those in riparian areas, could be reduced slightly over the life of the plan as projects are implemented to move the Forest towards a desired condition for road density of 2-3 miles per square mile. Expected levels of road decommissioning should result in little or no change in the public's ability to participate in a variety of summer and winter dispersed and developed recreation opportunities across the Forest.

The Proposed Action includes the third highest number of recommended wilderness acres, the third highest number of backcountry management area acres, and the highest number of backcountry motorized management area acres of the six alternatives. Non-conforming wilderness uses would be allowed to continue in recommended wilderness until the areas are designated as wilderness by Congress. Most backcountry recreation opportunities would continue across the Forest. However, the miles of trail open to mountain biking would be reduced (a result of adding additional recommended wilderness areas), resulting in the third lowest number of miles open to mountain biking when compared to the other alternatives.

Once the recommended wilderness areas are designated as wilderness by Congress, motorized equipment for trail maintenance and reconstruction would no longer be permitted on approximately 125 miles of trail accessing the recommended wilderness, resulting in a potential increase in trail maintenance and reconstruction costs across the Forest. Opportunities for over-snow vehicle recreation would be reduced as a result of an increase in acres associated with backcountry (semi-primitive non-motorized), research natural area, and recommended wilderness management areas as well as increases in designated winter range. The Proposed Action offers the third lowest number of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives.

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation Use

The Proposed Action Alternative retains the recreation suitability determinations made in the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended) for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. All of the types of recreation activities and opportunities provided for in the 1988 Plan would continue to be available under the Proposed Action Alternative, but may not be available in all of the same locations as under the No Action Alternative. For a comparison between alternatives of management areas suitable for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, see Table 2.

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect increases in the Semi-Primitive Motorized and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes as a result of increased acreages associated with recommended wilderness, Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized Management Areas. In addition, the ROS map would be updated to reflect the increase in the Roaded Natural ROS class as a result of the absorption of the 1988 Forest Plan's ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified into the Roaded Natural classification in the Revised Forest Plan. Recreation opportunities would still be available across the Forest in a variety of ROS classes including semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, and rural, representing a broad array of natural settings, managerial, and social environments in which users could participate in their preferred activities. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class acreages for each alternative are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Acres* and Percent of the Forest in each ROS Class by Alternative

ROS Class	No Action Acres (percent)	Proposed Action Acres (percent)	Alternative R Acres (percent)	Alternative P Acres (percent)	Alternative B Acres (percent)	Alternative O Acres (percent)
Urban (U)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rural (R) – 49 Degrees North Ski Area	2,032 (0.002%)	2,083 (0.002%)	2,083 (0.002%)	2,083 (0.002%)	2,083 (0.002%)	2,083 (0.002%)
Roaded Modified (RM)	549,357 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Roaded Natural (RN)	294,972 (27%)	810,028 (74%)	817,353 (74%)	817,353 (74%)	817,353 (74%)	817,353 (74%)
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	107,418 (10%)	62,116 (6%)	6,617 (0.6%)	54,790 (5%)	6,617 (0.6%)	54,790 (5%)
Semi-Primitive Non- Motorized (SPNM)	114,537 (10%)	196,180 (18%)	244,353 (22%)	196,180 (18%)	244,353 (22%)	196,180 (18%)
Primitive (P)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Wilderness**	31,436 (3%)	31,434 (3%)	31,434 (3%)	31,434 (3%)	31,434 (3%)	31,434 (3%)
TOTAL ACRES	1,102,787	1,101,840	1,101,840	1,101,840	1,101,840	1,101,840

*Acres are approximate and vary by alternative due to the GIS methodology used to count boundary areas.

**The congressionally designated acreage for the Salmo-Priest Wilderness does not actually change by alternative.

Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would provide the 4th highest number of total Forest acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities and the 4th highest number of total Forest acres open to summer motorized recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives. Total Forest acres open to non-motorized recreation opportunities remains fairly consistent (within 3,000 acres) amongst all the alternatives. For a comparison of the number of acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4. For a comparison of the number of acres open to summer motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 6.

Motorized Recreation Trails

The Proposed Action would maintain the same number of summer motorized and non-motorized trail miles across the Forest as the No Action Alternative. Under this alternative, approximately 181 miles of summer trail would be managed for motorized recreation opportunities and 342 miles of summer trail would be managed for non-motorized recreation opportunities. For a comparison of summer trail miles managed for motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 5. Trails managed for motorized recreation would continue to provide opportunities for ATVs, motorcycles, and four wheel drives greater than 50 inches wide (jeep trails). Trails managed for summer non-motorized

recreation would continue to provide opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and pack and saddle use. There would be no change in the number of motorized trail miles or the types of managed motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities on the Forest.

The Proposed Action would maintain the spatial distribution of existing summer motorized trail opportunities and the existing availability of summer motorized recreation trail opportunities located in backcountry settings. The Proposed Action would continue to provide the existing mix of motorized and non-motorized trail systems within each of the three counties in which the Colville National Forest is located. Under the Proposed Action, 61,725 acres (6% of the Forest) would be designated as backcountry motorized management areas. The Proposed Action offers the most backcountry motorized management area acres of the six alternatives. In total, summer motorized recreation trail use would be allowed on 872,338 acres (79%) across the Forest. Summer non-motorized recreation trail opportunities would be allowed on nearly 100% of the Forest's land base (except for Research Natural Areas), of which 223,668 acres (20%) would provide for summer non-motorized recreation trail opportunities in a non-motorized setting (includes backcountry, wilderness, and recommended wilderness management areas). For a comparison of management area acres open to motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities, see Table 6.

Under the Proposed Action, there would be a greater opportunity to access summer non-motorized recreation trails than summer motorized recreation trails for several reasons. First, the number of non-motorized trail miles would outnumber motorized trail miles by nearly 2 to 1. Second, the acres available for summer backcountry non-motorized trail opportunities would outnumber the acres available for summer backcountry motorized trail opportunities by 162,000 acres. Third, additional non-motorized trails could be constructed anywhere on the Forest (except research natural areas - RNAs) under the Proposed Action, while summer motorized recreation trails could only be located outside of wilderness, RW, RNAs, and backcountry management areas, which reduces the potential Forest acreage available for new summer motorized trail opportunities by 21% as compared to new non-motorized trail opportunities. Fourth, the summer motorized trail opportunities in the Proposed Action are geographically limited to remote areas of eastern Ferry County and the border between Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties while the Proposed Action's summer non-motorized trail opportunities are located fairly evenly across the Forest, with many of them easily accessible by passenger vehicle from communities adjacent to the Forest.

Access

Under the proposed action, the desired condition for road density on the Colville National Forest would be 2-3 miles per square mile, which is close to the existing forest-wide road density. In those watersheds already meeting the desired condition, there would be no need to decommission roads to show movement towards the road density desired condition. If no roads are decommissioned, there would be no effect to roaded access for recreation use in those watersheds. However, it is still likely that some road decommissioning would occur in those watersheds meeting the desired condition for road density in order to improve resource and habitat conditions on a project-by-project basis. Effects of this type of road decommissioning would be the same as those described under the No Action Alternative.

In the remaining watersheds that would require reductions in road density to meet the desired condition, there would be a corresponding reduction in roaded access for recreation use depending on the specific roads selected to be decommissioned. The level of effect associated

with reducing road density in these watersheds would be dependent on the length of open system roads that would be proposed for decommissioning – the greater the length, the greater the potential reduction in recreation access. However, if Maintenance Level 1 roads – those roads already closed to vehicle use by the public – are selected for decommissioning instead of open system roads, then there would be a corresponding reduction in the potential loss of open road access for recreation use. Similarly, roads decommissioned in riparian areas would have a greater impact on access for recreation use than those located in upland areas since most recreation use on the Forest occurs in riparian areas associated with lakeshores, rivers, and streams.

Under the Proposed Action, a reduction in roaded access for trail and developed site recreation opportunities would not be anticipated since these opportunities are generally located along major travel routes. These major travel routes would typically be improved or rerouted (instead of decommissioned) to correct resource concerns and ensure continued access to the Forest's recreation infrastructure. A reduction in open road density would reduce access to dispersed recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, driving for pleasure, and gathering of forest products. However, since most dispersed recreation activities can be enjoyed throughout the Forest, localized road decommissioning would likely result in users shifting their access needs to nearby roads in order to participate in the same dispersed recreation activities. As a result, a minor loss of road access would result in little to no reduction in the public's participation in or access to recreation opportunities on the Forest.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would likely result in fewer impacts to roaded access for recreation than Alternatives R and P which have a desired condition for road density of 1-2 miles per square mile and could result in a greater reduction in system roads, especially in key watersheds and watersheds where the existing road densities are above the desired condition. The Proposed Action would likely result in similar effects to roaded access for recreation as the No Action Alternative and Alternatives B and O, all of which do not have a desired condition for road density and would implement road decommissioning projects based on resource and habitat needs identified during project level analysis.

