

Colville Plan Revision
Meeting with Three Rivers RD Grazing Permittees
April 13, 2016

Subject: Forest plan revision presentation at the annual spring permittee meeting

Participants:

Three Rivers Ranger District grazing allotment permittees (names of some attendees included Mclrvin, Darnielle, Dawson, Pond, Schuerman Ranch, Wishon, Sanders, Greens, and Smith)

Jay Shepherd, WA Dept of Fish & Wildlife

Amy Dillon, Forest Plan Revision Team Lead; Brandon Weinmann, District Rangeland Management Specialist; Chase Bolyard, District Rangeland Management Specialist; Walt Bauman, District Rangeland Management Specialist; Travis Fletcher, Forest Plan Revision Lead for Range and Forest Range Program Manager; Christy Merritt, District Environmental Coordinator; and Marcy Rumelhart (notes)

Meeting start time: 2:00 pm, Three Rivers Ranger District office, Kettle Falls, WA.

This was the annual spring operations meeting with the Three Rivers Ranger District grazing permittees. An update on forest plan revision was on the agenda and that discussion began 2:00.

Amy provided a brief overview of the forest plan revision process, and explained some of the differences between the six alternatives in relation to recommended wilderness (RW) and water quality. She discussed the riparian management area buffer widths (not no-touch areas). The FS is aware that the stubble height guideline is a concern to the permittees. The stubble height guideline varies by alternative, based on which direction is proposed (INFISH, ARCS, or ARCS modified). This is a guideline only and would be reviewed by the district rangeland management specialist and the permittees for each allotment during annual meetings to discuss operating instructions for the grazing season. During the review, FS personnel and the allotment permittees, together, would determine if that guideline can be met for the affected allotment and document any reasons why it can't be met.

Amy discussed the special interest area (SIA) that overlaps the Kettle Crest in alternatives O and P. The SIA would have a recreation emphasis and existing uses of the area would still be allowed. It should have no effect on grazing allotment management.

Travis – Grazing would be incorporated into the management plan that would be developed for the SIA. If four-wheelers are used now, that use would continue under the draft plan (Alternative P).

Amy – the only difference would be with the Bald Snow recommended wilderness area. It would be managed as if it was wilderness. Under certain alternatives current uses would continue in RW, under other alternatives RW would be treated as if it is wilderness as soon as the plan becomes final.

Reminder that Wednesday April 20 is the community of interest (COI) meeting for the grazing permittees, the Cattlemen's Association and other grazing interests.

Question topics included:

- If congress designates it, then it's wilderness. Think once Congress designates it, it will be the end of grazing on the forest.

CNF Plan Revision Meeting with Three Rivers RD Grazing Permittees
April 13, 2016

- Whatever Congress signs off on would override the FS.
- Concern that the letter inviting folks to the COI meeting said only one person was allowed to attend. That doesn't make sense, since some permittees are a husband and wife team.
- Concern that letter also said people can't comment at the meeting.
 - Amy hadn't seen the letter but stated she would contact the meeting organizer to see if spouses can attend. Regarding commenting at the meeting, she clarified that folks will be encouraged to comment and share information at the meeting but the meeting doesn't take the place of formal comments submitted during the comment period. After the COI meeting everyone who attended will get a copy of the meeting notes including comments. She explained what the COI meeting will be like and that there will be time at the end for folks to look at maps, discuss, ask questions, and get answers. Is not a FS meeting and is being hosted by a third party and they can't accept comments. The FS is attending the meeting to participate and answer questions.
 - Christy clarified that folks should plan to comment formally outside the meeting. The FS will take information shared at the meeting and use it to improve the alternatives.
 - Travis had a copy of the letter and shared that it does say the intent of the meeting is to share information related to grazing interests. Please don't stay away because you don't think you can comment.
 - Amy – it's the formal comment piece that is confusing. At the meeting, folks will be speaking to the contractor, but they are just facilitating. The intent of the meeting is so people can speak freely without people of opposing interests taking over the meeting. We will review the meeting notes and disseminate to meeting attendees. Meeting notes are still comments, but there are no names to go with it. Will still consider the comments related to grazing. All comments will be considered equally.
 - Christy – the notes can be used as a tool to help you format a formal comment. The difference between formal and informal comment comes into play for standing to object. The content of comments will be dealt with the same.
 - Amy – If someone doesn't want to write comments, we are scheduling listening sessions for the end of May or early June. At those sessions there we be a recorder and people can speak and be recorded verbatim. Those will be considered formal comments.
- Concern that it would not be worth attending the COI meeting if what is said at the meeting doesn't count as formal comment.
 - Travis – think it would be a great benefit to attend if it in any way helps you form comments.
- At one point in time Conservation Northwest approached permittees with the intent to buy or trade the allotments on the Kettle Crest. In order to do that the permittees would have to sign a paper stating support for wilderness. Curious if that played into any of these RW areas on the map. Does an environmental group have more influence over the FS?
 - Travis – a grazing permit can't be bought, that's why there are nonuse policies in place. The FS has done NEPA analysis on every allotment, they were determined to be suitable for grazing, and they are expected to be grazed.

