



United States Department of Agriculture

Final Record of Decision for the Colville National Forest Revised Land Management Plan

Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens Counties, Washington

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Colville National Forest

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Introduction

This record of decision (ROD) documents my decision and rationale for approving the revised Colville National Forest Land Management Plan (revised land management plan) and final environmental impact statement (final EIS). This revised land management plan will provide guidance for future project and activity decision-making on the Colville National Forest (also Colville or Forest) for the next 10 to 15 years. The revised land management plan replaces the previous land management plan, which was approved in 1988, and has been amended 41 times. This decision facilitates the goal of the Department of Agriculture to facilitate rural prosperity and economic development, fostering productive and sustainable use of our National Forest System lands with a focus on customer service.

FOREST AND COMMUNITY SETTING

The 1.1-million-acre Colville National Forest is located in the northeastern corner of Washington State, within Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties. Ranger district offices are located in Republic, Kettle Falls, Metaline Falls, and Newport, and the supervisor's office is located in Colville, Washington. The Newport Ranger District is part of the Kaniksu National Forest but has been administered by Colville National Forest since 1974 and will continue to be managed by the Colville under the revised land management plan.

The Colville National Forest is considered to be geographically part of the northern Rocky Mountains, with the Kettle River Range on the west half of the national forest, and the Selkirk Mountains defining the eastern half. The Colville is bordered to the north by British Columbia, Canada, to the west by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, to the east by the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, and to the south by a portion of the Colville Confederated Tribes Indian Reservation.

The history of the Colville National Forest and surrounding communities is strongly tied to mining, homesteading, and logging. In 1821, the Hudson Bay Trading Company established a large outpost near Kettle Falls, attracting fur traders from Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Canada to the area. Miners began to filter into the area in search of gold in the 1850s, and the arrival of the Great Northern Railroad in 1890 allowed for the expansion of homesteading in the area. Homesteaders found that much of the land in the area was too rocky for farming, and discovered that timber harvest was much more profitable.

Today, Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties are comprised mostly of small, rural communities. The largest communities in the area are Colville (population 4,800) and Newport (population 2,100), Washington. The Colville National Forest, established in 1907, has a long history of providing timber and other forest products in support of these local communities, in addition to national needs.

Two major forest products companies, Boise Cascade and Vaagen Brothers Lumber Inc., are lead employers in the area. Currently, wood products from the Colville contribute to about 330 local jobs in the forest products industry, and an estimated annual labor income of \$19,335,000. Most of the Forest burned in the 1920s, resulting in a large crop of trees reaching maturity in the 1990s. Thus, the Colville was able to harvest at relatively high levels during an era when other national forests were severely reducing their timber cutting. While timber harvest levels vary year by year, the Colville has sustained an upward trend in harvest volumes for the last 25 years.

In the last five years, the Colville sold an average of 68 million board feet (MMBF) each year, reaching over 107 million board feet in 2018. Harvest volume is expected to surpass 130 million board feet in 2019.

Livestock grazing is another important part of the economy in northeastern Washington. Livestock grazing on the Forest supports about 29,500 animal unit months, and contributes to about 98 local jobs, and an estimated annual labor income of \$1,524,000. Grazing on the Colville contributes directly to livestock foraging needs and allows ranchers to grow forage on private lands for feeding during winter months.

The Colville also has about 750 mining claims. Lodes such as lead and zinc are predominate in the Metaline and Northport mining districts in Pend Oreille and Stevens Counties. Precious metals are also important in mining districts near Republic and Orient in Ferry County. Mining currently employs approximately 30 people on National Forest System lands in the Colville National Forest.

The Forest provides a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, and is the recreational backyard for communities of northeastern Washington and the greater Spokane area. There are approximately 4,000 miles of National Forest System roads on the Colville, including two scenic byways and one all American road. About a third of the open roads on the Forest are open to off-highway vehicles (also called mixed motorized use), allowing increased opportunities for this popular form of recreation. The trail system is composed of about 500 miles of summer-use trails, 80 miles of which are designated as National Recreation Trails, and approximately 40 miles of cross-country ski trails. Many of these roads and trails were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

The Forest also manages about 31,400 acres of the congressionally designated Salmo-Priest Wilderness, which is co-managed by the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The Salmo-Priest Wilderness provides important wildlife habitat, including recovery areas for Endangered Species Act listed grizzly bear, and the last remaining herd of woodland caribou in the continental United States.

The east side of the Forest also provides important designated critical habitat for threatened bull trout. On the west side of the Forest, the Kettle Crest has been identified as an important area for the recovery of Canada lynx in Washington.

The Forest also plays an important role in supporting hydroelectricity in the region. Waters from the Colville National Forest feed Lake Roosevelt on the Columbia River, which is impounded by the Grand Coulee Dam, the largest power-supplying dam in the United States. Two more hydropower projects are sited within the Colville on the Pend Oreille River. Boundary Dam generates one-third of Seattle City Light's power, and Box Canyon Dam supplies power for Pend Oreille County. Both dams also supply power to other western states and Canada at times of peak production. Environmental mitigations for hydropower projects completed by Seattle City Light and the Pend Oreille Public Utility District and collaboratively implemented by the Forest Service and State, Federal, and non-governmental partners, provide restoration benefits for multiple resources.

The Colville National Forest is known for its collaborative approach to forest management and robust accelerated vegetation management program, and is recognized as a leader in the Pacific Northwest Region. The Forest actively engages in partnerships and initiatives, including Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects, Good Neighbor partnerships with the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Tribal Forest Protection Projects with the Colville and Kalispel Tribes, Mill Creek A to Z 10-year stewardship project, and Joint Chief's projects. The Forest has had the privilege of working with the Northeast Washington Forest Coalition for over 15 years.

By sharing in the management of public lands in northeastern Washington, the Colville has created a sustainable model of collaboration and problem solving that has resulted in natural resource management on public lands being relevant in the community. The healthy local timber infrastructure has created competition for wood fiber that has allowed the Forest to retain profit from the vegetation management projects. This profit has been used to increase the pace and scale of acres being treated on the Forest, allowing for a greater expanse of management outcomes related to public safety, jobs, and market development. Involving communities in developing projects on their public lands has resulted in broad support for a variety of vegetation management actions on the Forest.

