

**Colville Plan Revision
Meeting To Discuss Potential Wilderness Areas
May 10, 2016**

Subject: Request to discuss history of past management in recommended wilderness areas

Participants:

Scott Nielsen, Public Lands Advisory Council & Stevens County Cattlemen's Association Vice-President; Gary Nielsen, TriCounty Motorized Recreation Association President; and Steve Parker, Stevens County Commissioner

Amy Dillon, Forest Plan Revision Team Lead; Eric McQuay, Forest Plan Revision Recreation Lead and West Zone Recreation Program Manager; and Marcy Rumelhart (notes)

Meeting start time: 8:30 am, Three Rivers Ranger District Office, Kettle Falls, WA.

This meeting was requested by Scott and Gary for purpose of obtaining clarification and understanding of potential wilderness area (PWA) designation process. They are concerned about the differences between the inventoried roadless area (IRA) boundaries and the recommended wilderness boundaries in the draft plan. Scott and Gary feel strongly that there are areas within recommended wilderness that should be precluded from wilderness designation.

Scott expressed concern about the status of a map he and Lee McNinch made with regard to PWA boundaries. It was given to the Forest Service to use and don't know what happened to it. The map contained valuable input to the PWA designation process and he would like to know what happened to it. It was provided to the plan revision team when the previous plan revision team was in place.

The group discussed a map with an orthophoto of the Abercrombie-Hooknose area. Specific discussion was about the Silver Creek and Hartbauer basin areas on the west side of the PWA.

Gary showed photos he had taken of a road he recently walked with Steve in the northwest portion of the PWA, to illustrate the road template is recognizable. He also showed photos of the North Fork of Silver Creek, just south of Hartbauer basin.

Scott stated these were FS roads and the carsonite road signs are still present even though the FS has changed the status to trails. The culverts were removed, and he feels the agency is complicit in wanting to make the area wilderness. He asked if the IRAs qualify for wilderness, because there are signs of obvious logging activity including stumps and roads. It is easily recognizable logging activity.

Commissioner Parker – regarding the IRA designation, wasn't it stated that the FS would confirm boundaries at a later time? He heard recently that part of the mandate was that future recommendations would identify if boundaries were mis-applied.

Eric – maybe with the PWAs. The IRAs and PWAs started out with the same language and rules, but the 2001 roadless rule separated them.

Amy – it has changed over the years. In the 1988 plan it was Management Area 11, then came IRAs from the roadless rule, and now they are PWAs in plan revision.

Eric stated that Appendix C from the 1988 forest plan is the same as the roadless rule, based on the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) I and II. That was the starting point for the Forest, that

inventory and looking at policy and manual direction. The era where we were supposed to do ground verification is fuzzy for everyone. We don't know who did that work. In looking at the map, do acknowledge some discrepancies and some of it could be a forest boundary issue too.

Scott – we have talked about this multiple times and feel like we keep going back to it. The 1972 photo shows an obvious clearcut and roads in the Hartbauer area. The logged area and roads are still recognizable but now the PWA boundary has changed to include it. What happened to change that and who made that decision?

The group looked at more 1972 era photos of the Abercrombie-Hooknose area. Gary stated in his field review of the area he saw firelines around dozer thinned areas and also some firelines where the dozer thinning did not occur. The roads and logging activity are recognizable.

Scott – understand it comes down to what is substantially recognizable and who interprets that. Not trying to argue the IRA boundaries, understand those are set.

Amy stated the draft plan can't change the IRA boundaries. If we find something that needs to be changed, the forest supervisor can recommend to the regional forester that something is wrong with the boundary, and the regional forester can recommend to the chief that something is wrong and boundaries need to be reviewed. How we *manage* the IRA can be changed in the plan. There are two choices for how we manage in an IRA, we can manage as backcountry nonmotorized or manage as recommended wilderness. If there are motorized trails present we could manage as backcountry motorized. As we go through the plan revision process we can change boundaries of recommended wilderness. There are options to change a line to match an IRA boundary, leave it as is, or provide some rationale as to why it doesn't qualify as recommended wilderness and should be backcountry nonmotorized. When Eric does the field work he will verify those differences between the IRA boundary and the recommended wilderness boundary. Keep in mind that just because it is an IRA and 5,000 acres doesn't mean it's automatically recommended wilderness. The ground verification and write-up needs to be done and what qualifies an area for either IRA, PWA, or wilderness is different for each.

