

Colville National Forest
Meeting with US Dept of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection Agency
April 14, 2016

Subject: Update on status of forest plan revision

Attending:

John Tucker, Public Lands Liaison for Spokane Sector, and Agents Rick Petrey, Felix Morales, Michele Morales, and Daniel McElheran

Forest Service:

Amy Dillon, Forest Plan Revision Team Lead, Rodney Smoldon, Forest Supervisor, Karen Nooney, Forest Lands, Special Uses, and Minerals Program Manager and Forest Plan Lead (for those resources), and Marcy Rumelhart (notes).

Meeting start time: 10:00 am, Three Rivers Ranger District Office, Kettle Falls, WA.

Objective: Provide an update on the status of the Colville forest plan revision efforts and discuss any questions related to the revised plan and DEIS.

Amy gave an overview of plan revision history. Discussion covered age of current plan, differences between alternatives, covered that plan does not make site-specific decisions such as specific OHV routes or opening/closing trails, and what the documents look like & where to get more information. She reviewed how the alternatives based on proposals from collaboration efforts (Alternative B & O) were developed.

Briefly covered differences between alternatives with emphasis on recommended wilderness and motorized use. The existing road restrictions in threatened, endangered, and sensitive species recovery areas won't change. Discussed changes to motorized and mechanized trails, and the proposed special interest area with a recreation emphasis.

The 90-Day comment period began on February 19th and will end on July 5th. Receiving comments by July 5th would be appreciated, but as another federal agency we will accept comments from Border Patrol at any time.

Question topics included:

- Question about miles of trail lost under different alternatives, and whether that would equate to an administrative closure or permanent closure.
 - Under alternatives B and R – if one of those two alternatives were selected (once draft plan becomes final), the recommended wilderness would immediately be managed as if it were wilderness, and any motorized/mechanized trail access within those areas would be lost. Under alternative P – current uses would continue in recommended wilderness areas until designated by Congress, so access would remain on any existing motorized/mechanized trail until that time.
- Losing motorized access would be a concern, especially since Border Patrol agents are continuously called upon to provide assistance to the county with search and rescue efforts. They also use Mtn bikes.

- Rodney – have heard it is not the quantity of miles lost, but the quality.
- Amy – mountain bikes are also not allowed in the wilderness, considered a mechanized use.
- Karen mentioned the Orient-Laurier TV Club is no longer transmitting even though the special use permit is still valid until the end of 2016 (Owl Mtn communication site). She wanted to make sure they were aware that those improvements were being removed and if that would be an impact to Border Patrol operations.
 - Felix – Border Patrol has been working with Stevens County on updating communication systems. Concern about last fire season and being in a situation where Border Patrol was asked to assist but there was no communication in some areas. Concern about some of the proposals becoming permanent (recommended wilderness) that would prevent us from being able to assist (fire situation), with no communications. How do we mitigate these situations for some of the alternatives? We want to work with the Forest Service and not be in conflict.
 - Amy – that is a consideration since there should be no communication towers in wilderness.
 - Rodney – that would require a special authorization.
 - Rick – there is a repeater in the Abercrombie Mtn area, would be a concern if that becomes wilderness and we lose access. There will be situations where we need access.
 - Rodney – need to know where that site is in relation to the recommended wilderness. It is just a recommendation in the alternatives now. The regional forester (decision maker) will ultimately determine what happens.
 - Karen – the recommended wilderness areas shown in alternative P overlap inventoried roadless areas.

General discussion

Michelle asked about timeframe for a possible decision.

Amy said after the comment period ends in July, it will take several months to go through and consider all the comments, and there will be more public meetings. It is possible to have final documents ready for public review in December. Then there will be a 45-day objection period and another 45 days to make a determination. Most likely a decision summer of 2017.

Amy displayed some maps of the different alternatives to show the differences in recommended wilderness and different types of management being proposed. She stated that under some of the alternatives, maintaining access and communication towers would be next to impossible. No motorized or mechanized uses in recommended wilderness. That includes helicopters, although it is possible to get special authorization.