- Concern about the stubble height guideline (if Alternative P is chosen), will it end grazing on the CNF?
 - Travis – think it will affect stocking numbers.
- Concern about slowly losing access roads.

General Discussion

Amy discussed some of the comments that have been received so far. She explained that with the six alternatives it is not a yes or no scenario, not a vote. After the comment period, changes will likely be made to the alternatives or a new alternative developed. They can be modified to come up with something different. If we get specific comments about the stubble height guideline, regarding the types of species and how it's measured, those comments can help us adjust the guideline to something better. It is not set in stone, and can be modified.

Some felt the wording in the documents is anti-grazing, and incorrect. We don't do year-long grazing.

Travis clarified if talking about season-long grazing then the statement would be correct.

Understand the 20 year plan for recreation and timber makes sense, but for grazing it seems like whatever is decided, your hands are tied and can't try new things. Looks like the whole thing is going in the wrong direction. The forage issue is important, but it seems like the environmental groups are tying your hands.

Travis – any use on the Forest needs to be incorporated into the long term plan. It is a broad scale plan that covers the whole forest. Next step down is project level considerations for allotments where we meet annually to decide how to graze. When the NEPA analysis is done, there will be more flexibility to account for changes in management and conditions. If we are tied down to certain numbers in the NEPA it ties our hands for a long time, but is different in the forest plan.

Amy – it is just a guideline, not a standard. The FS will work with each permittee for each allotment to determine what is realistic for each allotment, to be documented in the annual meetings.

Amy – the big issue is water. If you can come up with way that shows you are protecting water, tell us how we should measure it. Somewhere in the plan we have to say how we are protecting water, is there something else besides stubble height we should look at? What should replace the stubble height guideline? We have to say something to show we're not impacting water quality, what would the measure be?

Travis encouraged the permittees to attend the COI meeting and also submit formal comments.

Amy – if your comment is a “vote” it doesn't tell us how to improve alternatives. We accept all comments but doesn't tell us much. Make sure comments say what you don't want and also what you don't like about it. If we know that it will help us develop a better alternative in the end.

Provided at the meeting:

Riparian Management Area aquatic direction handout.

This portion of the meeting ended at approximately 3:30.

Spring Permittee Meetings
 Colville NF Plan Revision Overview
 Aquatics Handout

No Action and B Alternative	Proposed Action and O Alternative	R and P Alternatives
INFISH (1995)	ARCS (2008)	ARCS-modified (2015)
<p>GM-2. Locate new livestock handling and/or management facilities outside of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. For existing livestock handling facilities inside the Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, assure that facilities do not prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives.</p> <p>Minimum of 4" stubble height should be maintained.</p>	<p>RMA Guideline GM Within green-line vegetation area adjacent to all watercourses: Do not exceed 20 percent streambank alteration; Do not exceed 40% utilization of mean annual vegetative production on woody vegetation; Maintain at least 4-6 inches or do not exceed 40% utilization of mean annual vegetative production on herbaceous vegetations</p>	<p>MA-GDL-RMA-09. Permitted Grazing Management—Greenline Vegetation Areas Within greenline vegetation areas adjacent to all watercourses measured in designated monitoring areas: • Streambank alteration should not exceed 25 percent • Utilization of available mean annual vegetative production on woody vegetation should not exceed 40 percent • Residual stubble height of at least 6 to 8 inches should be maintained and no more than 40 percent of mean annual vegetative production on deep-rooted herbaceous vegetation should be utilized as determined by plant community type</p>
<p>GM-2. Relocate or close facilities where these objectives cannot be met.</p>	<p>RMA Guideline GM During allotment management planning consider removal of existing livestock handling or management facilities from RMAs</p>	<p>MA-STD-RMA-10. Permitted Grazing Management—Allotment Management Planning During allotment management planning, negative impacts to water quality and aquatic and riparian function from existing livestock handling or management facilities located within riparian management areas shall be minimized to allow conditions to move towards the desired condition or eliminated.</p>
<p>GM-1. Modify grazing practices (e.g., accessibility of riparian areas to livestock, length of grazing season, stocking levels, timing of grazing, etc.) that retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or are likely to adversely affect inland native fish. Suspend grazing if adjusting practices is not effective in meeting Riparian Management Objectives.</p>	<p>RMA Guideline GM Livestock trailing, bedding, loading, and other handling activities should be avoided in RMAs</p>	<p>MA-GDL-RMA-10. Recreational and Permitted Grazing Management—Livestock Handling Activities Livestock trailing, bedding, loading, and other handling activities should be avoided in riparian management areas, except for those that inherently must occur in a riparian management area.</p>
<p>GM-3. Limit livestock trailing, bedding, watering, salting, loading, and other handling efforts to those areas and times that would not retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish.</p>	<p>RMA Guideline GM Generally avoid trampling of federally listed threatened or endangered fish redds by livestock</p>	<p>MA-STD-RMA-11. Recreational and Permitted Grazing Management—Fish Redds Prohibit livestock access to federally-listed threatened or endangered fish redds.</p>