THE REVISED LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

As required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the Forest Service currently manages the Colville National Forest under a land management plan, approved in 1988, that guides decision-making on the Forest with respect to managing natural resources and human uses. The 1988 land management plan has been amended 41 times, and includes updated direction associated with the *Inland Native Fish Strategy* (INFISH 1995) and *Interim Management Direction Establishing Riparian, Ecosystem and Wildlife Standards for Timber Sales* (otherwise known as Eastside Screens 1994) amendments.

The final EIS and revised land management plan were developed according to the NFMA, its implementing regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 219; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (1969); the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1500–1508; and the Forest Service NEPA regulations at 36 CFR 220. According to transition language of the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(3), the responsible official may elect to use the provisions of the prior planning regulations (1982 Planning Rule, dated September 30, 1982, and as amended) to prepare plan amendments and revisions. I have elected to follow the provisions of the planning regulations in effect prior to May 9, 2012, referred to collectively in this document as the 1982 Planning Rule, as this land management plan revision process was initiated before 2012. References in this ROD refer to the 1982 Planning Rule unless indicated differently in the citation (see final EIS Appendix D for full text of 1982 Planning Rule, also available at <https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/nfmareg.html>). However, the revised land management plan includes a monitoring plan consistent with 36 CFR 219.12 of the 2012 Planning Rule. All other plan requirements are consistent with the 1982 regulations. However, where the 1982 planning rule does not provide definitions or process, the revised land management plan relies on the 2012 planning rule for those definitions and processes.

With this decision, the revised land management plan replaces the 1988 land management plan and becomes the Colville National Forest Land Management Plan. The revised land management plan updates the management areas, desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, special areas, suitability, and monitoring requirements that will guide management of the Colville for the next 10 to 15 years. Past implementation as well as broad-scale monitoring (Pacfish/INFISH Biological Opinion, forest health, insect and disease, Vision2020, and grazing management) was used to inform the revised land management plan analysis and plan development.

Compared to the 1988 land management plan, the revised land management plan increases potential wood sale quantity and timber-related jobs and income; maintains grazing and recreation-related employment; provides a framework to collaboratively implement shared stewardship and accomplish more work on the ground; and ensures access for all to Forest resources.

NATURE OF THE LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN DECISION

The nature of the land management plan decision is outlined in NFMA. Similar to local government land-use zoning, the direction in the land management plan is used to guide future management decisions and set consistent expectations for the types of activities permissible on a forest. A land management plan provides overall guidance for the management of National Forest System lands and is based on law, science, and input from tribes, local government, State and Federal agencies, and the public. A land management plan establishes goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, management areas, and land suitability to assure coordination of multiple uses (for example, outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness) and sustained yield of products and services.

This land management plan decision is strategic in nature, does not make a commitment to the selection of any specific project, and does not dictate day-to-day administrative activities needed to carry on the Forest Service's internal operations such as personnel matters, law enforcement, or organizational changes. The revised land management plan's programmatic management direction will be implemented through the design, execution, and monitoring of site-specific activities such as harvesting timber, conducting a prescribed burn, or relocating a trail. The decisions for these activities will be consistent with the strategic decisions made in the revised land management plan and are subject to separate analysis under the NEPA.

Need for Change

The 1988 land management plan was approved 30 years ago, well beyond the 10- to 15-year duration provided by the NFMA (16 U.S.C. 1604, et seq.). The need for change and subsequent revised land management plan is an outcome of extensive collaboration with State and county governments and other Federal agencies, tribal consultation, and engagement with the public and other groups. Land management plan revision on the Colville National Forest was initiated based on legal requirements and significant changes that have occurred in conditions, demands, and scientific understanding since the 1988 land management plan went into effect.

The 1988 land management plan did not fully address changes that have occurred to economic, social, and ecological conditions; new policies and priorities within the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service; and new information based on monitoring and scientific research. Using the *Analysis of the Management Situation* (USDA Forest Service 2011, 2018), and information provided through outreach to tribes, local governments, State and Federal agencies, and the public, the Forest identified five recommended needs for change from the 1988 land management plan. The needs are summarized here (see also final EIS, chapter 1):

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

There is a need to address changed social and economic conditions and preferences in light of ecosystem capacity. The Colville provides a variety of opportunities for recreating, working, and practicing cultural and spiritual traditions. In turn, communities provide infrastructure and skills to support forest management. Sustainable social and economic opportunities depend on well-functioning and resilient ecological systems. During the past 20 years, economic and demographic changes have altered how people use and access the Forest. Economic shifts in markets for certain types of timber products and declines in timber harvests have caused many eastern Washington wood processors to close.

Social changes include an increasing demand, largely due to population growth, for a variety of recreation opportunities on public lands. Land management plan revision is needed to address such shifts, within the capability of the available infrastructure and the ecosystem, and to address the types and extent of forest management activities that can be accomplished within projected budgets.

VEGETATIVE SYSTEMS

Historically, frequent fires kept tree densities and fuels low. With increased fire suppression, the dominant types of tree species and forest structure has changed. In the past 10 to 15 years, fires in eastern Washington have increased with greater severity reflective of higher fuel levels and tree mortality, along with longer fire seasons. Recent studies have shown that northeastern Washington is one of the areas with the highest need for active vegetation management activities. There is a need to revise the 1988 land management plan to focus restoration actions in Douglas-fir dry, Northern Rocky Mountain mixed conifer, and lodgepole pine landscapes, and create conditions that are more resilient to anticipated disturbances, including fire, insects, disease, and climate change. This is especially important in Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens Counties, where an average of 25 percent of homes are located in growing wildland-urban interface areas.