Eric discussed the work done in 2008-2009 and explained the process that was used by the team. The specialists reviewed capability, availability, and need for each PWA, for each resource, and then came together to evaluate. No specific benchmark was used, just an assessment of the condition of resources at the time (2009) within those identified boundaries. The recreation lead on the team at the time reviewed that work and presented it to the forest supervisor for inclusion in the Proposed Action alternative, and more recently for inclusion in Alternative P (FS preferred). Those two alternatives were the only ones reviewed by the line officer. He took public comment on the Proposed Action and applied it to Alternative P. All areas meet the minimum qualities to be considered, but lines on the map must be verified on the ground, and what outweighs wilderness versus other uses.

Amy said the Quartzite PWA might not meet the required 5,000 acres, which would disqualify it as a PWA. She asked Scott and Gary to provide anything they may have given to the former team leader Margaret that might change the conversation.

Commissioner Parker asked if there was any cost accounting for this. Does the FS have an idea how much money has been spent on PWA analysis to date?

Amy – there really is no way to separate out the work done on just the wilderness piece in the budget.

Scott asked for clarification that the writing of the PWA evaluations was done by the Forest Service.

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Eric – yes the work was done by the FS, and based on the recreational piece more than other resources. The collaborative work and meetings that were held did not set anything in stone. Just identified the boundaries at the time. The boundaries need to be manageable and make sense.

Gary stated the inconsistency of how boundaries were drawn is frustrating. Some areas with obvious timber sales were included in PWA boundaries and some were not. The process is questionable.

Scott – is troubling the amount of input on boundaries we provided that went nowhere, has never been incorporated. Some things should have been done by now.

Amy – understand their frustration and will do what we can to address their concerns.

Discussed differences in review process from the 1988 plan to now. In 1988 these areas were IRAs and were identified under a different process. Now the FS uses a different process to identify PWAs. The 1982 planning rule requires the FS to review and consider areas for wilderness recommendation. In 1988 the FS used RARE I and II guidance and reviewed areas to consider for backcountry.

Scott - it seems like the FS would look at the work done before and make changes where is it not accurate, instead of starting over. The FS should be able to show what has changed. Needs consistency.

Eric – the assessments are done, in the project record and on the web, so the only thing changing now is the boundaries. It comes down to the definition of substantially unrecognizable, making a recommendation to the team leader, who will then recommend to the line officer. The boundary on the map is not set in stone. Have to look at both sides, additions and subtractions, and will spend the same amount of time reviewing. Based on these conversations.

Scott thinks the original IRA boundary should be the final boundary, unless you can prove otherwise. This is a flawed process if the FS is including things that shouldn't be included. It is a burden on the FS and us (public) to go out and field verify to prove one way or the other.

Eric – just to clarify – the process you're talking about is a national process. Procedurally we have done what we're supposed to, followed the book, but there are areas of improvement where boundaries are concerned. He knows of one unit in Quartzite that may disqualify it.

Amy acknowledged where we are now. We can try to fix what is on the maps, but can't change what happened, or didn't, before. Quartzite is a high priority for review now and would appreciate any info Scott and Gary can provide on that. Hope to have some answers before the final plan is ready.

Gary allowed Amy to keep copies of the photos and some of his comments from his thumb drive.

Commissioner Parker stated a concern about the Community Wildfire Protection Plan boundaries and how they fit with the PWA boundaries. Stevens County will comment on that. It is a concern for county safety and welfare.

Commissioner Parker stated that during the coordination meetings the counties had with the FS in the fall of 2015, road densities were discussed. He stated a concern from Pend Oreille County Commissioner Steve Kiss about the proper way to address roads in the forest, and felt it wasn't addressed.

Amy responded that the road density measure is not necessarily the best way to go, but we're not sure how to do it better. How do we reflect the need to remove roads from streams with sediment or erosion, and be able to monitor we're making improvements? Our struggle is how to explain to the public what we're doing and set sideboards so when a project is done we know how to implement.

Commissioner Parker – think what is in the document, the standard, doesn't really address the problem.

****Commissioner Parker would like follow-up on this.**

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Commissioner Parker stated he has worked with fish and wildlife agencies and asked them not to lean so hard on the FS to close roads. He realizes at the project level the FS will deal with bad roads. But having a blanket road density measure across the forest isn't addressing the problem. It is not spelled out well in the draft plan. We are looking for a statement that roads are good for wildlife species, etc.