Recommended Wilderness

The Proposed Action recommends 9% (101,385 acres) of the Forest be recommended as additional wilderness, including the following inventoried Potential Wilderness Areas (PWAs): Salmo-Priest Adjacent, Abercrombie-Hooknose, Hoodoo, Profanity, and Bald-Snow. For a comparison of recommended wilderness acreage by alternative, see Table 9. Each of the PWAs in this alternative were evaluated by the forest plan revision team according to the process identified in FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70 and determined to contribute to the capability, availability, and need for additional wilderness in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion. The southern end of the Profanity PWA and the northern end of the Bald-Snow PWA were not brought forward as recommended wilderness (RW) in the Proposed Action Alternative to allow for established recreation uses to continue including mountain biking, maintenance of an historic fire lookout, and use of a backcountry recreation rental cabin. These recreation opportunities were identified during the 2009 wilderness evaluation process and the Forest Supervisor at the time the Proposed Action was selected supported the public benefits associated with these recreation opportunities over the recreational need for the affected acres to be recommended as additional wilderness in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion. At least one PWA under this alternative would be recommended as potential wilderness in each of the three counties located within the Forest's boundary.

Table 9. Acres of Recommended Wilderness (RW) by Alternative

No Action Alternative	Proposed Action Alternative	Alternative R	Alternative P	Alternative B	Alternative O
0	101,385	207,862	68,300	220,330	15,955

Under this alternative, non-conforming recreation opportunities and motorized trail maintenance and reconstruction activities would be allowed to continue until Congress designates the RW areas as wilderness. No new non-conforming uses would be allowed. Even with the continuation of non-conforming uses, the wilderness qualities associated with the RW areas listed in the Proposed Action are not expected to be altered prior to designation as wilderness by Congress. This determination is based on the fact that the existing non-conforming uses were identified during the 2009 PWA evaluation process and their presence did not preclude the roadless areas from meeting the evaluation criteria (capability, availability, and need) for inclusion on the inventory of Potential Wilderness Areas. Therefore, allowing these non-conforming uses to continue at use rates similar to when the wilderness evaluations were completed should not detract from the inherent wilderness qualities associated with the five PWAs.

This alternative strives to balance the public's desire for additional wilderness with existing backcountry recreation opportunities such as mountain biking and OHV riding. As a result, not all of the PWAs that have wilderness qualities were recommended as wilderness. Instead, this alternative retains 61,725 acres (6% of the Forest) of backcountry for motorized recreation opportunities and an additional 90,846 (8% of the Forest) acres of backcountry for non-motorized recreation opportunities that do not conform with wilderness management direction such as mountain biking and the use of game carts. See Table 6 for a comparison of backcountry and backcountry motorized management acres by alternative.

Eleven PWAs (Bodie Mountain, Clackamas Mountain, Cougar Mountain, Deer Creek, Grassy Top, Hall Mountain, Harvey Creek, Jackson Creek, Quartzite, South Fork Mountain, and Thirteenmile) are designated as backcountry management areas under the Proposed Action Alternative. In addition, the southern end of the Profanity PWA and the northern end of the Bald-Snow PWA were also retained as backcountry. Combined, these PWAs would provide approximately 75 miles of trail for backcountry mountain bike recreation opportunities. Managing these PWAs as backcountry would allow the Forest to continue to manage its only backcountry rental cabin and to maintain an historic fire lookout.

The PWAs designated as backcountry motorized management areas in this alternative include the Owl Mountain, Jackknife, Twin Sisters, South Huckleberry and Lost Creek. Combined, these PWAs provide access to all of the Forest's existing backcountry motorized trail systems. As a result, there would be no change in the existing summer motorized vehicle recreation opportunities if this alternative was implemented.

If the RW areas listed in this alternative become designated wilderness, mountain bike trail opportunities would no longer be available on an additional 101,390 acres across the Forest. This equates to a 150 mile (50%) reduction in the number of available mountain bike trail opportunities that are associated with the Forest's existing summer non-motorized trail system.

For a comparison between alternatives of backcountry management acres open to mountain biking and the number of trail miles open to mountain biking, see Table 7.

If the RW areas listed under the Proposed Action are designated as wilderness by Congress, trail maintenance and reconstruction costs would increase on the 150 miles of trail that access the 101,390 acres of RW. This cost increase is based on the required change from using motorized (chainsaws, power toters, trail dozers, etc.) trail maintenance and reconstruction equipment to non-motorized equipment (cross-cut saws, pack mules, pulaskis, etc.) which would likely result in annual tasks, such as spring logout, and reconstruction efforts taking more time to complete, additional people, or both.

Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would prohibit over-snow vehicle use on 93,849 acres currently open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities in the No Action Alternative as a result of an increase in acres associated with backcountry (semi-primitive non-motorized), research natural area, and recommended wilderness management areas as well as changes in designated winter range. However, the majority of the additional acres that would be closed to over-snow vehicle use under the Proposed Action consist of heavily vegetated slopes and terrain that is difficult to access and currently supports only limited over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would result in little to no reduction in the amount of over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities available on the Forest when compared to the No Action Alternative. For a comparison of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4.

Cumulative Effects

No major changes in recreation management on lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest were identified that would contribute to cumulative effects.

Alternative R

Alternative R responds to public comments that support old forest reserve land allocations where old forest habitat is the management emphasis and those who want to continue to use a 21-inch diameter limit on cutting old trees to maintain old forest habitats. It also responds to those who advocate for increased wilderness across the Forest.

Public issues concerning potential impacts that road access and summer and winter motorized trail use may have on aquatic, riparian, and wildlife habitats, including grizzly core areas and habitat connectivity, are addressed through low road densities, a low amount of backcountry motorized areas, and the high proportion of recommended wilderness areas.

This alternative is based on an alternative developed by a coalition of conservation groups.

Summary of Effects

The following summarizes the effects to recreation resources associated with the implementation of Alternative R. Issues analyzed include the identification of lands suitable for recreation, motorized recreation trails, access, and recommended wilderness.

Alternative R retains the recreation suitability determinations completed as part of the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Changes would be made to the Forest's

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect decreases in the Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS class and increases in the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness) and to reflect the increase in the Roded Natural ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the Roded Natural ROS classification in the Revised Forest Plan. The number of summer motorized recreation trail miles would be reduced by 22% (along with Alternative B, this represents the largest reduction in motorized trail miles of all the action alternatives) and the acres of backcountry motorized recreation management areas would be reduced by 51% (2nd largest reduction in acres of the action alternatives) when compared to the existing condition. Alternative R also reduces the Forest's existing backcountry jeep trail system from 39 miles of trail to zero.

Road access to dispersed recreation opportunities, especially those in riparian areas associated with key watersheds would be reduced over the life of the plan as projects are implemented to move the Forest towards a desired condition for road density of 1-2 miles per square mile. Expected levels of road decommissioning are expected to result in a gradual decrease in the public's ability to participate in a variety of summer and winter dispersed recreation opportunities across the Forest. Alternative R includes the second highest number of recommended wilderness acres, the second lowest number of backcountry management area acres, and the second lowest number of backcountry motorized management area acres of the six alternatives. Non-conforming wilderness uses would not be allowed to continue in recommended wilderness prior to designation as wilderness by Congress. Some existing backcountry recreation opportunities would no longer be available on the Forest (rental cabin, jeep trails). The miles of trail open to mountain biking would be reduced (a direct result of additional recommended wilderness areas), resulting in the second lowest number of miles open to mountain biking when compared to the other alternatives.

Motorized equipment for trail maintenance and reconstruction would no longer be permitted on approximately 213 miles of trail accessing recommended wilderness, resulting in a potential increase in trail maintenance and reconstruction costs across the Forest. Opportunities for over-snow vehicle recreation would be reduced when compared to the No Action Alternative as a result of the large increase in acres associated with recommended wilderness and additional acreage associated with RNAs and designated Winter Range. Alternative R provides the lowest number of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives.

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation Use

Alternative R retains the recreation suitability determinations made in the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended) for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. All of the recreation activities and opportunities provided for in the 1988 Plan would continue to be available under Alternative R, but may not be available in all of the same locations as under the No Action Alternative. For a comparison between alternatives of management areas suitable for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, see Table 2.

Under Alternative R, changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect decreases in the Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS class and increases in the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness) and to reflect the increase in the Roded Natural

ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the Roaded Natural ROS classification in the Revised Forest Plan. Recreation opportunities would still be available in a variety of ROS classes across the Forest including semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, and rural, representing a broad array of natural settings, managerial, and social environments in which users could participate in their preferred activities. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class acreages for each alternative are summarized in Table 8.

Alternative R would provide both the lowest number of total Forest acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities and the lowest number of total Forest acres open to summer motorized recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives. Total Forest acres open to non-motorized recreation opportunities remains fairly consistent (within 3,000 acres) amongst all the alternatives. For a comparison of the number of acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4. For a comparison of the number of acres open to summer motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 6.

Motorized Recreation Trails

Compared to the No Action Alternative, Alternative R decreases the miles of summer motorized recreation trails and increases the miles of summer non-motorized recreation trails available on the Forest. Under this alternative, approximately 142 miles of summer trail would be managed for motorized recreation opportunities and 382 miles of summer trail would be managed for non-motorized recreation opportunities. Converting 39 miles of motorized trail to a non-motorized classification results in a 22% decrease in the existing number of summer motorized recreation trail miles and an increase of 10% in the existing number of summer non-motorized recreation trail miles. For a comparison of summer trail miles managed for motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 5. Implementation of Alternative R would provide a reduced number of managed ATV and motorcycle trail opportunities across the Forest and would eliminate all of the Forest's existing trail opportunities (39 miles) associated with four wheel drives greater than 50 inches wide (jeep trails). Implementation of Alternative R would increase the number of summer non-motorized recreation trail opportunities including hiking and pack and saddle stock use as compared to the number of non-motorized recreation trail opportunities in the No Action Alternative.