AQUATIC AND RIPARIAN SYSTEMS

There is a need to focus efforts to improve watershed condition across the Forest. The 1988 land management plan was amended by INFISH and does not adequately integrate management direction, updated science, and watershed assessment tools. Since 1988, the *Aquatic Restoration Strategy* (USDA Forest Service 2005), the *Watershed Condition Framework* (Potyondy and Geier 2010), bull trout recovery plan (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service 2015), and the *Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy* (USDA Forest Service 2016) were developed to reflect management direction supported by current research and regional, national, and interagency policy. Consistency and integration of this new research and direction on restoration, protection, and maintenance of watershed and aquatic habitat and function is needed.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

The 1988 land management plan needs to be updated to reflect new species and critical habitat listings, and current science including species viability assessments for the Interior Columbia Basin and for northeastern Washington. Incorporating interagency direction in the revised land management plan for grizzly bear, woodland caribou, Canada lynx, and bull trout will contribute to the viability of these species and their habitats, and ensure the Forest's compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Recent scientific findings on climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2014) have improved our understanding of how ecosystems have changed and are likely to change in the future. Climate change has altered, and will continue to alter disturbance regimes, including forest insects and diseases, fire, and hydrologic regimes. Future conditions may be more favorable to some undesired non-native plant, wildlife, and aquatic species (IPCC 2014). The full impact of climate change is uncertain, but integrated management direction that provides flexibility to respond to change and maintains or restores the resilience of the national forests is needed.

The Decision

I have reviewed the alternatives, considered the objectives and concerns of tribal, county, State and Federal governments, public comments, national direction and policy, and internal management concerns. After considering the effects to the economic, social, and ecological environment as described in chapter 3 of the final EIS, I have selected the primary management direction identified in alternative P. My decision approves the desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, management area direction, suitability determinations, and monitoring and evaluation direction as described in the revised land management plan and under alternative P (hereafter referred to as the selected alternative) in chapter 2 of the final EIS.

My decision carries forward areas of the Forest that have already been formally designated by special statute because of unique or special characteristics (see revised land management plan, page 94). The Salmo-Priest Wilderness, Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, and the International Selkirk Loop scenic byway are congressionally designated areas that are also included in my decision.

My decision also carries forward areas of the Forest already designated through administrative action. The Colville has about 182,000 acres of inventoried roadless areas that were designated by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (see page 36). The revised land management plan includes forestwide direction for these inventoried roadless areas. Other existing administrative designations include Sherman Pass and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byways, research natural areas, various national recreation trails, and critical habitat designated for grizzly bear, woodland caribou, and bull trout.

The selected alternative provides for management of all of these previously designated areas, consistent with the nature of their designation.

The selected alternative will:

- Contribute about 830 jobs and generate approximately \$36,169,000 in annual labor income to local communities in forest products, recreation, and livestock grazing industries. This is an increase of more than 200 jobs in the forest products sector;
- Increase the acres suitable for scheduled timber production by 12 percent, and replace the Eastside screens 21-inch diameter limit with a guideline that allows harvest of large trees under certain scenarios;
- Provide a diversity of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, contributing \$3,556,000 annually in income from recreation-related jobs;
- Provide for a community-based approach to managing livestock grazing;
- Allow motorized access on designated routes over approximately 75 percent of the Forest in suitable management areas, and include desired conditions for road densities in focused and general restoration management areas;
- Recommend three areas for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (61,700 acres total, or 6 percent of the Forest). Current levels of existing activities (such as mountain biking and use of chainsaws) will continue to occur until Congress moves to designate these areas as wilderness;
- Establish the Kettle Crest Recreation Area management area (80,300 acres), allowing for a continued variety of recreation opportunities in this popular area, and maintaining the characteristics currently enjoyed by the public;

- Integrate the Colville Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy, modernizing direction established by INFISH in 1995, while supporting other uses, including timber harvest, grazing, recreation, and watershed restoration activities;
- Ensure viable native fish and wildlife populations and incorporate current science and interagency direction for recovery of threatened and endangered species;
- Recommend the Fire Mountain (1,457 acres) and Hall Ponds (627 acres) research natural areas.
- Provide a framework to promote partnerships and cooperative agreements to accomplish more work on the ground;
- Provide a monitoring plan that is consistent with the 2012 planning rule.

My decision is fully supported by the environmental analysis documented in the final EIS, as required by law and regulation. This decision applies only to National Forest System lands on the Colville National Forest. It does not apply to any other Federal, State, or private lands, although the effects of these lands and the effects of my decision on lands surrounding the Colville were considered.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

I believe the selected alternative provides the most balanced approach to management of the Colville and provides for a variety of uses the public told me were important. My decision is based on a careful and reasoned comparison of the environmental consequences of and responses to issues and concerns for each alternative. The selected alternative provides areas for active management and timber production. Focused and general restoration management areas provide the suitable base for timber production, while other management areas allow for harvest to achieve broader restoration goals. Activities in these active management areas will move vegetation toward desired conditions for improved resiliency within the historical range of variation. My decision also provides areas with passive management and non-motorized access, such as recommended wilderness and backcountry management areas.

The revised land management plan is responsive to the diverse needs, issues, concerns, and opportunities expressed by tribes, local governments, State and Federal agencies, organizations, and the public. The revised land management plan emphasizes moving toward desired conditions and contributing to economic, social, and ecological sustainability, and promotes sound land stewardship in partnership with local communities to conserve rural character.

The revised land management plan establishes a framework for future multiple-use management, setting programmatic direction for compliance with law at the site-specific project level. Approval of the revised land management plan does not require implementation of any site-specific management actions, but rather the revised land management plan provides a framework for future decision-making.

The revised land management plan will provide direction and guidance for accomplishing the following:

CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

This decision will support approximately 830 jobs in the timber, recreation, and livestock grazing industries, contributing \$36,169,000 in annual labor income. The decision will support about 537 timber-related jobs, an increase from the estimated 330 timber industry jobs and \$19,340,000 in labor income that timber harvest under the 1988 land management plan supports. This decision maintains approximately 300 recreation- and grazing-related jobs that are provided for under the 1988 land management plan, with an estimated labor income of \$5,080,000 annually.

The revised land management plan provides desired conditions emphasizing the Forest's commitment to work with the counties, other government agencies, and members of the public, in order to achieve multiple use goals on the Colville National Forest and to contribute to social and economic sustainability in conjunction with ecological sustainability. I believe a productive working relationship between the Forest and county governments is vital for successfully implementing the revised land management plan and supporting the economic base of the counties. The revised land management plan provides a framework to promote partnerships and cooperative agreements to accomplish more work on the ground. The Colville is known for its collaborative approach to forest management and robust accelerated vegetation management program. The Forest actively engages in partnerships and initiatives. By sharing the management of public lands in northeastern Washington, the Colville has created a sustainable model of collaboration and problem solving that has resulted in natural resource management on public lands being relevant in the community.