Colville National Forest

Land & Resource Management Plan Revision



Alternatives

Issues led to development of 6 alternatives:

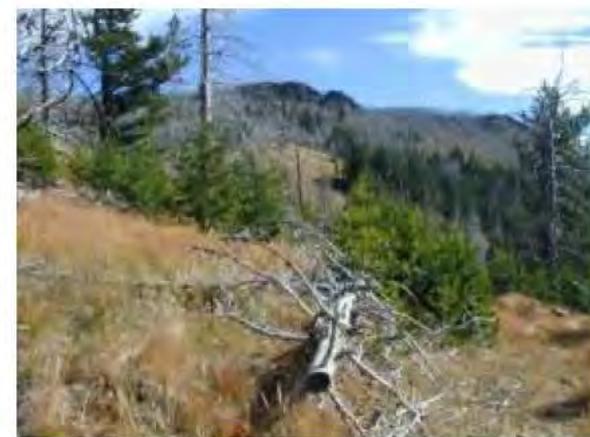
- ❖ No Action (current 1988 plan as amended)
- ❖ Proposed Action (public comment provided on this in 2011)
- ❖ Alternative R (developed in response to comments supporting large areas as recommended wilderness)
- ❖ Alternative B (developed based on NEWFC proposal and public input during collaborative meetings)
- ❖ Alternative O (developed based on points many participants agreed to during collaborative meetings)
- ❖ Alternative P (developed based on public comment; 2016 preferred alternative)

Key points - Wilderness & Recommended Wilderness

One designated wilderness (Salmo-Priest) = ~3% of Colville NFS land

Alternative	No Action	Proposed Action	B	O	R	P
Acres/Percent Recommended for Wilderness	0	101,390 9%	220,330 20%	15,950 1%	207,800 19%	68,300 6%
Existing uses can continue	n/a	Yes*	No	Yes*	No	Yes*

*Until such time Congress designates as Wilderness



Key Points - Riparian Management Areas

Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (INFISH) and Riparian Management Areas (ARCS) widths

Stream Type	INFISH RHCA Width (ft) Alternatives: No Action & B	ARCS RMA Width (ft) All other Alternatives
Fish-Bearing Streams	300 ft. on each side of the stream (600 ft. total)	300 ft. on each side of the stream (600 ft. total)
Permanently flowing Non-Fish Bearing Streams	150 ft. on each side of the stream (300 ft. total)	150 ft. on each side of the stream (300 ft. total)
Constructed Ponds and Reservoirs and Wetlands greater than one acre	150 ft. on each side of the pond, reservoir or wetland (300 ft. total)	150 ft. on each side of the pond, reservoir or wetland (300 ft. total)
Lakes and Natural Ponds	150 ft. on each side of the pond, reservoir or wetland (300 ft. total)	300 ft. slope distance from the lake or pond (600 ft. total)
Intermittent Streams, Wetlands, Seeps and Springs and Unstable and Potentially Unstable Areas	50 ft. slope distance from the stream, wetland, seep, spring or unstable area in non-Key and non-Priority Watersheds. 100 ft. in Key and Priority Watersheds	100 ft. slope distance from the stream, wetland, seep, spring or unstable area (200 ft. total)