Implementation of Alternative R would decrease the spatial distribution of summer motorized recreation trail opportunities across the Forest as well as the availability of backcountry summer motorized trail opportunities. Unlike the No Action Alternative which provides a mix of summer motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities throughout all three counties, Alternative R would only provide a mix of summer motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities in Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties. In Ferry County, 39 miles of motorized trail would be converted to non-motorized trail, leaving only 1.4 miles (less than one percent of the total trail miles in the County) of motorized trail available within the County. Likewise, the number of backcountry acres open to motorized recreation trail opportunities would be reduced from 13,571 acres in the No Action Alternative to 6,698 acres (the second fewest number of backcountry motorized management acres provided by any of the alternatives). This equates to a 51% reduction in backcountry areas open to motorized recreation trails.

Similarly, acres open to motorized recreation trail opportunities across the Forest would be reduced from 904,561 acres in the No Action Alternative to 836,483 acres in Alternative R, a

direct result of additional wilderness recommendations. This represents a 7.5% reduction in the number of acres available for motorized recreation trail opportunities across the Forest. Non-motorized recreation trail opportunities would be allowed on nearly 100% of the Forest's land base (except for RNAs) and the opportunity for trails to exist in a non-motorized setting (includes backcountry, wilderness, and recommended wilderness management areas) would increase from 118,330 acres in the No Action Alternative to 259,529 acres in Alternative R, an increase of 219%. For a comparison of management area acres open to motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities, see Table 6.

Across the Forest, there is currently a greater opportunity to access summer non-motorized recreation trails than summer motorized recreation trails. See discussion under the No Action and Proposed Action Alternatives that supports this statement. Implementation of Alternative R would further shift the opportunity for summer trail access towards non-motorized trail activities since it would increase the number of non-motorized trail miles and acres of backcountry open to non-motorized trail use while reducing the number of motorized recreation trail opportunities and motorized backcountry management areas. This is especially true in Ferry County where motorized recreation trail opportunities would be reduced to a single 1.4 mile segment of trail.

Access

Under Alternative R, the desired condition for road density on the Colville National Forest would be 1-2 miles per square mile, which is generally one third to one half lower than the existing condition for the Forest depending on the specific watershed. As a result, reductions in road density would be expected in the majority of watersheds across the Forest to meet the desired condition. These reductions would likely be focused initially on the Forest's key watersheds, where the restoration of failing road infrastructure would be a priority over the life of the revised Forest Plan. Given that projected Forest funding would allow for approximately 20 miles of decommissioning each year, the magnitude of potential road decommissioning over the twenty-year life span of the Forest Plan would be approximately 400 miles, or ten percent of the Forest's existing road system.

Reducing road density would likely result in a corresponding reduction in roaded access for recreation use depending on the specific roads selected to be decommissioned. The level of effect associated with reducing road density across all watersheds would be dependent on the length of open system roads that would be proposed for decommissioning – the greater the length, the greater the potential effect on recreation access. However, if some Maintenance Level 1 roads – those roads already closed to vehicle use by the public – are selected for decommissioning instead of open system roads, then there would be a corresponding reduction in the potential loss of open road access for recreation use. Similarly, roads decommissioned in riparian areas would have a greater impact on access for recreation use than those located in upland areas since most recreation use on the Forest occurs in riparian areas associated with lakeshores, rivers, and streams. Under this alternative, decommissioning of roads located in riparian areas in order to move towards the desired condition for road density would be anticipated in key watersheds.

The proposed reduction in road density associated with Alternative R would not be expected to result in a reduction in roaded access for trail and developed site recreation opportunities since these opportunities are generally located along major travel routes. These major travel routes would typically be improved or rerouted (instead of decommissioned) to correct resource

concerns in order to ensure continued access to the Forest's recreation infrastructure. The proposed reduction in road density would likely reduce access to dispersed recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, driving for pleasure, and gathering forest products. Since most dispersed recreation activities can be enjoyed throughout the Forest, localized road closures would likely result in users shifting their access needs to nearby roads. However, in key watersheds, where road decommissioning would be emphasized, road closures could reduce roaded access for dispersed recreation use to a level that would displace recreationists to other parts of the Forest in order to participate in the same dispersed recreation activities.

At the Forest scale, the effect of decommissioning approximately 400 miles of road over a 20-year period would be a gradual decrease in roaded access for recreation use. The impact of this decrease in roaded access for recreation use would be focused on dispersed recreation opportunities and would be expected to be more obvious in riparian areas associated with key watersheds. Implementation of Alternative R would likely result in greater impacts to roaded access for recreation than the No Action Alternative and Alternatives B and O. Alternative R would have similar affects to roaded access as Alternative P, which also has a desired condition for road density of 1-2 miles per square mile.

Recommended Wilderness

Alternative R recommends 19% (207,862 acres) of the Forest be recommended as additional wilderness including all inventoried Potential Wilderness Areas (PWAs) (Abercrombie-Hooknose, Bald Snow, Cougar Mountain, Deer Creek, Hall Mountain, Harvey Creek, Hoodoo, Jackknife, Owl Mountain, Profanity, Quartzite, Salmo-Priest Adjacent, South Huckleberry, Thirteenmile, and Twin Sisters) on the Colville National Forest except for Lost Creek and those portions of Bodie Mountain, Clackamas Mountain, Jackson Creek, Grassy Top, and South Fork Mountain PWAs that are located primarily on adjacent Forests and would not meet the acreage requirements necessary to be recommended as wilderness on the Colville National Forest without a corresponding recommendation from the Idaho Panhandle and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests for the contiguous acres located on those units. For a comparison of recommended wilderness acreage by alternative, see Table 9. Each of the PWAs in this alternative were evaluated by the forest plan revision team according to the process identified in FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70 and determined to contribute to the capability, availability, and need for additional wilderness in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion. Under Alternative R, at least two PWAs would be recommended as wilderness in each of the counties in which the Forest is located.

This alternative recommends a large increase in wilderness and provides few opportunities for other motorized and mechanized backcountry recreation opportunities on the Forest. Several PWAs that contain well-established non-conforming uses (i.e. motorized trails, rental cabin, and mountain bike use) that may detract from the wilderness qualities associated with the various PWAs are recommended as wilderness in Alternative R. This alternative designates 6,698 acres (less than 1% of the Forest) of backcountry for motorized recreation opportunities and an additional 20,230 acres (1.8% of the Forest) of backcountry for recreation opportunities that do not conform with wilderness management direction, such as mountain biking. See Table 6 for a comparison of backcountry and backcountry motorized management acres by alternative.

Under this alternative, recreation opportunities that would not conform to wilderness management direction (mountain biking, motorized trail use, motorized trail maintenance and

reconstruction, historic structure maintenance, and rental cabin management) would not be allowed to continue prior to designation of the recommended wilderness areas as wilderness by Congress. As a result, the Forest's only backcountry cabin rental would be closed to the public and, over time, removed from the landscape. Likewise, a recently renovated historic fire lookout would be managed to a standard compatible with wilderness designation and may be allowed to slowly deteriorate over time. Since existing recreation opportunities that would not conform to wilderness management direction would not be allowed to continue prior to wilderness designation, there would be little chance that the wilderness qualities associated with the identified recommended wilderness areas would be altered prior to their designation as wilderness by Congress.

Under Alternative R, the Lost Creek PWA would be designated as a backcountry motorized management area. The three existing trails in this PWA are currently open to motorcycles only. The result of implementing Alternative R would be a 39-mile (100%) reduction in backcountry motorized trail miles that are currently open to ATVs and four wheel drives greater than 50 inches wide and approximately a 70% decrease in the number of existing backcountry motorized recreation trail miles on the Forest.

Under this alternative, only those inventoried roadless areas included in the 2001 Roadless Rule inventory and the PWAs located primarily on adjacent forests that would not meet the minimum acreage requirements to be recommended as wilderness would be designated as backcountry management areas. As a result, backcountry mountain bike trail opportunities would be eliminated on 207,862 acres across the Forest. This equates to a 213 mile (71%) reduction in the number of available mountain bike trail miles associated with the Forest's summer non-motorized trail system. For a comparison between alternatives of backcountry management acres open to mountain biking and the number of trail miles open to mountain biking, see Table 7.

Under Alternative R, once the Forest Plan is approved and implemented, trail maintenance and reconstruction costs could increase on the 213 miles of trail that access the 207,862 acres of recommended wilderness. This cost increase is based on the required change from using motorized (chainsaws, power toters, trail dozers, etc.) trail maintenance equipment to non-motorized equipment (cross-cut saws, pack mules, pulaskis, etc.) which would likely result in annual tasks, such as spring logout, and reconstruction efforts taking more time to complete, additional people, or both.

Implementation of Alternative R would prohibit over-snow vehicle use on 125,021 acres currently open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities in the No Action Alternative as a result of the increase in acres associated with recommended wilderness, RNAs, and winter range. Approximately 55,000 acres of backcountry associated with the Twin Sisters, Jackknife, Owl Mountain and South Huckleberry PWAs are open to over-snow vehicles in the No Action Alternative and offer 39 miles of jeep trails (these trails are neither designated nor groomed for over-snow vehicle use) that are currently available for over-snow vehicle use. Implementation of Alternative R would prohibit this use. As a result, implementation of Alternative R would result in a high reduction in over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities across the Forest when compared to the No Action alternative. For a comparison of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4.

Cumulative Effects

No major changes in recreation management on lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest were identified that would contribute to cumulative effects.

