

**Colville National Forest
Meeting with Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
May 26, 2016**

Subject: Discussion of Evergreen's input to forest plan revision and questions about planning process

Attending:

Will Stone and Yvonne Kraus of Evergreen Mtn Bike Alliance

Forest Service:

Eric McQuay, Forest Plan Recreation Lead and West Zone Recreation Program Manager; Craig Newman, Recreation, Engineering, Lands, Minerals, and Hydropower Staff Officer; Deb Kelly, Forest Plan Revision Public Affairs Lead; Franklin Pemberton, Colville NF Public Affairs Officer; and Marcy Rumelhart (notes).

Meeting start time: 9:30 am, Colville National Forest Supervisor's Office, Colville, WA.

Objective: Mr. Stone requested the meeting to discuss their input on the draft plan, to get clarification on some of the plan details and for general information sharing. The meeting notes do not represent Evergreen's formal comments on the draft plan.

After introductions, Yvonne offered thanks and appreciation for the amount of work the FS has put into the planning documents. She said the FS has been a strong partner. Evergreen has used the online open house for sharing information with their members and felt that it is a great tool.

Most of the conversation focused on Evergreen's input to the plan, specific to Alternative P, and what they have been hearing from their members and folks in the local communities.

They discussed local contacts and coordination they have been doing with Washington Trails Association, Backcountry Horsemen Association, and the Sierra Club among others. In discussions with other groups they have gathered input and come up with some joint ideas to share with the FS. Have generally heard support for Alternative P, but also heard a lot of support for the No Action alternative. In recent informal conversations with folks in Republic Yvonne learned there is a lot of misunderstanding about the draft plan, and in one conversation actually got out a map and tried to help clarify things for folks. Feedback they heard from one individual indicated that as long as there isn't more recommended wilderness there could be support for the special interest area on the Kettle Crest.

Elements of Alternative P that Evergreen would like to highlight are:

- Request that the Bald Snow recommended wilderness area be removed from consideration.
- Support for the Abercrombie-Hooknose recommended wilderness with exception of the Mtn bike loop ride in the Silver Creek area. Would like that portion (Silver Creek trail to Abercrombie trail) to be removed from the recommended wilderness boundary.

Deb asked how they would rank the quality of the ride on the Kettle Crest vs Bald Snow, and to other high elevation rides.

Will – for a one-day ride would probably take the north loop and would rank it higher quality than the south. If had more than a day ride, cutting out the south end eliminates the quality of the ride. Would prefer to keep both the north and south parts of the trail, but would choose the north loop if it came down to it.

Yvonne spoke of input from Evergreen's previous Executive Director about the uniqueness of the southern portion of the Crest, and that it was considered fairly low quality in terms of wilderness consideration. She spoke with a person in Republic who said that Snow Peak is the only ride available where he can do an 8-mile epic loop ride, after work. It is close to town and the perfect length.

Craig pointed out that part of the trail is not within the recommended wilderness boundary under Alternative P. The FS received input from a group that advocated to preserve that part of the trail for mechanized use. He asked them to give it some thought and see if that might meet their needs. Reminder that it is only a recommendation and it wouldn't become wilderness until Congress acts on it.

Yvonne shared insights received from their meeting with county commissioners and conservation groups. In working with Conservation Northwest, they agreed their groups goals will not align. One of the ideas that has surfaced to bring economic, motorized, and nonmotorized interests together is to consider national monument status for the Kettle Crest. They have received positive feedback from the economic development district and there is also some momentum with state legislators on this idea too. Evergreen would like to explore this idea and get feedback from the FS.

Craig – We did look closely at our administrative special designation options for the Kettle Crest, and came up with the special interest area. Considering it as a national monument may not be something the FS could do administratively.

Eric – there has also been some discussion about whether it could be a national recreation area, but don't think that it meets the criteria for that, which is why we went to the next administrative level with the special interest area. He read a short section of the Forest Service Manual that speaks to national monuments. The case would have to be made for why the Crest fits that definition, not sure it fits.

Deb asked if a conceptual monument boundary would retain the same footprint as the (rough) draft existing special interest area boundary or if the interest groups wanted to see additional development in general.

Will – they want to preserve the access they have now. Ideally, would like to see more access, but understand it would take an act of Congress.

Eric – recognize there is a desire to create more access to the Crest, for both motorized and nonmotorized use. If we can get partners involved, it increases the opportunity to pursue funding to be able to do more.

Craig pointed out objectives stated in the draft plan for more trails in the Profanity area which is within the special interest area.

Eric – eventually there will need to be a management plan developed for the special interest area. That can be done with the revised plan or after the plan has been signed which would require a plan amendment. Comments on development of the management plan are encouraged.

Yvonne – don't have anything to add at this time regarding the boundary or shape of the special interest area, but appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the management plan.

Discussion about likely adjustments to the boundary of the special interest area, but it likely won't increase in size. Regarding adjustments to the recommended wilderness boundaries, there will be changes made between the draft and final plan, based on field verification.

Eric provided some insights on how they, and their members, can provide substantive comments. It is not a voting process and many form letters that say the same thing are considered one comment. Specific, detailed comments are the most helpful, including what is liked or not liked about a particular

alternative. Suggestions for improving an alternative, with specific details, are helpful. Comments on the uniqueness of an area and what makes it unique are good, e.g., Kettle Crest provides the only Mtn bike trail ride in an alpine setting. All comments are considered and will help the forest supervisor make a recommendation to the regional forester, who ultimately makes the decision.

Briefly discussed the six alternatives and differences in recommended wilderness. Discussed how, during the recommended wilderness evaluations, four areas of the forest stood out as high quality areas for consideration – Bald Snow, Profanity, Abercrombie-Hooknose, and Salmo-Priest Adjacent.

Deb stated it is good to hear the value of this use in this area. Keep in mind that comments submitted will be read by the general public and it is a good opportunity to help inform people about why Mtn bike users value the area.

Yvonne asked if there were other pieces of the plan that they should be looking at or commenting on.

Eric stated most areas you would ride are in semi-primitive nonmotorized management areas, so don't see conflicts with grazing, or riparian management areas.

Deb pointed out there was a webinar held regarding forest access and that information is located on the forest plan revision webpage if they want a better understanding of the road density piece.

Eric – in general the road density on the forest would decrease over the next 15-20 years under the new plan. Roads are considered for removal for different reasons such as wildlife, soil, or riparian issues but most of that work is done at the project level. In the draft plan the road densities are a desired condition, which means we may not get there, but we are moving toward it. There could be effects over time for dispersed camping areas adjacent to water.

Craig – other considerations when providing comments are the nationally designated trail, the scenic byway, special interest area, backcountry, and backcountry motorized management areas.

Eric encouraged them to review the other five alternatives too as there could be pieces they like or may not like. All comments matter and could change the outcome of the final alternative that is chosen. Alternatives will most likely be modified after receiving public comment.

Deb – asked if they would be willing to host a link to the forest plan webpage on the Evergreen Mtn Bike website and shared information about the listening session that will be held in four locations in June.

Evergreen is working on their comment letter and anticipates sharing an action alert with their members in mid-June.

The meeting ended about 11:30.



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