Rodney – understand that the amount of recommended wilderness varies between alternatives. Alternative P is the alternative preferred by the Forest Service, and there is a good chance that the alternative will change after the comment period. The regional forester can choose one of the six alternatives and modify it if there is something he doesn't like. Take that into consideration in your comments, if we proceed with alternative P.

John requested another meeting after they've had a chance to review the documents and discuss.

Amy/Rodney – discussed conforming and nonconforming uses, and there is not much change between what's going on now and what would change with alternative P. Very few nonconforming uses in alternative P.

Amy gave a heads-up that along with the existing road restrictions in the grizzly bear recovery area, there has already been some discussion about noise disturbance in relation to helicopters operating over recovery habitat and what is an appropriate elevation limit for flying over those areas. East of the Pend Oreille River is grizzly bear and caribou recovery area. Just be aware, we are in discussions with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and whatever comes out of their Biological Opinion (regarding this issue) will probably end up in our forest plan. This is also a consideration for the Air Force survival school that operates in the area.

John – is a contentious issue. We have found locations during fires where a clearing has been made for a landing zone.

Rodney stated the Forest Service is very interested in how Alternative P (preferred) would have a negative effect on Border Patrol operations. Would like to know what you like and what you don't like. We would be happy to provide any information you need to help you be specific with comments.

Amy – please send comments to her or Rodney. Comments can be submitted in any format. Would be happy to coordinate another meeting with you.

Michelle requested a CD copy of the documents. She will send the correct address and her contact info.

Amy will coordinate the date and time of next meeting with John Tucker, possibly in early June.

The meeting ended about 11:30.

Follow-up needed:

- Send CD copy of documents, and copy of meeting notes to Michelle.

Conference Room Attendance List

(Please sign and return to reception desk before the start of your meeting).

Date: 4/14/16
Time: _____

Meeting Title: _____

Daniel McEthern Curlew Borderpatrol

Felix R Morales Colville Station

MICHELE MORALES, CURLEW STATION

SBPA John Tucker, Bonners Ferry

Rick Petrey, Metaline Falls Station

Rodney Smoldon

Karen Noony

John.l.tucker@cbp.dhs.gov

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Colville National Forest

Land & Resource Management Plan Revision



Forest Plan Purpose

Provide high-level guidance for management of National Forest system lands

– 15-year strategic document providing land management direction by guiding programs, practices, uses, and projects

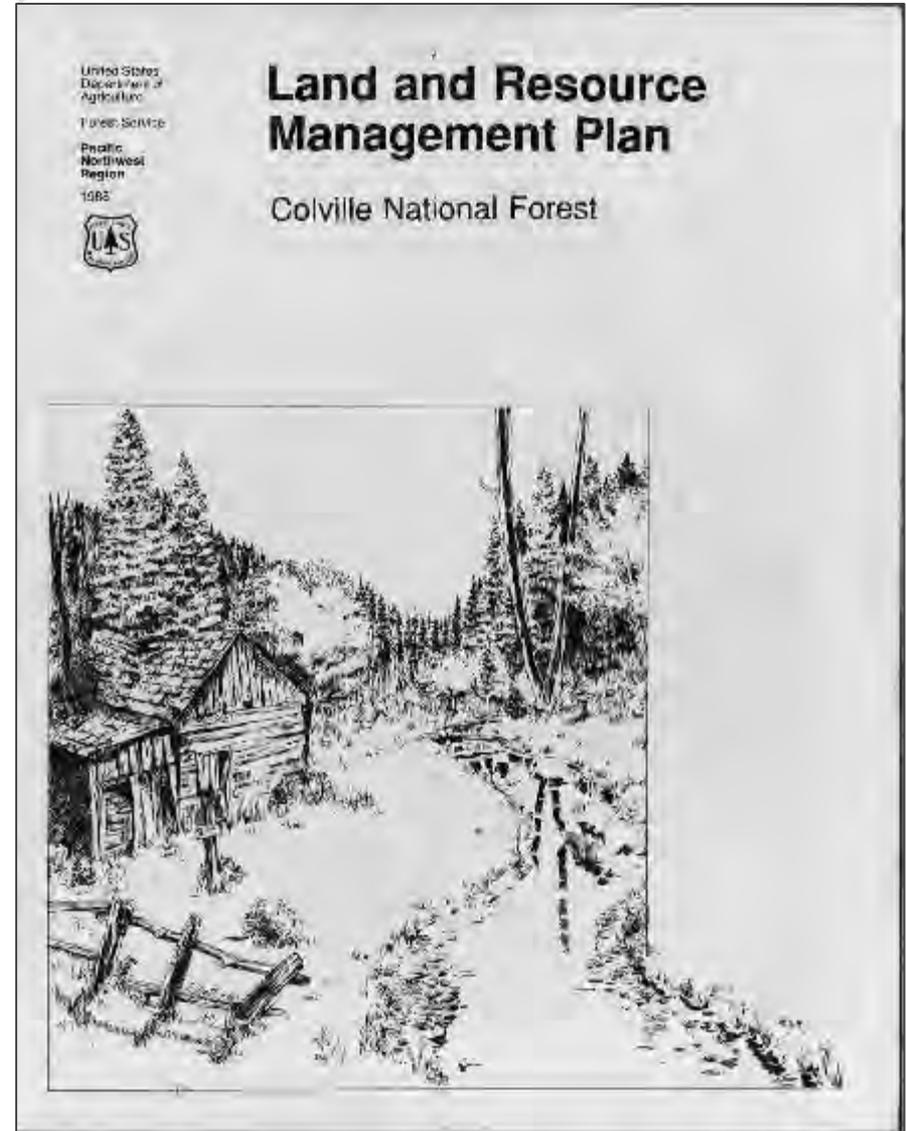
– Designates management areas allocating zones of the forest for different activities