RESTORING AND SUSTAINING LANDSCAPES

Throughout the planning process, I heard from our local governments, State government agencies and our public a desire to produce more timber volume to support local communities and economies. The selected alternative designates the most acres suitable for timber production of all the alternatives, and allocates approximately 63 percent of the Forest as suitable for scheduled timber production in focused and general restoration management areas. This is an increase in suitable timber production acres of about 12 percent when compared with the 1988 land management plan. I believe these acres represent areas where timber production is feasible, based on other resource requirements, and compatible with management area desired conditions. Another 19 percent of the Forest will be suitable for timber harvest for other resource benefit, making timber harvest a suitable restoration tool on more than 82 percent of the Forest.

There will no longer be a prohibition on harvest of trees greater than 21 inches in diameter, as required by the 1988 land management plan as amended. Instead, the revised land management plan contains a guideline for large tree management and specifies a number of scenarios where large trees (defined as greater than 20 inches in diameter) may be harvested. These scenarios include moving stands toward their desired conditions for structural stages, to control or limit insects and disease, for fuels reduction, and for safety reasons. I believe that this guideline was developed using best available science, and will protect large trees and emphasize late structure across the landscape, while allowing adequate management flexibility to respond to emerging resource issues.

The revised land management plan will use a dynamic landscape approach for providing late forest structure, while allowing late structure forests to naturally shift location in response to ecological processes (for example, wildfires). Late-successional forests may occur in various management areas across the Forest. Forestwide desired conditions for forest structure will be based on the historical range of variability by vegetation type, and will provide for ecological resilience to disturbances such as fire, insects, and disease.

The allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the revised land management plan is 67 MMBF per year. The ASQ represents the volume of green timber (not salvage material) that can be harvested from land suitable for timber production (focused and general restoration management areas). The annual potential wood sale quantity (PWSQ) for the revised land management plan will be 62 MMBF per year. The PWSQ represents the amount of timber and all other wood products, including firewood, that are expected to be sold during the plan period from harvests for any purpose (except salvage harvest or sanitation harvest) on all lands in the planning area, not just lands suitable for timber production. Actual volume offered in an individual year may vary due to budget or regulatory conditions.

Both the ASQ and PWSQ for the revised land management plan represent a substantial increase from the 1988 land management plan, as amended. Based on the analysis, the Colville National Forest has the ability to maintain a relatively high level of timber harvest under the revised land management plan.

The numbers used to compare the timber volume outputs for the various action alternatives received a lot of attention and comments from the public. I heard a desire from county commissioners to include an objective for a volume output larger than 62 MMBF. To respond to this request, the Colville land management plan revision interdisciplinary team modeled objectives of 80 MMBF and 97 MMBF. The modeling exercise concluded that neither of these numbers would attain desired conditions for all forest structural stages as well as the selected alternative. This exercise is documented in the final EIS appendix G and in the planning record.

While I have decided not to include an objective for timber volume output, I want to be clear that the PWSQ of 62 MMBF is not a cap or a target, and does not represent a limit to what the Forest may produce. I believe that the increasing trend of volume produced on the Colville shows a commitment by the Forest and the Region to contribute to local economies and communities and treat more acres.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO THE FOREST

With a large Federal land base in northeastern Washington, I recognize the local economic base is dependent on access to and use of the Forest. I heard from all sides of this issue, some like county commissioners that didn't want any net loss in roads, and those who wanted to reduce road densities.

The revised land management plan contains desired conditions for road densities in focused and general restoration management areas. Roads in these areas will be evaluated at the project level with appropriate public input and resource analysis. It is important to note that this decision does not make any road designations or decisions regarding specific roads; it creates sideboards for how roads are managed in the different management areas. The revised land management plan does not open or close any roads, or change current designations for motor vehicle use on existing roads on the Forest, but includes a desired condition for a safe and sustainable access system that allows access for the public in a similar fashion to current uses. Revised land management plan direction, as well as information from the most current version of the Forestwide Travel Analysis Report will be used to inform future analyses, project-level decisions, and specific actions aimed at attaining the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel, and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands. Designations of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use will be in accordance with subpart B of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212). The Forest will continue to modify its motor vehicle use map annually to reflect changes that are made to the transportation system and its designated uses. Similarly, designation of roads, trails, and areas for over-snow vehicle use will be conducted per revised land management plan direction and in accordance with subpart C of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212). Designations for over-snow vehicle use will be depicted on an over-snow vehicle use map.

I also heard concerns about access from many people who use the Forest for gathering forest products, hunting, mountain biking, hiking, camping, and winter recreation. Access to these types of activities is facilitated by the Forest road system, and my decision results in approximately 75 percent of the Forest being suitable for roads and motorized use on designated routes. However, I also considered the non-motorized types of activities that people told me they valued by designating approximately 12 percent of the Forest as backcountry management areas where motorized use is not suitable.

My decision will create the Kettle Crest Recreation Area (approximately 80,300 acres). The Forest received many comments specific to the Kettle Crest and the importance of this area for its recreational, scenic, and spiritual value. This management area will emphasize and protect outstanding recreation opportunities in a semi-primitive setting, while allowing continued motorized and mechanized recreation. Some commenters expressed their interest in seeing this area as recommended wilderness (as reflected in alternatives B and R). However, due to the variety of existing recreational uses and public interest in this particular area, I believe the Kettle Crest is best managed for a range of recreational experiences, similar to the way the area is currently managed. The Kettle Crest Recreation Area will be managed in part as backcountry. Non-motorized opportunities will continue to be emphasized along the nationally designated trails at the top of the crest. Motorized opportunities will continue to be emphasized in backcountry-motorized management areas where these types of uses are already occurring.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Livestock grazing is a valuable local industry, and it is the desired condition of the revised land management plan that grazing continues to be a viable use of vegetation on the forest (see revised land management plan, FW-DC-LG-01). All management areas in the revised land management plan are suitable for livestock grazing, with the exception of research natural areas, certain administrative areas, and the Salmo-Priest Wilderness. The revised land management plan does not make allotment-level decisions, such as the number of animal unit months that may graze a particular allotment. The revised land management plan will continue to provide for approximately 98 jobs related to grazing, and an associated \$1,524,000 in annual income. Site-specific analysis at the allotment scale has the potential to allow for an increase in grazing capacity.

