

Review of County Management Plans

A 2007 memorandum of agreement with the Washington State Association of Counties provides a framework for our work with the three local counties. This memorandum is designed to enhance communication and mutual cooperation between the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and counties.

The 1982 planning rule (36 CFR¹ 219 [1982 planning rule]) requires the responsible line officer to coordinate forest planning with the equivalent and related planning efforts of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian tribes. The following identifies specific pieces of this requirement and how the Colville National Forest considered information from the county management plans.

The responsible line officer shall review the planning and land use policies of local governments. The results of this review shall be displayed in the environmental impact statement for the plan (40 CFR 1502.16(c), 1506.2). The review shall include--

- (1) Consideration of the objectives of local governments as expressed in their plans and policies;
- (2) An assessment of the interrelated impacts of these plans and policies;
- (3) A determination of how each Forest Service plan should deal with the impacts identified; and,
- (4) Where conflicts with Forest Service planning are identified, consideration of alternatives for their resolution.

Each county's comprehensive plan has been assessed and considered during the revised plan development (Ferry County (2013), Pend Oreille County (2013), Stevens County (2008), and Okanogan County (2014)). The county land use plans describe local government goals and objectives for land management within the respective county. Copies of the county land use plans are located in the project record. A summary of the County plans and disclosure of possible conflicts is listed in Chapter 2 of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS; pages 11-13). Although the interdisciplinary team did not find any direct conflicts or inconsistencies between the proposed plan's management direction and the counties' natural resource management objectives (where found), the county representatives perceive potential issues regarding economic effects related to recommended wilderness, expected timber outputs, and motorized access.

All elements of the above plans were considered while developing alternatives for the Colville National Forest plan revision. The social and economic impacts to the counties are discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

In developing land and resource management plans, the responsible line officer shall meet with the representatives of local governments at the beginning of the planning process to develop procedures for coordination. As a minimum, such conferences shall also be held after public issues and management concerns have been identified and prior to recommending the preferred alternative. Such conferences

¹ CFR = Code of Federal Regulations

may be held in conjunction with other public participation activities, if the opportunity for government officials to participate in the planning process is not thereby reduced.

Local government officials from the counties within and adjacent to the Colville National Forest have been invited to participate in forest plan development since the beginning of the planning effort (2003). Meetings with representatives from local counties began in 2004, and are being held on a continuing basis throughout the forest plan revision process. Forest representatives have met with individual county board of commissioners as well as met with combined boards and with county departments. Between 2005 and 2015, the Forest Service met specifically with county commissioners more than 65 times. In addition, county commissioners participated in plan revision collaboration and workgroup meetings, and Forest Service representatives met with various county committees and departments such as Stevens County Public Lands Advisory Committee.

Areas of county concern were identified, and, if feasible, resolution of those concerns were addressed in at least one alternative. An example is management designation proposed for the Kettle Crest area. County commissioners were concerned about the recommended wilderness proposed in the 2011 Proposed Action alternative. This concern is addressed in Alternative P where there is less recommended wilderness along the Kettle Crest, and other management designations are proposed for the Kettle Crest that better reflect county interests.

In developing the forest plan, the responsible line officer shall seek input from local governments to help resolve management concerns in the planning process and to identify areas where additional research is needed. This input should be included in the discussion of the research needs of the designated forest planning area.

Discussions between the forest supervisor and county commissioners led to a potential need to complete additional review of water quantity impacts. The county commissioners are interested in current water flows (amount of water flowing during different times of the year) and management options that could affect both amount of flow and when high flows occur. The best way to get this information is still being discussed with the county commissioners.