– Designates suitability of areas for various uses

Need for Change (why are we doing this?)

Currently following a
land management plan
signed in 1988

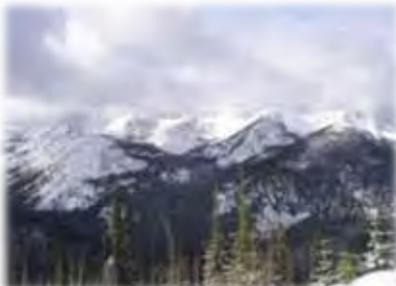
Includes 40 Forest
Plan Amendments



Key Issues for Alternative Development

Analysis of public concerns and resource issues produced 6 issues for development & comparison of alternatives

1. Old Forest (Late Successional) Management & Timber Production
2. Motorized Recreation Trails
3. Access (FS roads)
4. Recommended Wilderness Areas
5. Wildlife Habitat
6. Riparian & Aquatic Resource Management



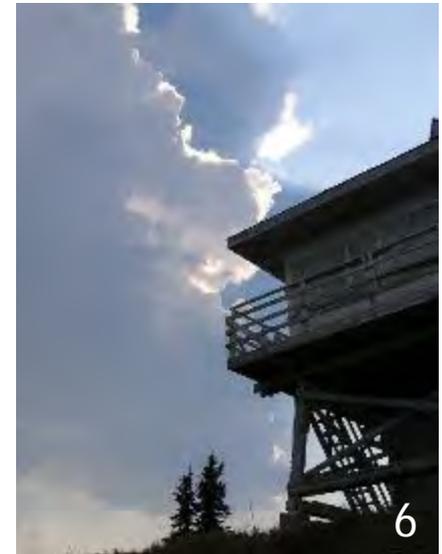
Alternatives

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)**

What the Forest Plan cannot change:

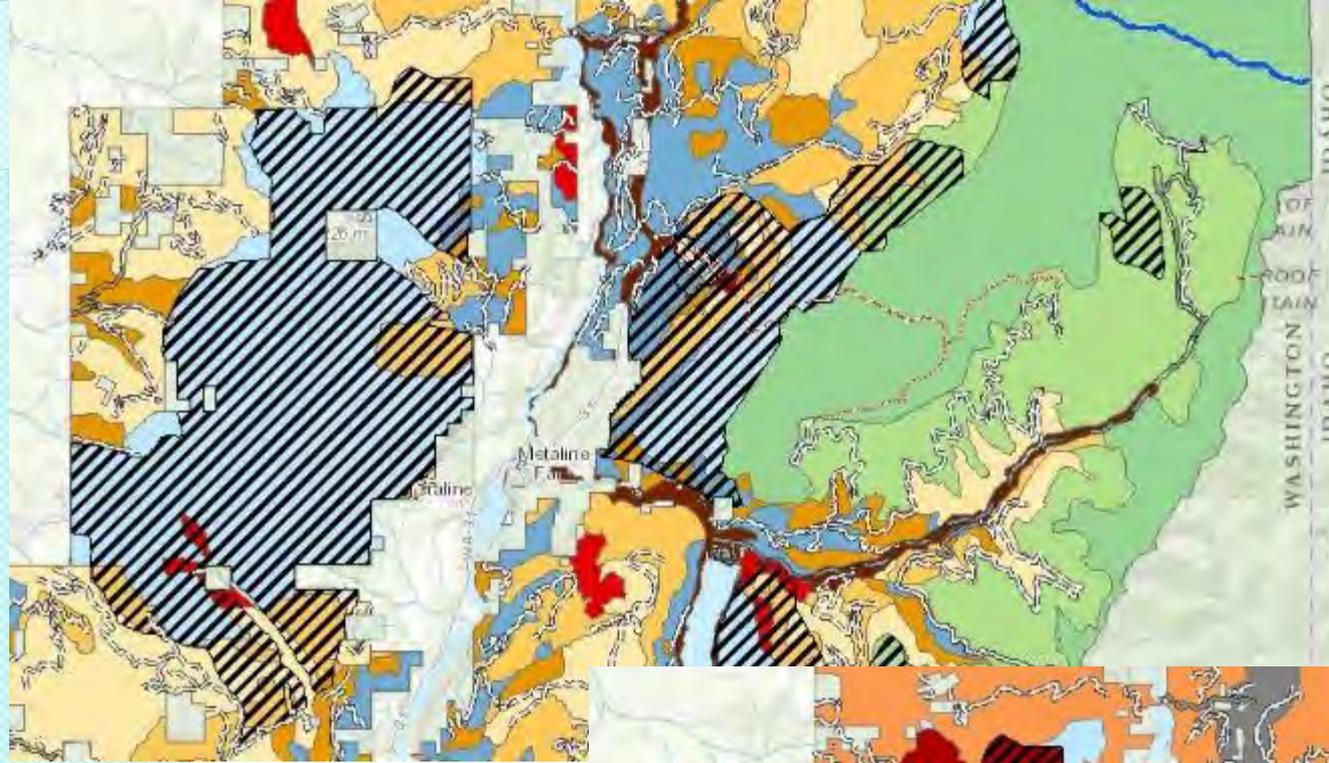
- ✓ Boundary for designated wilderness (Salmo-Priest)
- ✓ Inventoried Roadless Area boundaries (designated in 2001)
- ✓ Any existing law, regulation or policy
- ✓ Management plans or direction related to other ownerships



What *can* change in the Forest Plan :