My decision includes a modified version of the riparian vegetation guideline that was included in the revised land management plan. The original guideline included indicators for streambank alteration, utilization of woody vegetation, and stubble height in the riparian area. The guideline has been modified based on comments received from the public and is now called Annual Grazing Use Indicators (MA-GDL-RMA-12). Specifically, this guideline is intended to provide more current, consistent, and objective grazing management across the Forest based on best available science; and to maintain or improve riparian vegetative and stream conditions, thereby improving the viability of regional forester sensitive aquatic species, contributing to the recovery of Endangered Species Act listed species, and facilitating the attainment of State water quality standards over the long term. By including this modified guideline in the revised land management plan, I have determined positive trends in watershed health established by management under the INFISH amendment will persist, while ensuring continued, viable livestock use on the Colville National Forest.

RECOMMENDING AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION AS WILDERNESS

Public opinion regarding wilderness recommendation varies widely. The Forest received many comments about recommending wilderness throughout the planning process. Many people favor recommending additional areas for wilderness, while many others do not agree with any new wilderness recommendations. The Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens County commissioners do not support additional recommended wilderness in the revised land management plan. Although I acknowledge their concerns, I believe a balanced approach to managing the Colville includes managing some areas for their semi-primitive and primitive character. These areas are important to some members of the public for the opportunities they provide for a recreational experience with a sense of solitude and self-reliance. These areas also provide unroaded blocks of wildlife habitat with relatively little human disturbance.

My decision results in 61,700 acres (6 percent of the Forest) of recommended wilderness allocations. This is approximately 7,000 acres less than what was proposed in the draft EIS and draft revised land management plan. Individually, the recommended wilderness areas are Abercrombie-Hooknose (29,300 acres), Bald Snow (17,400 acres), and Salmo-Priest Adjacent (14,900 acres) (see final EIS map packet, map 3). These areas, in particular, represent the best examples of wilderness characteristics on the Forest.

Approximately 56,177 acres (95 percent) of these recommended wilderness areas are already within inventoried roadless areas, as identified under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Currently, these areas are not suitable for scheduled timber production, timber harvest for resource benefit, roads, or motorized recreation. Managing these areas as recommended wilderness under the revised land management plan does not represent a change to the way they are currently managed.

My decision allows inconsistent uses in recommended wilderness. For recreation, this is identified as mountain biking on existing trails and motorized equipment for maintenance of trails in recommended wilderness areas until these areas are considered for designation as wilderness by Congress. The revised land management plan contains direction for the monitoring of mechanized uses, as well as direction to address these uses if they cause any increase in user-created trails. Other ongoing activities, including grazing and mineral exploration, will continue to be suitable uses in these recommended wilderness areas.

Despite the consistency between the revised land management plan and county land use plans, and work with the community and collaborative groups, issues persist regarding economic effects related to expected timber outputs and recommendation for wilderness designation. The social and economic section in the final EIS chapter 3 discusses these issues. I acknowledge the Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens County commissioners still dispute whether my decision will strike the correct balance between ecological protection and local economic need.

My recommendation, paired with the already designated Salmo-Priest Wilderness on the Colville (31,400 acres), will result in about 9 percent of the Forest to be managed as wilderness if Congress should formally designate these areas. I believe that this approach for recommended and designated wilderness provides balance with managing for other desired conditions across the Colville National Forest. The Salmo-Priest Adjacent recommended wilderness area will improve the manageability of the boundaries of the Salmo-Priest Wilderness. These areas provide valuable habitat for wildlife species that benefit from quiet, unroaded environments, such as grizzly bear, caribou, and lynx. Providing the Abercrombie-Hooknose and Bald Snow recommended wilderness areas will ensure Forest users who seek a wilderness-like experience can find that opportunity on both the east and west zones of the Forest. Managing these areas as recommended wilderness does not mean that fire suppression would not occur if conditions and incident objectives determined that would be the appropriate course of action.

To address the needs of the local community for the management of these areas, the Tri-County Forest Group has committed to working with the Forest to develop management strategies for each inventoried roadless area and recommended wilderness area. The creation of management strategies that all group members and the Forest support shows a continued commitment to working together to help further the smooth implementation of the revised land management plan. This effort would start with the three recommended wilderness areas: Bald Snow, Abercrombie Hooknose, and Salmo-Priest Adjacent, and the following inventoried roadless areas: Profanity, Thirteenmile, and Hoodoo. Each specific management strategy would include specifics for grazing, fire management, and trail clearing, as well as other potential management activities agreed to by the group during their strategy development.

INTEGRATING SCIENCE AND DIRECTION FOR AQUATIC AND TERRESTRIAL HABITATS

The revised land management plan ensures viable native fish and wildlife populations, as well as restoration of forest health on a broad scale including the diversity of vegetation structure across the Forest. Surrogate species are used to represent specific habitats and risk factors across the Forest, and plan components enhance viability of these species by providing favorable habitat conditions and reducing risk factors. Focal species, whose abundance, distribution, health, and trend over time and space are indicative of the functioning of the larger ecological system (USDA Forest Service 1999) are identified for monitoring consistent with 2012 Planning Rule.

The revised land management plan incorporates current science and interagency direction from recovery plans for threatened and endangered species in forestwide wildlife habitat and water resources plan components. It incorporates the 2003 winter recreation strategy and 2012 critical habitat designation for woodland caribou, as well as direction from the 1993 grizzly bear recovery plan in specific components under forestwide wildlife habitat (see revised land management plan, chapter 2). The revised land management plan also incorporates and updates current management guidance from the Canada Lynx Interagency Agreement, which relies on the science summarized in the *Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy* (ILBT 2013).