Eric – from the recreation perspective, it's not the number of miles it's the location of the miles removed. The plan says it is a desired condition we want to move toward, but would be implemented at the project level.

Commissioner Parker – think we'll need to have another coordination session to discuss areas that they feel haven't been addressed. Concerned about the road density measure being implemented at the project level, and not having a good decision maker (project level).

The meeting ended about 11:00.

Additional information provided at the meeting:

- Eric gave 3 WUI maps to Scott for Abercrombie-Hooknose, Profanity, and Quartzite

- Roadless Area Conservation Website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/roadmain/roadless/home>
- Acronyms are available to the public on the Forest Plan Revision website:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/colville/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprd3824594>

Acronyms:

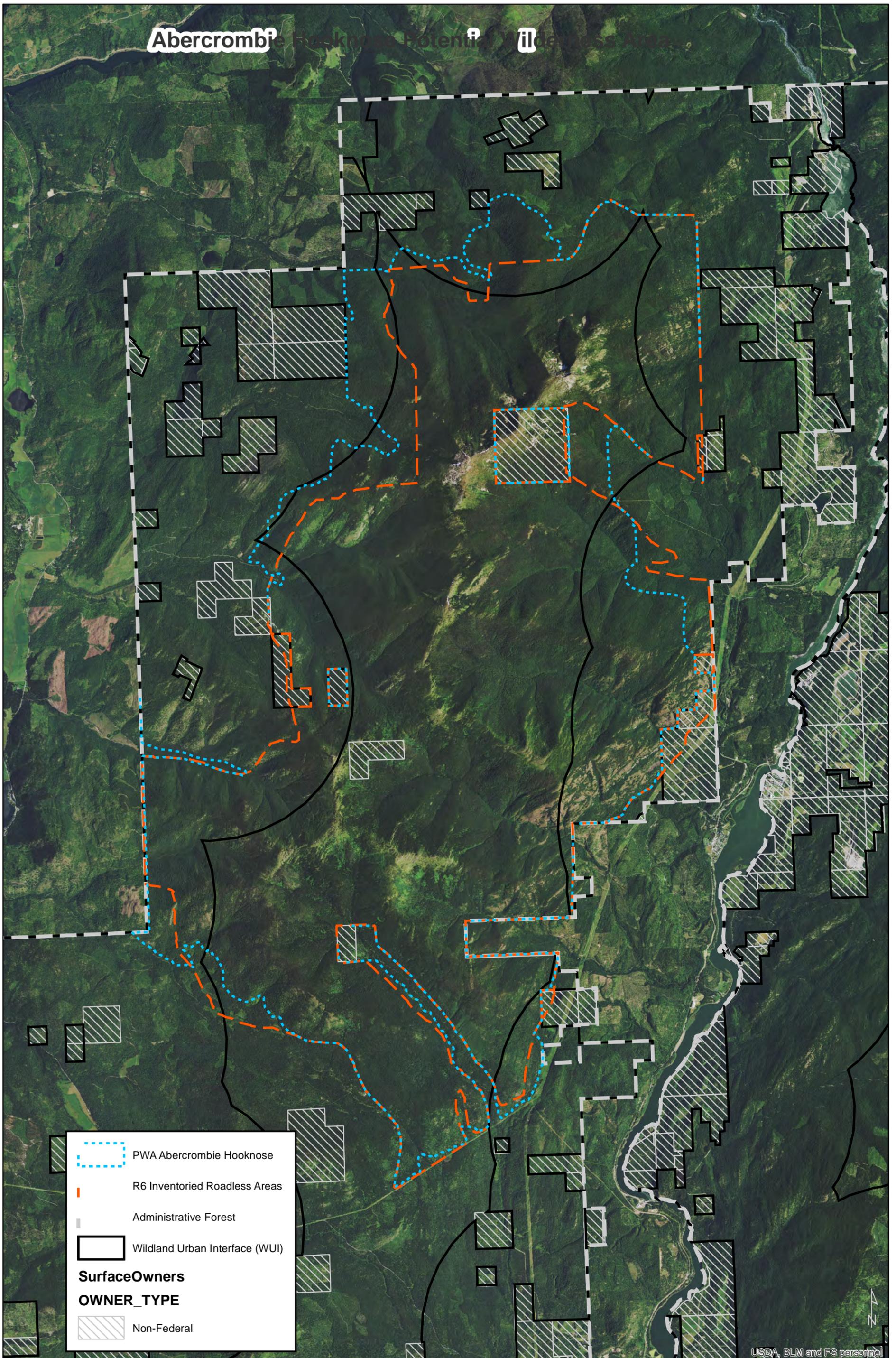
PWA – potential wilderness area

IRA – inventoried roadless area

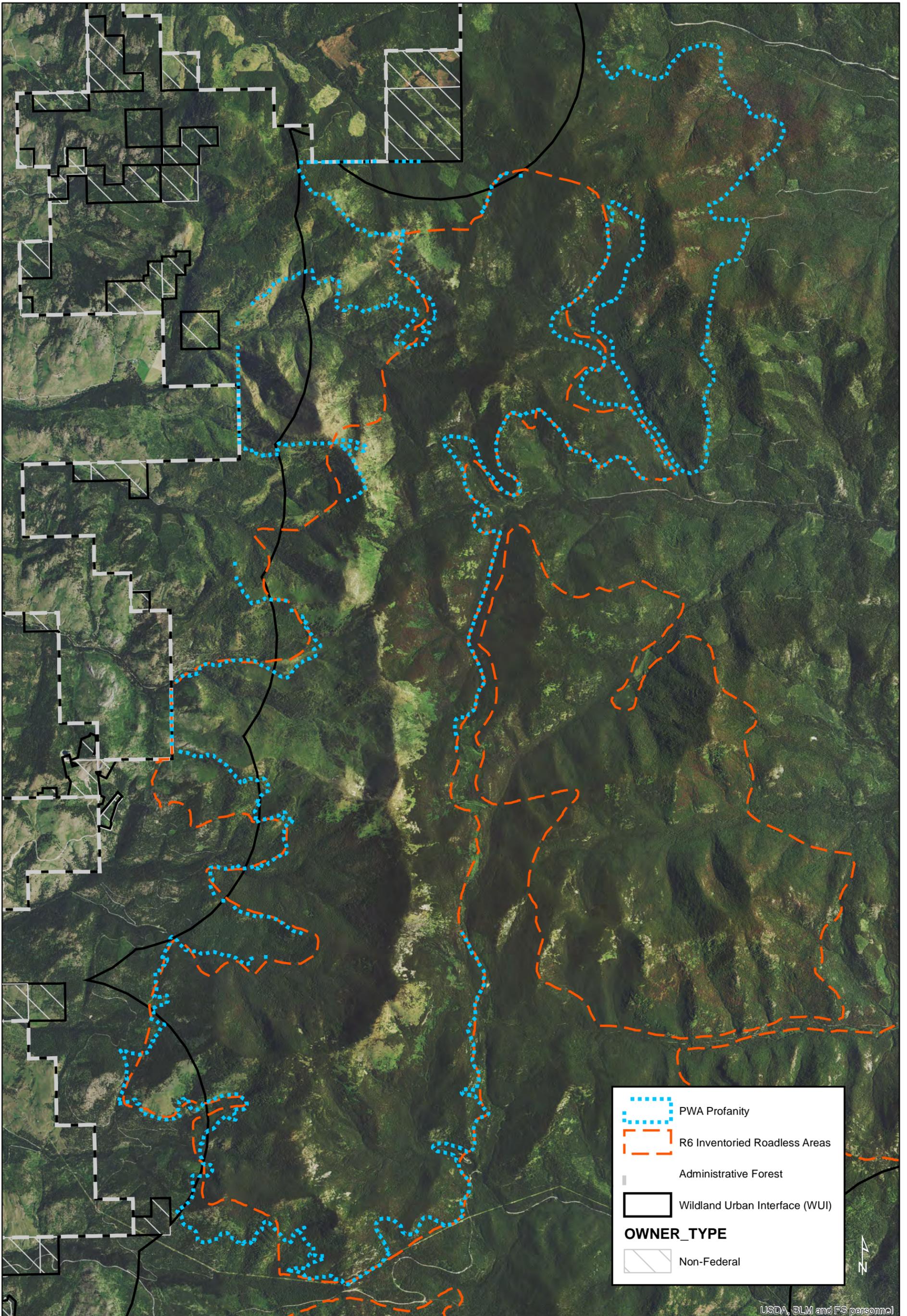
RARE – roadless area review and evaluation