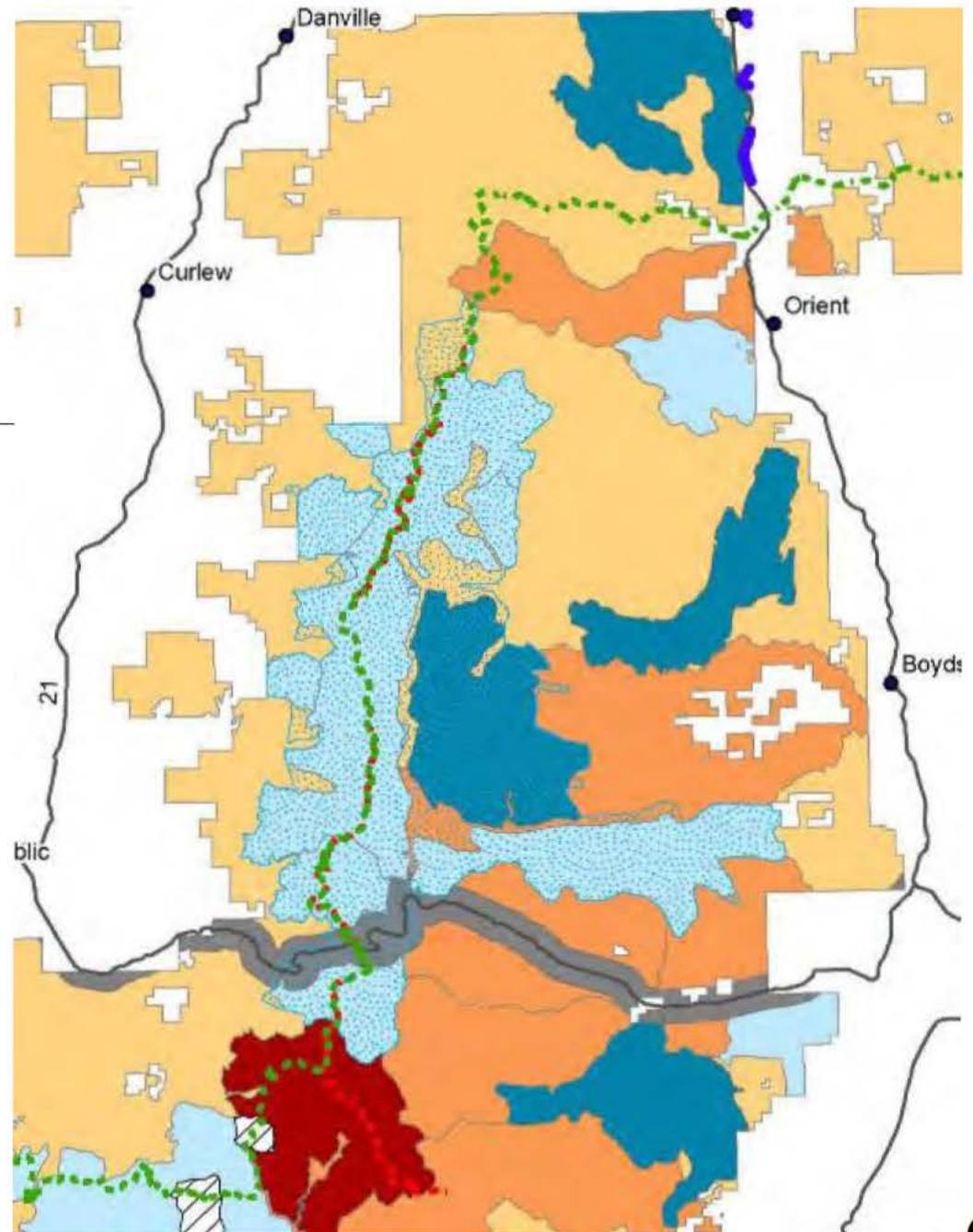


Key points – Stubble Height

No Action & Alt. B	Proposed Action & Alt. O	Alt. R & P
INFISH (1995)	ARCS (2008)	ARCS-modified (2015)
<p>GM-2. Locate new livestock handling and/or mgmt. facilities outside of RHCAs. For existing livestock handling facilities inside the RHCAs, assure that facilities do not prevent attainment of RMOs.</p> <p>Relocate or close facilities where these objectives cannot be met.</p> <p>4” minimum stubble height.</p>	<p>RMA Guideline GM</p> <p>Within green-line vegetation area adjacent to all watercourses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • $\leq 20\%$ streambank alteration; • $\leq 40\%$ utilization of mean annual vegetative production on woody vegetation; <p>Maintain at least 4-6 inches residual stubble height or $\leq 40\%$ utilization of mean annual vegetative production on herbaceous vegetation</p>	<p>MA-GDL-RMA-09. Permitted Grazing Management</p> <p>Within greenline vegetation areas adjacent to all watercourses measured in designated monitoring areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streambank alteration $\leq 25\%$ • Utilization of available mean annual vegetative production on woody vegetation ≤ 40 percent • Residual stubble height of at least 6-8 inches should be maintained & $\leq 40\%$ of mean annual vegetative production on deep-rooted herbaceous vegetation should be utilized as determined by plant community type

Recreation Special Interest Area

Included in Alternatives
O and P



Immediate Next Steps

On-going

- Consultation, communication and coordination

February 19, 2016

- Notice of Availability of plan and DEIS published in Federal Register (started comment period)

February – July 5, 2016

- Draft environmental impact statement available for review & comment
- Receive public comments
- Engage the public through meetings & web applications

April 20, 2016 – Grazing COI mtg.





Discussion and Questions