The Colville Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy (see final EIS appendix H), was adapted based on the Region 6 Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy which builds upon elements of INFISH (USDA and USDI 1995) as well as PACFISH (USDA and USDI 1995) and the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) (USDA and USDI 1994). It forms the basis for management of watershed, aquatic, and riparian processes to maintain and restore the health of aquatic and riparian ecosystems in the revised land management plan. Recent science, assessment, monitoring, and policy direction highlight the need to integrate and refine these older aquatic conservation strategies. There is a particular need to adopt a long-term strategy to replace INFISH, since it is an interim, short-term strategy. In addition, the existing strategies do not address some new threats (for example, climate change and aquatic invasive species) and some recent policies, plans, and best available science pertaining to species conservation and recovery, watershed restoration, and assessment and monitoring.¹ The Colville Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy is similar to existing INFISH direction, however it includes several refinements including establishment of a key watershed network, modest changes to riparian area widths in headwater streams, and refined plan components for water resources and riparian areas.

¹ Science and monitoring completed since the development and implementation of INFISH, PACFISH, and the Northwest Forest Plan support their general framework and assumptions (Spence et al. 1996, Naiman et al. 2000, Reeves et al. 2017), reinforcing the need for a landscape approach to aquatic habitat management and conservation that focuses on protection and restoration of natural processes (Rieman et al. 2015). The new science also emphasizes the importance of headwater streams, and the need to protect riparian forests (Reeves et al. 1995, Natural Research Council 2002, Benda et al. 2004, Moore et al. 2005, Rieman et al. 2006, Burnett and Miller 2007, Wipfli et al. 2007, Benda et al. 2015, Reeves et al. 2017). In addition, there is evidence that the existing strategies are achieving their goals of maintaining or restoring aquatic and riparian habitats and key ecological processes (Heller and McCammon 2003, Reeves 2006, Reeves et al. 2017, Kershner et al. 2017, Roper et al. 2019).

The Eastside Screens had several components that affected vegetation management which have been replaced in the revised land management plan with a series of desired historical range of variability conditions, desired wildlife habitat conditions, and a guideline for large tree retention. The Eastside Screens interim wildlife standard that required keeping all live trees greater than or equal to 21 inches diameter at breast height has been replaced with a large tree guideline (FW-GDL-VEG-03) that provides protections for large trees while also allowing for movement towards forest structure desired conditions. The Eastside Screens interim ecosystem standard required a historical range of variability analysis to compare current stand structure to historical conditions. The revised land management plan maintains this requirement in the forest structure desired condition (FW-DC-VEG-03), which provides the basis for vegetation management and promotes large and old forest structure across the Forest.

NET PUBLIC BENEFIT

The 1982 NFMA implementing regulations (1982 Planning Rule 219.1) state that land management plans must "...provide for multiple-use and sustained yield of goods and services from the National Forest System in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner."

I have considered the many competing public desires for uses of the Forest in the context of ecological diversity and integrity, and the economic needs of the counties surrounding the Forest. My decision balances the need for resource conservation with one that contributes to the economic well-being of these communities.

I chose alternative P because, in my judgment, it maximizes the net benefit to the public by:

- Increasing contributions to economic and social needs of people, cultures, and communities while emphasizing a diversity of high-quality motorized and non-motorized outdoor recreation opportunities, as well as a road and trail system that provides access to the Colville;
- Emphasizing restoration of vegetation and watersheds to improve resiliency to wildfires and other disturbance while supporting timber harvest, grazing, mining, recreation, and a variety of other uses; and
- Aiding in conserving and recovering federally listed species and other species with viability concerns by incorporating updated science and recovery plans, while providing sustainable and predictable levels of products and services, such as timber and forage.

My choice also considered how the revised land management plan responded to local government concerns and objectives, public comments, internal management concerns, and national direction and policy.

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC CONCERNS

Many stakeholders shared their concerns and preferences during the collaboration and public involvement for the Colville National Forest land management plan revision (see page 16 for summary of public involvement). I have made my decision with due consideration of the input from those diverse stakeholders. This section describes the key concerns and comments expressed during the land management plan revision process and how my decision responds to those concerns (see also "Summary of Public Participation" section below). The full text of the response to public comments is located in the final EIS appendix E.

TIMBER HARVEST AND VOLUMES

Concerns were heard from many parties about the amount of timber harvest and volumes supported by the Colville. These comments generally fell into the category of those who wanted to see more timber harvest and those who wanted to see less.

The ASQs of the alternatives considered in detail vary from 7.5 MMBF (alternative R) to 67.6 MMBF (proposed action) per year, and the PWSQs vary from 14 MMBF (alternative R) to 62 MMBF (selected alternative and proposed action). Based on the analysis in chapter 3 of the final EIS, I have concluded the harvest levels associated with the selected alternative will best move the Forest toward the desired conditions of increased ecological and economic stability. Additionally, I have chosen to allocate 61,700 acres of recommended wilderness and 129,000 acres of backcountry to protect the values that are important to those who wanted an emphasis on recreational experiences and wildlife habitat.

Some commenters were concerned with the consideration of budget constraints developing the revised land management plan (for example, determining the PWSQ). The revised land management plan was developed to move toward a variety of desired conditions in the various resource and management areas. The desired conditions are unconstrained by budget, but the quantity or amount of each objective was based on the assumption that future budgets stay relatively flat or decrease. Therefore, if future budget allocations increase or other funding opportunities arise, the revised land management plan allows for an increase in outputs within the ASQ as expressed as a 10-year average. The revised land management plan objectives are a projection of what the Colville National Forest would expect to accomplish if budgets do not increase, but they are not limits to what the Forest may achieve if an increase in staffing or budgets occurs. The objectives also do not take into account the use of special authorities, such as Good Neighbor Authority and stewardship contracts like the Middle and South Fork A-Z project.

MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION

Motorized recreational use on the Forest was another key concern. Similar to the issues around timber harvest, comments about motorized and non-motorized recreation on the Forest also fell into the categories of those who wanted more of one type and less of the other.