WUI – Wildland Urban Interface

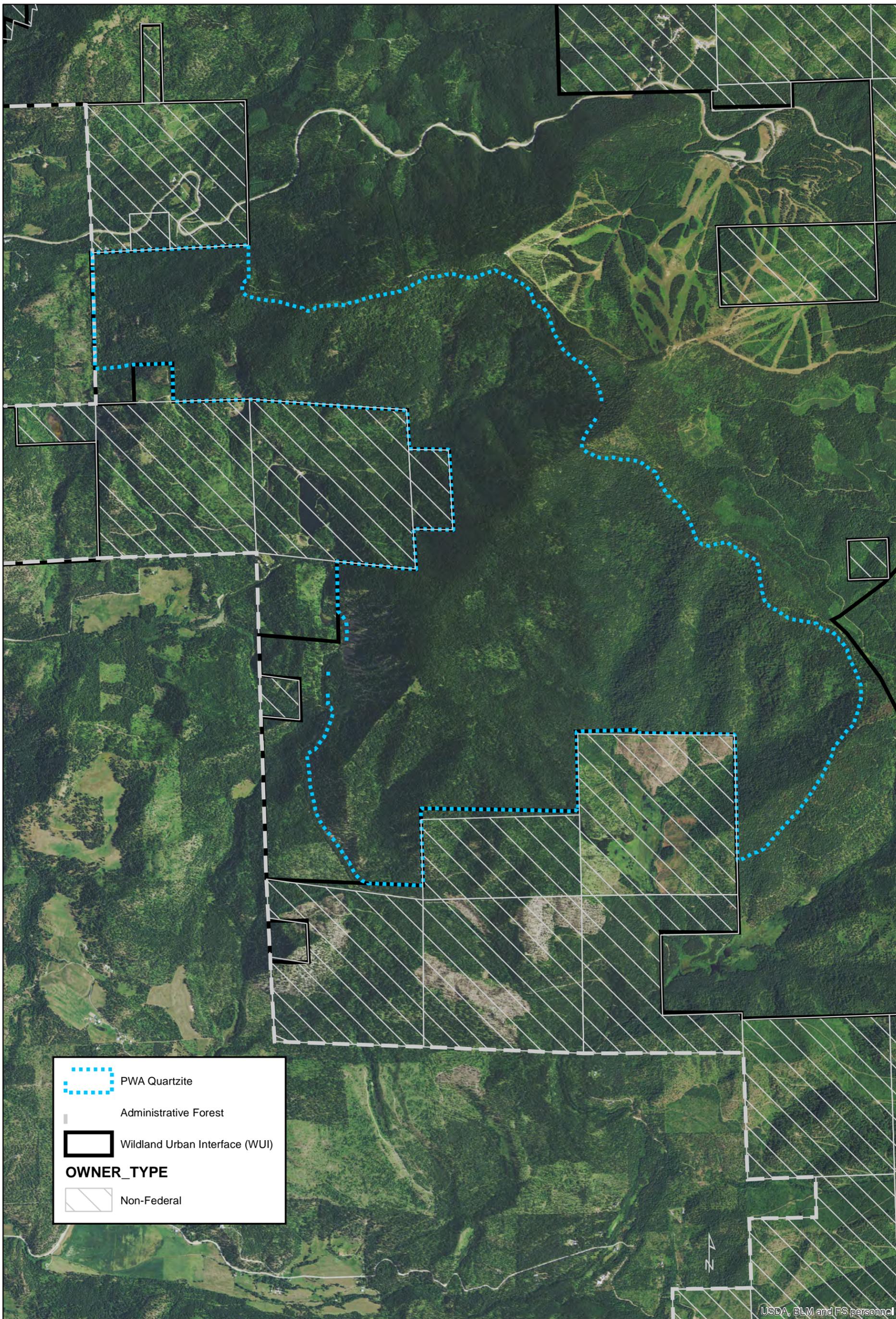
Abercrombie Hooknose Potential Wilderness Area



Profanity Potential Wilderness Area



Quartzite Potential Wilderness Area



Conference Room Attendance List

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

Date: May 10, 2016
Time: _____

Meeting Title: COLVILLE PLAN REVISION

Gary Nielsen

Scott Nielsen

Gar Parker

RS: Amy Dillon

Eric McQuay

Harry Rummelhart