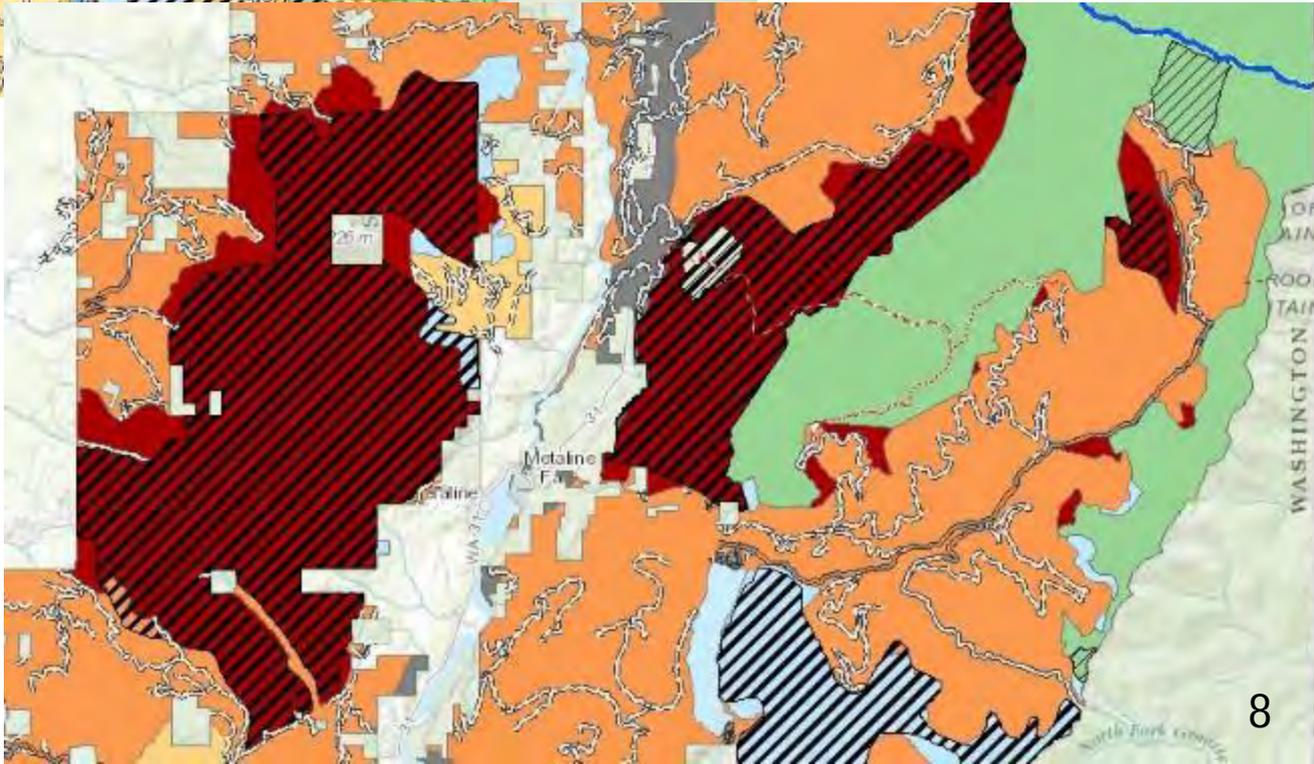
1. Management area designations
2. Management area proposed boundaries
3. Management area direction:
 - Desired conditions
 - Objectives
 - Standards
 - Guidelines
 - Suitable Uses





Current (1988)
plan

Alternative P
(preferred
alt.)

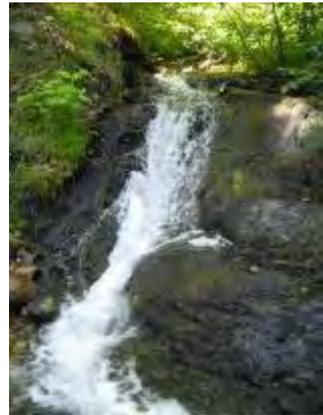


Riparian Management Area

- Alternatives Proposed Action, R, B & P
- have direction for no net increase in road miles in key watersheds
- No Action and Alternative O retain INFISH

Key watersheds:

- Based on native fish habitat and T&E species recovery area designations
- Have different guidance related to road density and other management activities that focus on habitat improvement.



Wildlife Habitat:

All alternatives incorporate:

- Interagency direction for woodland caribou, grizzly bear, Canada lynx and bull trout habitat
- Management direction for big game and landbirds



Motorized & Mechanized Trails

- Direction for motorized & mechanized use varies between alternatives
- Recommended wilderness

Alternative	Acres	Existing uses continue?	Change to miles of trail currently designated	
			For motor vehicle use	suitable for mech. use
No Action	0		0	0
Proposed Action	101,400	yes	0	-150*
B	220,300	no	-39	-221
O	15,900	yes	0	-29*
R	207,800	no	-39	-213
P	68,300	yes	0	-78*

*If areas get designated by Congress

Recreational Uses

Motorized recreation = The amount (percent) of the Colville National Forest where roads, trails and areas *may* be designated for motor vehicle use (suitable for motorized recreation)