Alternative P

This alternative responds to public comments that support the proposed landscape approach to providing old forests as described in the June 2011 Proposed Action.

Alternative P proposes the second highest amount of non-motorized backcountry of all alternatives and a lower amount of recommended wilderness (RW) than the Proposed Action to address public concern's that wilderness designation may result in lower revenue to local economies due to reduced recreational opportunities. The backcountry motorized (BCM) management areas are similar to those in the Proposed Action. Participants in the Colville Collaborative group that worked on forest plan issues around wilderness and vegetation management agreed that the Kettle Crest was a special area for semi-primitive recreation opportunities, but did not agree that the area should be wilderness because of the impacts to recreation opportunities such as mountain biking and OHV riding as well as motorized trail maintenance. The proposed Kettle Crest Recreation Special Interest Area (SIA) was added as a component of this Alternative to address public disagreement about recommending this area for wilderness. The backcountry and backcountry motorized management areas within the SIA would be managed to maintain their existing wilderness qualities while allowing recreation activities that do not conform with wilderness designation to continue, such as mountain biking, OHV riding, and the use of a recreation rental cabin.

Public issues concerning potential impacts that desired road densities and motorized trails in the proposed action may have on aquatic, riparian, and wildlife habitats, including grizzly core areas and habitat connectivity, are addressed through lower road densities in the focused and general restoration management areas and the higher number of combined recommended wilderness and backcountry non-motorized management acres.

This alternative also responds to public comments that asked for additional protections for riparian areas and addresses public concerns that the Proposed Action may not provide adequate protection that is as effective as the current forest plan amendments in managing activities within the riparian areas.

Summary of Effects

The following summarizes the effects to recreation resources associated with the implementation of Alternative P. Issues analyzed include the identification of lands suitable for recreation, motorized recreation trails, access, and recommended wilderness.

Alternative P retains the recreation suitability determinations completed as part of the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect increases in Semi-Primitive Motorized and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness, Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized Management Areas) and to reflect the increase in the Roaded Natural ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the

Roaded Natural ROS classification in the Revised Forest Plan. The number of summer motorized recreation trail miles would remain the same and the acres of backcountry motorized recreation management areas would increase when compared to the existing condition.

This alternative would provide the greatest number of summer motorized trail miles (along with Alternative O, the Proposed Action, and the No Action) and the second most acres managed for backcountry motorized recreation. Road access to dispersed recreation opportunities, especially those in riparian areas associated with key watersheds would be reduced over the life of the plan as projects are implemented to move the Forest towards a desired condition for road density of 1-2 miles per square mile. Anticipated levels of road decommissioning are expected to result in a gradual decrease in the public's ability to participate in a variety of summer and winter dispersed recreation opportunities across the Forest. Alternative P includes the fourth highest number of recommended wilderness acres, the second highest number of backcountry management area acres, and the second highest number of backcountry motorized management area acres of the six alternatives. In addition, this alternative includes approximately 82,800 acres of primarily backcountry and backcountry motorized management areas that would be designated as a Recreation Special Interest Area along the Kettle Crest. Non-conforming wilderness uses would be allowed to continue in recommended wilderness until the areas are designated as wilderness by Congress. All backcountry recreation opportunities would continue across the Forest. However, the miles of trail open to mountain biking would be reduced by 78 miles (a direct result of additional recommended wilderness areas), resulting in the third highest number of miles open to mountain biking when compared to the other alternatives.

Once the recommended wilderness areas are designated as wilderness by Congress, motorized equipment for trail maintenance and reconstruction would no longer be permitted on approximately 78 miles of trail accessing the recommended wilderness, resulting in a potential increase in trail maintenance and reconstruction costs across the Forest. Opportunities for over-snow vehicle recreation would be reduced as a result of an increase in acres associated with backcountry (semi-primitive non-motorized), research natural area, and recommended wilderness management areas as well as increases in designated winter range. Alternative P offers the third highest number of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives.

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation Use

Alternative P retains the recreation suitability determinations made in the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended) for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. All of the recreation activities and opportunities provided for in the 1988 Plan would continue to be available under Alternative P, but may not be available in all of the same locations as under the No Action Alternative. For a comparison between alternatives of management areas suitable for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, see Table 2.

Under Alternative P, changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect increases in Semi-Primitive Motorized and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness, Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized Management Areas) and to reflect the increase in the Roaded Natural ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the Roaded Natural ROS classification in the Revised

Forest Plan. Recreation opportunities would still be available in a variety of ROS classes across the Forest including semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, and rural, representing a broad array of natural settings, managerial, and social environments in which users could participate in their preferred activities. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class acreages for each alternative are summarized in Table 8.

Implementation of Alternative P would provide the third highest number of total Forest acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities and the third highest number of total Forest acres open to summer motorized recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives. Total Forest acres open to non-motorized recreation opportunities remains fairly consistent (within 3,000 acres) amongst all the alternatives. For a comparison of the number of acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4. For a comparison of the number of acres open to summer motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 6.

Motorized Recreation Trails

Alternative P would maintain the same number of summer motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities across the Forest as the No Action Alternative. Under this alternative, approximately 181 miles of summer trail would be managed for motorized uses and 342 miles of summer trail would be managed for non-motorized uses. For a comparison of summer trail miles managed for motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 5. Trails managed for motorized use would continue to provide opportunities for ATVs, motorcycles, and four wheel drives greater than 50 inches wide (jeep trails). Trails managed for summer non-motorized use would continue to provide opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and pack and saddle use. There would be no change in the number of miles or the types of managed motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities on the Forest.

Alternative P would also maintain the spatial distribution of existing summer motorized recreation trail opportunities across the Forest and would continue to provide the existing mix of summer motorized and non-motorized trail systems within each of the three counties in which the Colville National Forest is located. Implementation of Alternative P would increase the number of backcountry acres managed for summer motorized recreation trail opportunities from 13,571 acres in the No Action Alternative to 54,577 acres. This equates to a 400% increase in backcountry motorized (BCM) management area acres. These BCM areas would include all of the existing motorized backcountry trail opportunities on the Forest. Overall, summer motorized recreation trail opportunities would be allowed on 873,331 acres (79% of the Forest) across the Forest. Non-motorized recreation trail opportunities would be allowed on nearly 100% of the Forest's land base (excluding RNAs) and the opportunity for trails to exist in a non-motorized setting (including backcountry, wilderness, and recommended wilderness management areas) would equal 222,870 acres, equaling 20% of the Forest's land base. For a comparison of management area acres open to motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities, see Table 6.

Under Alternative P, there would be a greater opportunity to access summer non-motorized recreation trails than summer motorized recreation trails for several reasons. First, the number of non-motorized trail miles would outnumber motorized trail miles by nearly 2 to 1. Second, the acres available for summer backcountry non-motorized trail opportunities would outnumber the acres available for summer backcountry motorized trail opportunities by

168,293 acres. Third, additional non-motorized trails could be constructed anywhere on the Forest (except research natural areas - RNAs) under Alternative P, while summer motorized recreation trails could only be located outside of wilderness, RW, RNAs, and backcountry management areas, which reduces the potential Forest acreage available for new summer motorized trail opportunities by 20% as compared to new non-motorized trail opportunities. Fourth, the summer motorized trail opportunities in Alternative P are geographically limited to remote areas of eastern Ferry County and the border between Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties while Alternative P's summer non-motorized trail opportunities are located fairly evenly across the Forest, with many of them easily accessible by passenger vehicle from communities adjacent to the Forest.

Access

Under Alternative P, the desired condition for road density on the Colville National Forest would be 1-2 miles per square mile, which is approximately one third to one half lower than the existing condition for the Forest depending on the specific watershed. As a result, reductions in road density would be expected in the majority of watersheds across the Forest to meet the desired condition. These reductions would likely be focused initially on the Forest's key watersheds, where the restoration of failing road infrastructure would be a priority over the life of the Forest Plan. Given that projected Forest funding would allow for approximately 20 miles of decommissioning each year, the magnitude of potential road decommissioning over the twenty-year life span of the Forest Plan would be approximately 400 miles, or ten percent of the Forest's existing road system.

Reducing road density would likely result in a corresponding reduction in roaded access for recreation use depending on the specific roads selected to be decommissioned. The level of effect associated with reducing road density across all watersheds would be dependent on the length of open system roads that would be proposed for decommissioning – the greater the length, the greater the potential effect on recreation access. However, if some Maintenance Level 1 roads – those roads already closed to vehicle use by the public – are selected for decommissioning instead of open system roads, then there would be a corresponding reduction in the potential loss of open road access for recreation use. Similarly, roads decommissioned in riparian areas would have a greater impact on access for recreation use than those located in upland areas since most recreation use on the Forest occurs in riparian areas associated with lakeshores, rivers, and streams.

The proposed reduction in road density associated with Alternative P would not be expected to result in a reduction in roaded access for developed recreation site and trail access since these opportunities are generally located along major travel routes. These major travel routes would typically be improved or rerouted (instead of decommissioned) to correct resource concerns in order to ensure continued access to the Forest's recreation infrastructure. However, the proposed reduction in road density would likely reduce access to dispersed recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, driving for pleasure, and gathering forest products. Since most dispersed recreation activities can be enjoyed throughout the Forest, localized road closures would likely result in users shifting their access needs to nearby roads. However, in key watersheds, where road decommissioning would be emphasized, road closures could reduce roaded access for dispersed recreation use to a level that would displace recreationists to other parts of the Forest in order to participate in the same dispersed recreation activities.