The Analysis of the Management Situation (USDA Forest Service 2018, in the project record) revealed a need to diversify and improve recreation experiences. The demand for activities such as riding off-highway vehicles and mountain biking on the Colville National Forest has increased since the 1988 land management plan was adopted. The revised land management plan includes areas for motorized use and recreation, and areas where non-motorized experiences are emphasized. Approximately 75 percent of the Forest will be managed for motorized use. The revised land management plan emphasizes the need to work with communities to identify loop trails and routes for motorized mixed use. The revised land management plan also provides areas where recreationists can find opportunities for solitude in a more quiet, semi-primitive, or primitive setting.

Given the need to contribute to local communities and economies, I believe allowing for a variety of recreation experiences, including the motorized and non-motorized opportunities that are increasing in popularity across the region, is important to ensure that the Colville continues to be an attractive and exciting place to recreate.

RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS

As described above, public views on recommended wilderness were divergent. Some commenters wanted to see more recommended wilderness, some wanted to see less or none. To ensure I met my legal and regulatory responsibilities during the land management plan revision process for evaluating areas that exhibit wilderness values, I directed the interdisciplinary team to again look for areas that met the criteria of recommended wilderness areas prior to the release of the final EIS. Through ground verification, the team found limited areas in the Abercrombie-Hooknose recommended wilderness that had evidence of past timber harvest and old system roads.

The team also addressed concerns from the mining industry regarding access to claims that led to refinement of the boundaries of the Abercrombie-Hooknose and Salmo-Priest Adjacent recommended wilderness areas. The Salmo-Priest Adjacent recommended wilderness was also adjusted to allow more flexibility to manage vegetation and fuels around the water source for the community of Metaline Falls. The team also identified additional acres adjacent to the Bald Snow recommended wilderness area that met the criteria for recommended wilderness, and adjusted the boundary of this recommended wilderness to include those acres. Overall, this exercise resulted in a reduction of about 7,000 acres of recommended wilderness in the selected alternative than what was published in the draft EIS and draft revised land management plan. New boundaries followed the boundary adjustment guidelines for potential wilderness areas in the Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 chapter 70.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Livestock grazing was also a controversial topic, with some groups requesting that the Forest increase grazing, and some wanting less or no grazing at all. The revised land management plan only designates management areas as suitable or not suitable for grazing, consistent with the 1982 Planning Rule. All other grazing decisions will continue to be made at the allotment level.

Many commenters, including local county commissioners, were concerned about the effect of aquatic and riparian plan direction (Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy, as described above) on livestock grazing. The riparian vegetation guideline included in the draft revised land management plan received considerable attention. Grazing interests expressed concern that the stubble height requirement is not implementable and that specific numbers were not appropriate for the revised land management plan.

As described above on page 10, I have worked with regional stakeholders to modify this guideline for the revised land management plan. The final annual grazing use indicators guideline (described above on page 10; see revised land management plan, MA-GDL-RMA-12) clarifies that only those indicators and numeric values that are appropriate to the site and necessary for maintaining or moving toward desired conditions should be applied. The updated guideline emphasizes that inference and professional judgement must be made to interpret and apply the best available scientific information at the site level.

The information used to characterize existing conditions and evaluate trends toward desired conditions was another issue that prompted conversations with stakeholders, and ultimately led to the revised guideline. Use of the Watershed Condition Framework in the evaluation of existing conditions was in particular a point of confusion and concern for the stakeholders that coordinated in revising the guideline. The Watershed Condition Framework is now not specifically identified in the guideline as a driver in establishing existing condition. However, the Watershed Condition Framework provides information that can and will be used as part of the evaluation with other specific, local information that will also play a prominent role in establishing existing condition for a specific site. I believe these are positive changes to the revised land management plan that will improve and protect habitats, and promote consistent grazing management across the region.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

The Forest Service recognizes the complexity of interests and differences in beliefs regarding grazing, wilderness, timber, and recreation. The Colville National Forest will continue to work with local stakeholders to better understand the connection between forest management and social and economic conditions. Through a collaborative assessment, stakeholders and employees of the Colville will gain a better understanding of contemporary and potential future contributions of the Colville to the local area. This assessment will provide the Colville National Forest and local stakeholders additional social and economic data that will help meaningfully address the social and economic well-being in the early stages of future project-level planning. The proposed collaborative socio-economic assessment will build on the successful history of shared stewardship that has already added significant value to the Colville and surrounding communities.

Engagement with Tribes, State and Local Governments, other Federal Agencies, and the Public

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Early public involvement for land management plan revision began in 2004, as a combined effort with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, and included a series of public meetings (see final EIS chapter 1). Workshops about the need to change the existing land management plans were held in communities throughout northeastern Washington.

Meetings with representatives from local counties began in 2004, and were held on a continuing basis throughout the land management plan revision process. Government-to-government consultation with Tribal nations and staff-to-staff consultation with their resource specialists began early in the process and continued. Additional meetings with interest groups, user groups, State and Federal officials, Tribal staff, and industry groups were held.

In March 2006, the Colville began its collaboration process separate from the Okanogan-Wenatchee. Separate meetings were held in each county to spread the word about the collaborative forest planning process. In April 2006, the Forest held a 3-day Forest Summit at an educational retreat center on the Forest. Working groups developed at the Forest Summit had six day-long meetings between late April 2006 and January 2007, to discuss and formulate recommendations.

In the fall of 2008, the Forest hosted a series of public workshops to help the agency evaluate inventoried roadless areas within the Forest for their recommendation as wilderness.

Scoping of the proposed action was initiated with the Federal Register Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS and Revised Land Management Plan in 2011. After review of public scoping input and the feasibility of the combined revision process, the Regional Forester determined that separating the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests' revision efforts was the best way to reflect the very different issues for each forest, based on public input and resource needs.

The Colville National Forest released a draft EIS for the revised land management plan for public comment in February 2016. The draft EIS analyzed six alternatives, including the 1988 land management plan as the no action alternative, and the proposed action identified in the 2011 scoping.