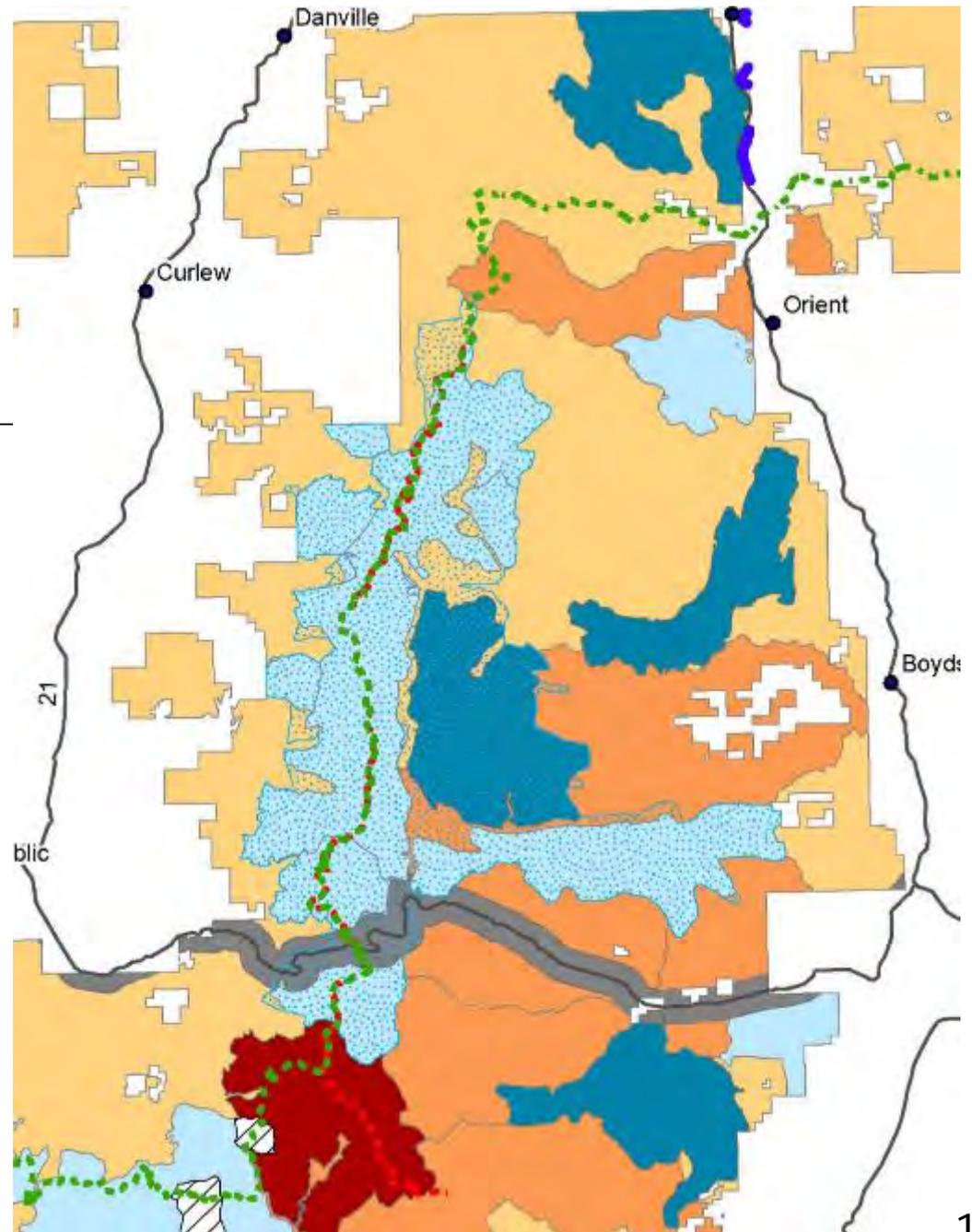
Non-motorized recreation = The amount (percent) of the Colville National Forest identified to be managed *specifically* for non-motorized use changes between alternatives

- Backcountry (non-motorized),
- Research natural areas,
- Recommended wilderness and
- Wilderness

	Motorized Rec	Non-motorized Rec
No Action	89%	11%
Proposed Action	79%	21%
B	75%	25%
O	78%	22%
R	76%	24%
P	79%	20%

Recreation Special Interest Area

Included in Alternatives
O and P





Discussion and Questions