At the Forest scale, the effect of decommissioning approximately 400 miles of road over a 20-year period would be a gradual decrease in roaded access for recreation use. The impact of this decrease in roaded access for recreation use would be focused on dispersed recreation opportunities and would be expected to be more obvious in riparian areas associated with key watersheds. Implementation of Alternative P would likely result in greater impacts to roaded access for recreation than the No Action Alternative and Alternatives B and O. Alternative P would have similar affects to roaded access as Alternative R.

Recommended Wilderness

Alternative P recommends 6% (68,300 acres) of the Forest as additional wilderness, including the following inventoried Potential Wilderness Areas (PWAs): Salmo-Priest Adjacent, Abercrombie-Hooknose and the portion of the Bald Snow PWA located south of Snow Peak Cabin, which corresponds with tributaries to South Fork O'Brien Creek and South Fork Sherman Creek. For a comparison of potential wilderness area acreage by alternative, see Table 9. Each of the PWAs in this alternative were evaluated by the forest plan revision team according to the process identified in FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70 and determined to contribute to the capability, availability, and need for additional wilderness in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion. At least one PWA under this alternative would be recommended as potential wilderness in each of the three counties located within the Forest's boundary.

This alternative attempts to balance the public's desire for additional wilderness with existing backcountry recreation opportunities such as mountain biking and OHV riding. As a result, not all of the Forest's PWAs that have wilderness qualities were recommended as wilderness in this alternative. Instead, Alternative P retains 54,577 acres (5% of the Forest) of backcountry for motorized recreation opportunities, and 123,105 acres (11% of the Forest) of backcountry for recreation opportunities that do not conform with wilderness management direction such as mountain biking, rental cabins and historic structure maintenance. See Table 6 for a comparison of backcountry and backcountry motorized management acres by alternative.

In addition, this alternative recommends approximately 82,800 acres be included in a recreation special interest area along the Kettle Crest in Ferry County that would include the Profanity, northern part of the Bald-Snow, Hoodoo, and Twin Sisters PWAs. This SIA would provide for the existing outstanding motorized and non-motorized recreation values associated with the Kettle Crest region while also maintaining many of the existing wilderness qualities that make these PWAs popular with both motorized and non-motorized recreationists. Within the SIA, PWAs would be managed as either backcountry (Profanity, Bald-Snow, and Hoodoo) or backcountry motorized (Twin Sisters) and all existing recreation opportunities would be retained. Acres attributable to the SIA are included in the backcountry and backcountry motorized acres listed in this paragraph.

Under this alternative, non-conforming recreation opportunities and motorized trail maintenance and reconstruction activities would be allowed to continue until Congress designates the RW areas as wilderness. No new non-conforming uses would be allowed. Even with the continuation of non-conforming uses, the wilderness qualities associated with the RW areas listed in Alternative P are not expected to be altered prior to designation as wilderness by Congress. This determination is based on the fact that the existing non-conforming uses were identified during the 2009 PWA evaluation process and their presence did not preclude the roadless areas from meeting the evaluation criteria (capability, availability, and need) for inclusion on the inventory of Potential Wilderness Areas. Therefore, allowing these non-

conforming uses to continue at use rates similar to when the wilderness evaluations were completed should not detract from the inherent wilderness qualities associated with the three PWAs.

The PWAs that would be designated as backcountry motorized management areas in this alternative include Owl Mountain, Jackknife, Twin Sisters, South Huckleberry and Lost Creek. Combined, these PWAs would provide access to all of the Forest's existing backcountry motorized trail systems. As a result, there would be no loss of existing summer motorized recreation use if this alternative was implemented.

Implementation of Alternative P would designate thirteen PWAs as backcountry management areas including: northern part of Bald-Snow, Bodie Mountain, Clackamas Mountain, Cougar Mountain, Deer Creek, Grassy Top, Hall Mountain, Harvey Creek, Hoodoo, Jackson Creek, Quartzite, South Fork Mountain and Thirteenmile. Combined, these PWAs contain approximately 53 miles of backcountry mountain bike trail opportunities. However, if the RW areas listed in this alternative become wilderness, mountain bike trail opportunities would no longer be available on 68,300 acres across the Forest. This equates to approximately a 90 mile (30%) reduction in the number of available mountain bike trail opportunities that are associated with the Forest's existing summer non-motorized trail system. As a result, Alternative P provides the third highest number of mountain bike trail miles of all the alternatives. For a comparison between alternatives of backcountry management acres open to mountain biking and the number of trail miles open to mountain biking, see Table 7. Managing these PWAs as backcountry would also allow the Forest to continue to manage its only backcountry recreation rental cabin and to maintain a popular historic fire lookout.

If the RW areas listed under Alternative P are designated as wilderness by Congress, trail maintenance and reconstruction costs could increase on the 90 miles of trail that access the 68,300 acres of recommended wilderness. This cost increase is based on the required change from using motorized (chainsaws, power toters, trail dozers, etc.) trail maintenance equipment to non-motorized equipment (cross-cut saws, pack mules, pulaskis, etc.) which would likely result in annual tasks, such as spring logout, and reconstruction efforts taking more time to complete, additional people, or both.

Implementation of Alternative P would prohibit over-snow vehicle use on 91,579 acres currently open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities in the No Action Alternative as a result of an increase in acres associated with backcountry (semi-primitive non-motorized), research natural area, and recommended wilderness management areas as well as changes in designated winter range. However, the majority of the additional acres that would be closed to over-snow vehicle use under Alternative P consist of heavily vegetated slopes and terrain that is difficult to access and currently supports only limited over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities. Therefore, implementation of Alternative P would result in little to no reduction in the amount of over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities available on the Forest when compared to the No Action Alternative. For a comparison of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4.

Cumulative Effects

No major changes in recreation management on lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest were identified that would contribute to cumulative effects.

Alternative B

Alternative B emphasizes two management areas (MA) that focus on forest vegetation; the Restoration MA, which emphasizes old forests, and the Active MA, which emphasizes timber production. These are generally the Focused Restoration and General Restoration Management Areas in the Proposed Action and other alternatives. The Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment #2 (Eastside Screens) from the existing forest plan provides direction for managing vegetation.

This alternative also responds to those advocating for increased wilderness and to public concerns that the amount and location of summer and winter motorized use may impact aquatic, riparian and wildlife habitats. Alternative B provides for the highest acreage of recommended wilderness across all alternatives and the least amount of summer motorized and non-motorized backcountry recreation opportunities.

Input from the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition's alternative on vegetation, road, aquatic management and wilderness recommendations are included in this alternative. Proposed management not provided in the coalition's alternative comes from the Proposed Action.

Summary of Effects

The following summarizes the effects to recreation resources associated with the implementation of Alternative B. Issues analyzed include the identification of lands suitable for recreation, motorized recreation trails, access, and recommended wilderness.

Alternative B retains the recreation suitability determinations completed as part of the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect decreases in the Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS class and increases in the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness) and to reflect the increase in the Roaded Natural ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the Roaded Natural ROS classification in the Revised Forest Plan. The number of summer motorized recreation trail miles would be reduced by 22% (along with Alternative R, this represents the largest reduction in motorized trail miles of all the action alternatives) and the acres of backcountry motorized recreation management areas would be reduced by 51% (the largest reduction in acres of the action alternatives) when compared to the existing condition.

Alternative B also reduces the Forest's existing backcountry jeep trail system from 39 miles of trail to zero. Access for recreation would continue to be affected through project specific decisions based on improving resource and habitat conditions. Road decommissioning would be expected to continue at a rate similar to recent years across the Forest and should result in little or no change in the public's ability to participate in a variety of summer and winter dispersed and developed recreation opportunities across the Forest. Alternative B includes the highest number of recommended wilderness acres, the lowest number of backcountry management area acres, and the lowest number of backcountry motorized management area acres of the six alternatives. Non-conforming wilderness uses would not be allowed to continue in recommended wilderness prior to designation as wilderness by Congress. Some existing backcountry recreation opportunities would no longer be available on the Forest (rental cabin,

jeep trails). The miles of trail open to mountain biking would be reduced (a direct result of additional recommended wilderness areas), resulting in the lowest number of miles open to mountain biking when compared to the other alternatives. Motorized equipment for trail maintenance and reconstruction would no longer be permitted on approximately 221 miles of trail accessing recommended wilderness, resulting in a potential increase in trail maintenance and reconstruction costs across the Forest. Opportunities for over-snow vehicle recreation would be reduced when compared to the No Action Alternative as a result of the large increase in acres associated with recommended wilderness. As a result, Alternative B provides the second lowest number of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives.

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation Use

Alternative B retains the recreation suitability determinations made in the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended) for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. All of the recreation activities and opportunities provided for in the 1988 Plan would continue to be available under Alternative B, but may not be available in all of the same locations as under the No Action Alternative. For a comparison between alternatives of management areas suitable for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, see Table 2.

Under Alternative B, changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect decreases in the Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS class and increases in the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness) and to reflect the increase in the Roaded Natural ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the Roaded Natural ROS classification in the Revised Forest Plan. Recreation opportunities would still be available in a variety of ROS classes across the Forest including semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, and rural, representing a broad array of natural settings, managerial, and social environments in which users could participate in their preferred activities. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class acreages for each alternative are summarized in Table 8.

