



Colville National Forest

September 2016

Forest Plan Revision Update

This is the third newsletter in a series addressing comments we received from the public. In this edition I want to provide some background and clarifications regarding the Roadless Rule, Inventoried Roadless Areas and how these are considered in forest plan revision.

What is the Roadless Rule?

The term “inventoried roadless area” (IRA) first came about in the 1970s during the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE I and RARE II) efforts by the Forest Service to inventory and review all roadless areas greater than 5,000 acres in the National Forest System. The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) issued by presidential directive established national management direction for all IRAs identified in the 2001 Roadless Rule. For the Colville National Forest, the IRAs that were mapped and included as part of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule are identical to the Appendix C Inventoried Roadless Area maps that are in the Colville National Forest’s 1988 Land and Resource Management Plan.

The Roadless Rule prohibits new road construction and reconstruction in IRAs on National Forest System lands, but there are some limited exceptions. To learn more about the exceptions, please check-out the RACR information page: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/roadmain/roadless/2001roadlessrule> and http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5308549.pdf



Rodney Smoldon
Colville Forest Supervisor

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What activities can occur within IRAs?

The 2001 RACR limits or prohibits activities that would most negatively affect air and water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, forest health, dispersed recreational opportunities and opportunities for personal renewal. It also prohibits the cutting, sale, and removal of timber in IRAs with some exceptions, such as threatened or endangered wildlife habitat improvement. Aside from new road construction or reconstruction, and the cutting, sale, and removal of timber, most other activities can occur in inventoried roadless areas. Allowed uses within an IRA may include, but are not limited to, all forms of non-motorized recreation, motorized recreation, grazing, forest product gathering (mushrooms, berries, etc.), special uses (outfitter guides, communication sites, etc.), prescribed fire, administrative and recreational facilities, and mineral removal **where that use is specifically allowed within the overlaying management area in the revised forest plan. For example, motorized recreation could continue in an IRA located within the Backcountry Motorized Management Area but would not be approved within an IRA contained within the Backcountry or Recommended Wilderness Management Areas.** So, while the list of possible uses are appropriate for an IRA, they may not be appropriate within a given management area. For specific types of uses allowed within an IRA contained in either the Backcountry, Backcountry Motorized, or Recommended Wilderness Management Areas, please see the suitability tables listed in the draft forest plan for these three management areas.

Q. Can timber harvest or other forest vegetation management activities occur within IRA’s?

Generally, road construction and timber harvest are prohibited within IRAs. However, the Chief of the Forest Service can authorize the removal of timber in an IRA under a very few limited and clearly defined exceptions. Under these exceptions, the cutting, sale, or removal of generally small diameter trees can be approved if the work maintains or improves roadless characteristics and improves habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species.



for the greatest good

In addition, the removal of timber can occur when it is:

- 1) *incidental to the accomplishment of a management activity not otherwise prohibited by this rule (i.e. the use of logs to support trail maintenance activities such as the construction of water bars, retaining walls, foot bridges, etc.);*
- 2) *it is for personal or administrative use, such as poles or posts, etc.; and*
- 3) *it occurs in areas where roadless characteristics have been substantially altered within a portion of an IRA due to road construction or timber harvest that occurred after an area was designated as an IRA and before the 2001 Roadless Rule.*

Please note that timber removal and vegetation management projects in an IRA would require separate site-specific environmental analysis with associated public involvement (NEPA) before being implemented under the Revised Forest Plan. If approved, these projects would be implemented in areas where access could be gained through existing roads, by equipment not requiring roads, or by other means such as the use of prescribed fire or hand thinning, and where the vegetation management activity is identified as a suitable use in the overlaying management area.

Q. Why are there some “IRAs” that have “roads” that are currently open to motorized vehicle use?

Some IRA’s contain roads that were constructed for public access and forest management after the RARE I and II inventories in the 1970s and prior to the passage of the final Roadless Rule in 2001, when road construction in an IRA became prohibited. In some cases, these roads are still open for public access and non-commercial forest management. In other situations, some of the “roads” have been converted to motorized trails and those trails will continue to be managed for motorized recreation where permitted under the Revised Forest Plan. Please note that any decisions to close specific roads or trails in an IRA would require separate site-specific environmental analysis with associated public involvement (NEPA), or possible Congressional legislation.

Q. How do IRAs relate to Forest Plan direction?

Inventoried Roadless Areas, as established in the 2001 RACR, are allocated to varying management areas in the forest plan, with the majority being allocated to three primary management areas: ***Recommended Wilderness, Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized.*** These management areas would continue to be managed for a primitive to semi-primitive recreation experience, while allowing for multiple uses (grazing, special uses, forest products gathering, etc.). **Many activities that are not allowed in designated wilderness would be allowed in the backcountry and backcountry motorized management areas** such as mountain biking, chainsaw use, motorized trail use, and cabin rentals. In addition, the desired future conditions, objectives, suitable uses, standards, and guidelines for these management area designations in the Revised Forest Plan align with the regulations outlined in the 2001 RACR.



Q. Can IRA boundaries change through plan revision process?

The Forest plan revision process cannot be used to change inventoried roadless area boundaries (2001 RACR Appendix C maps) or to remove Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) designations.

Q. Will the Remote Character of the IRAs be maintained or protected in the revised plan?

Yes, the Revised Forest Plan will protect the roadless characteristics of the Forest’s Inventoried Roadless Areas. Most of the Forest’s IRA acres are located within the Backcountry, Backcountry Motorized and Recommended Wilderness management area designations. The desired future conditions, objectives, suitable uses, standards, and guidelines for these three management areas in the Revised Forest Plan ensure that the roadless characteristics of the IRAs will be maintained by 1) not allowing new road construction, road reconstruction work, or scheduled commercial timber harvest and by 2) ensuring the landscape is natural appearing, that ecological processes are present that enhance connectivity and contribute to aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitat conditions for species that benefit from low human use, that watersheds are protected, and that dispersed recreational opportunities can occur in a semi-primitive setting. There are small areas within some of the IRAs that contain open system roads. These small pieces do not meet Backcountry, Backcountry Motorized or Recommended Wilderness criteria and are, therefore, designated as a different management area.

Next Plan Revision Steps Coming Together...*Please Stay Tuned!*

The planning team continues to work on reviewing, assimilating and analyzing comments from the more than 900 letters received during the 135-day comment period, which closed on July 5, 2016. Public comments received during that comment period will help to finalize the forest plan and environmental impact statement (EIS). Comments may also be used to modify alternatives, develop new alternatives for consideration, improve the analysis of effects, or to make factual corrections. The planning team is developing responses to concerns and suggestions identified in the comment analysis process. The Region and Forest will determine what the next steps will be for the Colville Forest Plan Revision Process after completing review of all public comments, and then share that information with the public this fall.

Contact Information

Amy Dillon

Forest Environmental Coordinator
& Plan Revision Team Leader

Phone: (509) 684-7211

Email: colvilleplanrevision@fs.fed.us

Project Website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/colville/plan-revision>

Postal Mail: Attn: Forest Plan Revision Team
Colville National Forest
765 South Main Street, Colville, WA 99114

Debbie Kelly

Public Affairs Lead

Phone: (509) 664-9247



Abercrombie-Hooknose, August 2016

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