Implementation of Alternative B would provide both the second lowest number of total Forest acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities and the second lowest number of total Forest acres open to summer motorized recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives. Total Forest acres open to non-motorized recreation opportunities remains fairly consistent (within 3,000 acres) amongst all the alternatives. For a comparison of the number of acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4. For a comparison of the number of acres open to summer motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 6.

Motorized Recreation Trails

Compared to the No Action Alternative, Alternative B decreases the miles of summer motorized recreation trails and increases the miles of summer non-motorized recreation trails available on the Forest. Under this alternative, approximately 142 miles of summer trail would be managed for motorized recreation opportunities and 382 miles of summer trail would be managed for non-motorized recreation opportunities. Converting 39 miles of motorized trail to a non-motorized classification results in a 22% decrease in the existing number of summer motorized

recreation trail miles and an increase of 10% in the existing number of summer non-motorized recreation trail miles. For a comparison of summer trail miles managed for motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 5. Implementation of Alternative B would provide a reduced number of managed ATV and motorcycle trail opportunities across the Forest and would eliminate all of the Forest's existing trail opportunities (39 miles) associated with four wheel drives greater than 50 inches wide (jeep trails). Implementation of Alternative B would increase the number of summer non-motorized recreation trail opportunities including hiking and pack and saddle stock use as compared to the number of non-motorized recreation trail opportunities in the No Action Alternative.

Alternative B also decreases the spatial distribution of motorized recreation trail opportunities across the Forest as well as the availability of backcountry motorized trail opportunities. Unlike the No Action Alternative which provides a mix of summer motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities throughout all three counties, Alternative B would only provide a mix of summer motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities in Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties. In Ferry County, 39 miles of motorized trail would be converted to non-motorized trail, leaving only 1.4 miles (less than one percent of the total trail miles in the County) of motorized trail available within the County. The number of backcountry acres open to motorized use would be reduced from 13,571 acres in the No Action Alternative to 6,606 acres in Alternative B. This equates to a 51% reduction in backcountry areas open to motorized recreation trails. Similarly, total acres open to summer motorized recreation trail opportunities across the Forest would be reduced from 904,561 acres in the No Action Alternative to 839,565 acres in Alternative B. This represents a 7.3% reduction in the number of acres available for summer motorized recreation trail opportunities across the Forest. Summer non-motorized recreation trail opportunities would be allowed on nearly 100% of the Forest's land base (excluding RNAs) and the opportunity for trails to exist in a non-motorized setting (includes backcountry, wilderness, and recommended wilderness management areas) would increase from 118,330 acres in the No Action Alternative to 256,602 acres in Alternative B, an increase of 217%. For a comparison of management area acres open to motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities, see Table 6.

Across the Forest, there is currently a greater opportunity to access summer non-motorized recreation trails than summer motorized recreation trails. See discussion under the No Action and Proposed Action Alternatives that supports this statement. Implementation of Alternative B would further shift the opportunity for summer trail access towards non-motorized trail activities since it would increase the number of non-motorized trail miles and acres of backcountry open to non-motorized trail use while reducing the number of motorized recreation trail opportunities and motorized backcountry management areas. This is especially true in Ferry County where motorized recreation trail opportunities would be reduced to a single 1.4 mile segment of trail.

Access

Under Alternative B, the Forest's road system would be capped at approximately 4,000 miles for the entire Forest. No roads would be allowed to be added to the Forest's road system unless an equal distance was decommissioned. Road management decisions would be based on the need for public access, safety, forest management and resource needs. Decisions on road decommissioning would be made at the project level based on information provided by resource specialists and recommendations contained in the Forest's most recent Travel Analysis Report pursuant to subpart A of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. During these project level

discussions, reductions in road density could be proposed to meet resource needs that would reduce roaded access for recreation uses. The level of effect associated with reducing road density would be dependent on the length of open system roads that would be proposed for decommissioning – the greater the length, the greater the potential reduction in roaded recreation access. However, if Maintenance Level 1 roads – those roads already closed to vehicle use by the public – are selected for decommissioning instead of open system roads, then there would be a corresponding reduction in the potential loss of open road access for recreation use. Similarly, roads decommissioned in riparian areas would have a greater impact on roaded access for recreation use than those located in upland areas since most recreation use on the Forest occurs in riparian areas associated with lakeshores, rivers, and streams. A reduction in open road density would reduce access to dispersed recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, driving for pleasure, and gathering of forest products. However, since most dispersed recreation activities can be enjoyed throughout the Forest, localized road decommissioning would likely result in users shifting their dispersed recreation access needs to nearby roads in order to participate in the same dispersed recreation activities resulting in little to no reduction in the public's participation in or access to dispersed recreation opportunities on the Forest.

Under Alternative B, a reduction in roaded access for trail and developed site recreation opportunities would not be anticipated since these opportunities are generally located along major travel routes. These major travel routes would typically be improved or rerouted (instead of decommissioned) to correct resource concerns in order to ensure continued access to the Forest's developed recreation infrastructure.

Implementation of Alternative B would likely result in fewer impacts to roaded access for recreation than Alternatives R and P which have a desired condition for road density of 1-2 miles per square mile and could result in a greater reduction in system roads, especially in key watersheds and watersheds where the existing road densities are above the desired condition. Alternative B would have similar effects on roaded access for recreation as the Proposed Action which has a desired condition for road density of 2-3 miles per square mile which is close to the existing condition (at the Forest scale) for most watersheds. Alternative B would have a similar effect on roaded access for recreation as the No Action and Alternative O, which do not have a desired condition for road density.

Recommended Wilderness

Alternative B recommends 20% (220,330 acres – the highest amount of all alternatives) of the Forest be recommended as additional wilderness, including all the inventoried Potential Wilderness Areas (PWAs) on the Forest except for Lost Creek. For a comparison of potential wilderness acreage by alternative, see Table 9. Based on the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition's wilderness recommendations, this alternative also recommends as additional wilderness those portions of the Bodie Mountain, Clackamas Mountain, Jackson Creek, Grassy Top, and South Fork Mountain PWAs that are located primarily on adjacent Forests. By Forest Service policy, those PWAs located primarily on adjacent forests that would not meet the minimum acreage requirements necessary to be recommended as wilderness on the Colville National Forest alone would typically be evaluated for wilderness recommendation through the Idaho Panhandle and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests respective forest plan revision processes. The preferred alternative for the Idaho Panhandle forest plan revision process did not support the South Fork Mountain or Grassy Top PWAs as recommended wilderness and the Okanogan-Wenatchee forest plan process did not support the Jackson Creek, Bodie Mountain,

and Clackamas Mountain PWAs as recommended wilderness in its proposed action for forest plan revision. Each of the PWAs in this alternative were evaluated by the forest plan revision team according to the process identified in FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70 and determined to contribute to the capability, availability, and need for additional wilderness in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion. Under Alternative B, at least two PWAs would be recommended as wilderness in each of the counties in which the Forest is located.

This alternative recommends a large increase in wilderness and provides few opportunities for other motorized and mechanized backcountry recreation opportunities on the Forest. Several PWAs that contain well-established non-conforming uses (i.e. motorized trails, rental cabin, and mountain bike use) that may detract from the wilderness qualities associated with the various PWAs are recommended as wilderness in Alternative B. This alternative designates 6,606 acres (0.6% of the Forest) of backcountry for motorized recreation opportunities and an additional 4,835 acres (0.4% of the Forest) of backcountry for recreation opportunities that do not conform with wilderness management direction, such as mountain biking. See Table 6 for a comparison of backcountry and backcountry motorized management acres by alternative. Under Alternative B, recreation opportunities that would not conform to wilderness management direction (mountain biking, motorized trail use, motorized trail maintenance and reconstruction, historic structure maintenance and rental cabin management) would not be allowed to continue prior to congressional designation of the recommended wilderness areas as wilderness. As a result, the Forest's only backcountry cabin rental would be closed to the public and, over time, removed from the landscape. Likewise, a recently renovated historic fire lookout would be managed to a standard compatible with wilderness designation and may be allowed to slowly deteriorate over time. Since existing recreation opportunities that would not conform to wilderness management direction would not be allowed prior to wilderness designation, there would be little chance that the wilderness qualities associated with these recommended wilderness areas would be altered by existing non-conforming recreation uses prior to their designation as wilderness by Congress.

Under Alternative B, the Lost Creek PWA would be designated as the Forest's only backcountry motorized management area. The three existing trails in this PWA are currently open to motorcycles only. The result of implementing Alternative B would be a 39-mile (100%) reduction in backcountry motorized trail miles that are currently open to ATVs and four wheel drives greater than 50 inches wide. Overall, this alternative would result in approximately a 70% decrease in the number of existing backcountry summer motorized recreation trail miles on the Forest.

Under this alternative, only those inventoried roadless areas included in the 2001 Roadless Rule inventory (Bangs, Dry Canyon Breaks) that would not meet the minimum acreage requirements to be recommended as wilderness would be designated as backcountry management areas. As a result, backcountry mountain bike trail opportunities would be eliminated on 220,330 acres across the Forest. This equates to a 221 mile (73%) reduction in the number of available mountain bike trail miles associated with the Forest's summer non-motorized trail system. For a comparison between alternatives of backcountry management acres open to mountain biking and the number of trail miles open to mountain biking, see Table 7.

Under Alternative B, once the Forest Plan is approved and implemented, trail maintenance and reconstruction costs could increase on the 221 miles of trail that access the 220,330 acres of RW. This cost increase is based on the required change away from using motorized (chainsaws, power toters, trail dozers, etc.) trail maintenance equipment to non-motorized equipment

(cross-cut saws, pack mules, pulaskis, etc.) which would likely result in annual tasks, such as spring logout, and reconstruction efforts taking more time to complete, additional people, or both.

Implementation of Alternative B would prohibit over-snow vehicle use on 122,652 acres currently open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities in the No Action Alternative as a result of the increase in acres associated with recommended wilderness, RNAs, and winter range. Approximately 55,000 acres of backcountry associated with the Twin Sisters, Jackknife, Owl Mountain and South Huckleberry PWAs are open to over-snow vehicles in the No Action Alternative and offer 39 miles of jeep trails (these trails are neither designated nor groomed for over-snow vehicle use) that are currently available for over-snow vehicle use. Implementation of Alternative B would prohibit this use. As a result, implementation of Alternative B would result in a high reduction in over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities across the Forest when compared to the No Action alternative. For a comparison of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4.

Cumulative Effects

No major changes in recreation management on lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest were identified that would contribute to cumulative effects.

Alternative O

Alternative O emphasizes summer and winter motorized and non-motorized opportunities in an unroaded backcountry setting and minimizes recommended wilderness. In addition, the Kettle Crest Recreation Special Interest Area (SIA) is proposed to address public disagreement about recommending this area for wilderness. Participants in the Colville Collaborative group that worked on forest plan issues around wilderness and vegetation management agreed that the Kettle Crest was a special area for semi-primitive recreation opportunities, but did not agree that the area should be wilderness because of the impacts to recreation opportunities such as mountain biking and OHV riding as well as motorized trail maintenance. The proposed Kettle Crest Recreation Special Interest Area (SIA) was added as a component of this Alternative to address public disagreement about recommending this area for wilderness. The backcountry and backcountry motorized management areas within the SIA would be managed to maintain their existing wilderness qualities while allowing for non-wilderness recreation activities to continue, such as mountain biking, OHV riding, and use of a rental cabin, in a semi-primitive setting.

This alternative proposes two management areas to address vegetation management: the Restoration MA to restore the historic range of variation, and the Responsible MA that emphasizes timber production. The total percentage of the Forest allocated to vegetation management—72 percent—is similar to the B Alternative’s 73 percent, though the O Alternative has a greater percentage in the Restoration MA than the B Alternative.

This alternative comes from a series of public, collaborative meetings run by the Forest Service that focused on motorized recreation, wilderness recommendations, and vegetation management and reflects areas of general agreement among participants in those meetings. The Forest Service fully developed this alternative using the Proposed Action to fill in the gaps not addressed in the collaborative process.

Summary of Effects

The following summarizes the effects to recreation resources associated with the implementation of Alternative O. Issues analyzed include the identification of lands suitable for recreation, motorized recreation trails, access, and recommended wilderness.

Alternative O retains the recreation suitability determinations completed as part of the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect increases in Semi-Primitive Motorized and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness, Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized Management Areas) and to reflect the increase in the Roaded Natural ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the Roaded Natural ROS classification in the Revised Forest Plan. The number of summer motorized recreation trail miles would remain the same and the acres of backcountry motorized recreation management areas would increase when compared to the existing condition. This alternative would provide the greatest number of summer motorized trail miles (along with Alternative P, the Proposed Action, and the No Action) and the third most acres managed for backcountry motorized recreation. Access for recreation would continue to be affected through project specific decisions based on improving resource and habitat conditions. Road decommissioning would be expected to continue at a rate similar to recent years across the Forest and should result in little or no change in the public's ability to participate in a variety of summer and winter dispersed and developed recreation opportunities across the Forest. Alternative O includes the second lowest number of recommended wilderness acres, the highest number of backcountry management area acres, and the third highest number of backcountry motorized management area acres of the six alternatives. In addition, this alternative includes approximately 99,000 acres of primarily backcountry and backcountry motorized management areas that would be designated as a Recreation Special Interest area along the Kettle Crest. Non-conforming wilderness uses would be allowed to continue in recommended wilderness until the areas are designated as wilderness by Congress. All backcountry recreation opportunities would continue across the Forest. However, the miles of trail open to mountain biking would be reduced minimally (a direct result of additional recommended wilderness areas), resulting in the second highest number of miles open to mountain biking when compared to the other alternatives. Once the recommended wilderness areas are designated as wilderness by Congress, motorized equipment for trail maintenance and reconstruction would no longer be permitted on approximately 29 miles of trail. Opportunities for over-snow vehicle recreation would be reduced as a result of an increase in acres associated with backcountry (semi-primitive non-motorized), research natural area, and recommended wilderness management areas as well as increases in designated winter range. Alternative O offers the second highest number of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives.

Identification of Lands Suitable for Recreation Use

Alternative O retains the recreation suitability determinations made in the 1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended) for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. All of the recreation activities and opportunities provided for in the 1988 Plan would continue to be available under Alternative O, but may not be available in all of the same locations as under the No Action Alternative. For a

comparison between alternatives of management areas suitable for summer and winter motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, see Table 2.

Under Alternative O, changes would be made to the Forest's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) map to accurately reflect increases in Semi-Primitive Motorized and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes (a result of increases in acres associated with recommended wilderness, Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized Management Areas) and to reflect the increase in the Roaded Natural ROS class that resulted from the absorption of the ROS sub-class of Roaded Modified in the 1988 Forest Plan into the Roaded Natural ROS classification in the Revised Forest Plan. Recreation opportunities would still be available in a variety of ROS classes across the Forest including semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, and rural, representing a broad array of natural settings, managerial, and social environments in which users could participate in their preferred activities. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class acreages for each alternative are summarized in Table 8.

Implementation of Alternative O would provide both the second highest number of total Forest acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities and the second highest number of total Forest acres open to summer motorized recreation opportunities when compared to the other alternatives. Total Forest acres open to non-motorized recreation opportunities remains fairly consistent (within 3,000 acres) amongst all the alternatives. For a comparison of the number of acres open to winter over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4. For a comparison of the number of acres open to summer motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 6.

Motorized Recreation Trails

Alternative O would maintain the same number of motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities across the Forest as the No Action Alternative. Under this alternative, approximately 181 miles of summer trail would be managed for motorized uses and 342 miles of summer trail would be managed for non-motorized uses. For a comparison of summer trail miles managed for motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 5. Trails managed for motorized use would continue to provide opportunities for ATVs, motorcycles, and four wheel drives greater than 50 inches wide (jeep trails). Trails managed for summer non-motorized use would continue to provide opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and pack and saddle use. Implementation of Alternative O would result in no change in the number of miles or the types of managed motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities on the Forest as compared to the No Action Alternative.

Alternative O would also maintain the spatial distribution of existing summer motorized trail opportunities across the Forest and would continue to provide the existing mix of summer motorized and non-motorized trail systems within each of the three counties in which the Colville National Forest is located. Alternative O would increase the number of backcountry acres managed for summer motorized trail use from 13,571 acres in the No Action Alternative to 53,734 acres. This equates to almost a 400% increase in backcountry acres that would be managed for summer motorized trail use. The additional backcountry motorized management acres would include all of the existing summer motorized backcountry trail opportunities on the Forest. Overall, summer motorized trail recreation opportunities would be allowed on 873,957 acres (80%) across the Forest. Summer non-motorized recreation trail opportunities would be allowed on nearly 100% of the Forest's land base (excluding RNAs) and the opportunity for trails to exist in a non-motorized setting (including backcountry, wilderness, and RW management

areas) would equal 221,702 acres, equaling 20% of the Forest's land base. For a comparison of management area acres open to motorized and non-motorized recreation trail opportunities, see Table 6.

Under Alternative O, there would be a greater opportunity to access summer non-motorized recreation trails than summer motorized recreation trails for several reasons. First, the number of non-motorized trail miles would outnumber motorized trail miles by nearly 2 to 1. Second, the acres available for summer backcountry non-motorized trail opportunities would outnumber the acres available for summer backcountry motorized trail opportunities by 167,968 acres. Third, additional non-motorized trails could be constructed anywhere on the Forest (except research natural areas - RNAs) under Alternative O, while summer motorized recreation trails could only be located outside of wilderness, RW, RNAs, and backcountry management areas, which reduces the potential Forest acreage available for new summer motorized trail opportunities by 20% as compared to new non-motorized trail opportunities. Fourth, the summer motorized trail opportunities in Alternative O are geographically limited to remote areas of eastern Ferry County and the border between Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties while this alternative's summer non-motorized trail opportunities are located fairly evenly across the Forest, with many of them easily accessible by passenger vehicle from communities adjacent to the Forest.

Access

Under Alternative O, the Forest's road system would be capped at approximately 4,000 miles for the entire Forest. No roads would be allowed to be added to the Forest's road system unless an equal distance was decommissioned. Road management decisions would be based on the need for public access, safety, forest management and resource needs. Decisions on road decommissioning would be made at the project level based on information provided by resource specialists and recommendations contained in the Forest's most recent Travel Analysis Report pursuant to subpart A of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. During these project level discussions, reductions in road density could be proposed to meet resource needs that would reduce roaded access for recreation uses. The level of effect associated with reducing road density would be dependent on the length of open system roads that would be proposed for decommissioning – the greater the length, the greater the potential reduction in roaded recreation access. However, if Maintenance Level 1 roads – those roads already closed to vehicle use by the public – are selected for decommissioning instead of open system roads, then there would be a corresponding reduction in the potential loss of open road access for recreation use. Similarly, roads decommissioned in riparian areas would have a greater impact on roaded access for recreation use than those located in upland areas since most recreation use on the Forest occurs in riparian areas associated with lakeshores, rivers, and streams. A reduction in open road density would reduce access to dispersed recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, driving for pleasure, and gathering of forest products. However, since most dispersed recreation activities can be enjoyed throughout the Forest, localized road decommissioning would likely result in users shifting their dispersed recreation access needs to nearby roads in order to participate in the same dispersed recreation activities resulting in little to no reduction in the public's participation in or access to dispersed recreation opportunities on the Forest.

Under Alternative O, a reduction in roaded access for trail and developed site recreation opportunities would not be anticipated since these opportunities are generally located along major travel routes. These major travel routes would typically be improved or rerouted (instead

of decommissioned) to correct resource concerns and ensure continued access to the Forest's developed recreation infrastructure.

Implementation of Alternative O would likely result in fewer impacts to roaded access for recreation than Alternatives R and P which have a desired condition for road density of 1-2 miles per square mile and could result in a greater reduction in system roads, especially in key watersheds and watersheds where the existing road densities are above the desired condition. Alternative O would have similar effects on roaded access for recreation as the Proposed Action which has a desired condition for road density of 2-3 miles per square mile which is close to the existing condition (at the Forest scale) for most watersheds. Alternative O would have a similar effect on roaded access for recreation as the No Action and Alternative B, which do not have a desired condition for road density.

Recommended Wilderness

Alternative O recommends 1.5% (15,955 acres – the second lowest amount of the alternatives) of the Forest as additional wilderness including the Salmo-Priest Adjacent PWA. For a comparison of potential wilderness acreage by alternative, see Table 9. This PWA was evaluated by the forest plan revision team according to the process identified in FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70 and it was determined that it contributed to the capability, availability, and need for additional wilderness in the Okanogan Highlands ecoregion. This alternative recommends additional wilderness in Pend Oreille County only. No PWAs would be recommended as wilderness in Ferry or Stevens Counties. If the RW area becomes wilderness, this alternative would concentrate the Forest's wilderness recreation opportunities into the extreme northeastern corner of the Forest.

This alternative strives to maintain all of the existing motorized, mechanized (mountain bike), and non-motorized recreation opportunities on the Forest while providing for a limited amount of additional wilderness area. As a result, the majority of PWAs on the Forest that have wilderness qualities were not recommended as wilderness in this alternative. Instead, Alternative O would designate 53,734 acres (5% of the Forest) of backcountry for motorized recreation opportunities and an additional 174,311 acres (16% of the Forest) of backcountry for non-motorized recreation opportunities that do not conform with wilderness management direction such as mountain biking, use of recreation rental cabins and maintenance of historic structures. See Table 6 for a comparison of backcountry and backcountry motorized management acres by alternative. In addition, this alternative recommends approximately 99,000 acres be included in a recreation special interest area along the Kettle Crest in Ferry County that would include the Profanity, Bald-Snow, Hoodoo, and Twin Sisters PWAs. This SIA would provide for the existing outstanding motorized and non-motorized recreation values associated with the Kettle Crest region while also maintaining many of the existing wilderness qualities that make these PWAs popular with both motorized and non-motorized recreationists. Within the SIA, PWAs would be managed as either backcountry (Profanity, Bald-Snow, and Hoodoo) or backcountry motorized (Twin Sisters) and all existing recreation opportunities would be retained. Acres attributable to the SIA are included in the backcountry and backcountry motorized acres listed in this paragraph.

Under this alternative, recreation opportunities that do not conform with wilderness management direction, as well as motorized trail maintenance and reconstruction, would be allowed to continue in the Salmo-Priest Adjacent recommended wilderness area until Congress designates the RW area as wilderness. No new non-conforming uses would be allowed. Even

with the continuation of non-conforming uses, the wilderness qualities associated with the RW areas listed in Alternative O are not expected to be altered prior to designation as wilderness by Congress. This determination is based on the fact that the existing non-conforming uses were identified during the 2009 PWA evaluation process and their presence did not preclude the roadless areas from meeting the evaluation criteria (capability, availability, and need) for inclusion on the inventory of Potential Wilderness Areas. Therefore, allowing these non-conforming uses to continue at use rates similar to when the wilderness evaluations were completed should not detract from the inherent wilderness qualities associated with the PWA.

The PWAs that would be designated as backcountry motorized management areas in this alternative include Owl Mountain, Jackknife, Twin Sisters, South Huckleberry and Lost Creek. Combined, these PWAs would provide access to all of the Forest's existing backcountry motorized trail systems. As a result, implementation of Alternative O would result in no change in the amount of summer motorized recreation trail opportunities when compared to the No Action Alternative.

Under this alternative, fifteen PWAs would be designated as backcountry management areas including: Abercrombie-Hooknose, Bald Snow, Bodie Mountain, Clackamas Mountain, Cougar Mountain, Deer Creek, Grassy Top, Hall Mountain, Harvey Creek, Hoodoo, Jackson Creek, Profanity, Quartzite, South Fork Mountain, and Thirteenmile. Combined, these PWAs contain the majority of backcountry mountain bike trail opportunities on the Forest. However, if the Salmo-Priest Adjacent RW area listed in this alternative becomes wilderness, mountain bike trail opportunities would be eliminated from 15,955 acres across the Forest. This equates to approximately a 29 mile (10%) reduction in the number of available mountain bike trail opportunities that are associated with the Forest's existing summer non-motorized trail system. As a result, this alternative would provide the second highest amount of mountain bike trail miles of all the alternatives. For a comparison between alternatives of backcountry management acres open to mountain biking and the number of trail miles open to mountain biking, see Table 7. Managing these PWAs as backcountry, instead of wilderness, would also allow the Forest to continue to manage its only backcountry rental cabin and to maintain a popular historic fire lookout.

If the recommended wilderness areas listed under Alternative O are designated as wilderness by Congress, trail maintenance and reconstruction costs could increase on the 29 miles (the lowest mileage increase of all the alternatives) of trail that access the 15,955 acres of RW. This cost increase is based on the required change from using motorized (chainsaws, power toters, trail dozers, etc.) trail maintenance and reconstruction equipment to non-motorized equipment (cross-cut saws, pack mules, pulaskis, etc.) which would likely result in annual tasks, such as spring logcut, and reconstruction efforts taking more time to complete, additional people, or both.

Implementation of Alternative O would prohibit over-snow vehicle use on 90,513 acres currently open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities in the No Action Alternative as a result of an increase in acres associated with backcountry (semi-primitive non-motorized), research natural area, and recommended wilderness management areas as well as changes in designated winter range. However, the majority of the additional acres that would be closed to over-snow vehicle use under Alternative O consist of heavily vegetated slopes and terrain that is difficult to access and currently supports only limited over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities. Therefore, implementation of Alternative O would result in little to no reduction in the amount of over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities available on the Forest when

compared to the No Action Alternative. For a comparison of acres open to over-snow vehicle recreation opportunities by alternative, see Table 4.

Cumulative Effects

No major changes in recreation management on lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest were identified that would contribute to cumulative effects.

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Appendix A - ROS Classes

Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) – A framework for defining the types of outdoor recreation opportunities the public might desire and identifies that portion of the spectrum a given national forest area might be able to provide. The broad classes are:

Primitive (P) – Characterized by essentially unmodified natural environment. Interaction between users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal. Essentially free from evidence of human-induced restrictions and controls. Motorized use within the area is generally not permitted. Very high probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, tranquility, self-reliance, and risk.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) – Characterized by a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment. Interaction between users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. The area is managed in such a way that minimum on site controls and restrictions may be present, but are subtle. Motorized use is generally not permitted. High probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, tranquility, self-reliance, and risk.

Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) – Characterized by a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. The area is managed in such a way that minimum on site controls and restrictions may be present, but are subtle. Motorized use is generally permitted. Moderate probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, tranquility, self-reliance, and risk.

Roaded Natural (RN) – Characterized by a predominantly natural-appearing environment with moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of other humans. Such evidences usually harmonize with the natural environment. Interaction between users may be low to moderate but with evidence of other users prevalent. Resource modification and utilization practices are evident but harmonize with the natural environment. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities. Opportunity to affiliate with other users in developed sites but with some chance for privacy.

Roaded Modified (RM) – Characterized by substantially modified natural environment except for campsite. Roads and management activities may be strongly dominant. There is moderate evidence of other users on roads. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities. Opportunity to get away from others, but with easy access.

Rural (R) – Characterized by substantially modified natural environment. Resource modification and utilization practices are to enhance specific recreation activities and to maintain vegetative cover and soil. Sights and sounds of humans are readily evident, and the interaction between users is often moderate to high. A considerable number of facilities are designed for use by a large number of people. Facilities are often provided for special activities. Moderate densities are provided far away from developed sites.

Appendix A - ROS Classes

Facilities for intensified motorized use and parking are available. Opportunity to observe and affiliate with other users is important, as is convenience of facilities.

Urban (U) – Characterized by a substantially urbanized environment, although the background may have natural-appearing elements. Resource modification and utilization practices are to enhance specific recreation activities. Vegetative cover is often exotic and manicured. Sights and sounds of humans on-site are predominant. Large numbers of users can be expected, both on-site and in nearby areas. Facilities for highly intensified motor use and parking are available with forms of mass transit often available to carry people throughout the site. Opportunity to observe and affiliate with other users is very important, as is convenience of facilities.

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