The Forest received 926 comment letters and hundreds of postcards on the draft EIS and draft revised land management plan. Major themes of those comments focused on the amounts (more or less) of recommended wilderness, motorized recreation, timber harvest, aquatic and riparian management strategies, and livestock grazing. As a result, the Forest made several changes to recommended wilderness, access, motorized recreation, and livestock grazing between draft and final EIS (see “Response to Public Concerns” section on page 13 above). No additional alternatives were analyzed in detail as a result of public comment, though 16 alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study (see final EIS, chapter 2).

TRIBAL CONSULTATION

Tribes are sovereign nations, meaning the Forest Service has a government-to-government relationship with them. In addition, the Federal Government also holds a special responsibility to consult with tribes over management concerns that may affect them.

Government-to-government consultation with tribal nations and staff-to-staff consultation with their resource specialists began early and continued throughout the land management plan revision process (see final EIS, chapter 1). Coordination with tribal planning efforts, (per 36 CFR 219.7), included review of and evaluation of consistency with tribal plans, as documented in final EIS appendix B.

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation borders the southwestern part of the Forest. The Tribes participated in government-to-government consultation, and provided written comments on the revised land management plan. Overall, the Colville Confederated Tribes are generally supportive of the revised land management plan. The Tribes have concerns about the potential difficulties of managing fuels in the recommended wilderness and backcountry areas along the boundary of the reservation; however, they have also expressed an understanding of the balance the Forest is seeking in addressing the Tribes’ and others’ interests associated with recommended wilderness and backcountry along the Tribes’ boundary, by including recommended wilderness and backcountry management areas. The area along the boundary is primarily backcountry and focused restoration management areas where timber harvest is an appropriate tool for fuels management.

The Kalispel Indian Reservation also shares a border with the southeast part of the Forest. The Kalispel Tribe participated in government-to-government consultation and provided written comments on the draft revised land management plan. The Tribe stated concerns about the suitability of grazing on the east side of the forest in the LeClerc watershed, their most cherished cultural landscape. The revised land management plan identifies this area as suitable for grazing, but does not make any decisions about grazing at the allotment level. The Tribe also expressed an interest in including the Cee Cee Ah Creek subwatershed as a key watershed. In response, Cee Cee Ah Creek is included as a key watershed in the revised land management plan.

The Spokane Indian Reservation is south of the Forest but does not share a direct border. The Spokane Tribe of Indians did not provide written comments on the revised land management plan, but participated in government-to-government consultation. They expressed concern for continued protection of archaeological sites and sites of cultural significance, which the Forest is committed to by adhering to laws such as the National Historic Preservation Act. Additionally, the revised land management plan includes the desired condition for heritage resources to preserve, protect, or restore known Native American sacred sites and traditional cultural properties, and includes a standard for heritage program management, further emphasizing these commitments.

COUNTIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Meetings with representatives from the three surrounding counties (Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens) were held on a continuing basis throughout the land management plan revision process. Forest representatives met regularly with individual county boards of commissioners, as well as combined boards, county departments, and committees such as the Stevens County Public Lands Advisory Committee (see final EIS Appendix B). In addition, county commissioners participated in land management plan revision collaboration and workgroup meetings.

As part of the coordination effort (per 219.7) with county planning efforts, the interdisciplinary team reviewed and assessed each county's comprehensive plan (Ferry County 2013, Pend Oreille County 2013, Stevens County 2008), during development of the revised land management plan. The county land use plans describe local government goals and objectives for land management and provide opportunities for coordination between the Forest Service and the county. All elements of these plans were considered while developing alternatives for the Colville land management plan revision and no direct conflicts or inconsistencies were identified with topics addressed in those plans. Coordination with county planning efforts, (per 36 CFR 219.7), including review of and evaluation of consistency with these plans, is documented in final EIS appendix B.

In 2014, the interdisciplinary team held a series of study sessions with county commissioners, followed by two separate work sessions with county commissioners in fall of 2015 and fall of 2016. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the commissioners' concerns and consider making adjustments to the revised land management plan where possible. Timber harvest levels, recommended wilderness, access, and grazing were among the commissioners' primary concerns.

The county commissioners expressed interest in a harvest level greater than the 62 MMBF² of annual timber and other wood products predicted to be harvested in the revised land management plan. The Forest has worked with county commissioners to reach an understanding that this number is a projected level of harvest subject to many conditions, and is not a cap or a target. The Forest also continues to strive to accomplish restoration goals by initiating creative, collaborative methods to increase harvest volumes and acres treated, while benefitting local communities.

The county commissioners do not support recommended wilderness. To be responsive to these concerns, and to accommodate concerns about areas with past harvest and mining claims, modifications were made in the final EIS and revised land management plan, reducing the final acres of recommended wilderness in the selected alternative from 69,000 acres to 61,700 acres (see page 15). The Forest has worked to balance the county commissioners' concerns with comments from other stakeholders that wanted more recommended wilderness (see also "Response to Public Concerns" section on page 13 above).

² This number is termed the potential wood sale quantity (PWSQ), and is associated with the concern by county commissioners about establishment of a limitation or timber harvest target in the selected alternative. The PWSQ is the estimated annual quantity of timber and all other wood products that are expected to be sold from the plan area during the plan period. The PWSQ consists of the projected timber sale quantity as well as other woody material such as fuelwood, firewood, or biomass that is also expected to be available for sale. The PWSQ includes volume from timber harvest for any purpose (except salvage or sanitation harvest) from all lands in the plan area based on expected harvests that would be consistent with the plan components. The PWSQ is neither a target nor a limitation on harvest.

The county commissioners are also interested in maintaining access to the Forest and increasing opportunities for motorized use. They requested no net loss of roads on the Forest and remain concerned about desired conditions for road densities in focused and general restoration management areas. During the work sessions in 2015 and 2016, the interdisciplinary team worked with county commissioners to reach an understanding that the revised land management plan itself does not close roads or make any site-specific decisions about access. Additionally, the interdisciplinary team addressed the way road densities are calculated to account for closed roads that have been hydrologically stabilized.

Concern that livestock grazing may be reduced with implementation of the aquatic and riparian strategy associated with the revised land management plan was also expressed by the counties. In response, changes were made to the riparian vegetation guideline that was included in the draft revised land management plan. These changes highlight the flexibility of the guideline to use the best available tools to assess site-specific conditions. Forest range program managers have also worked with permittees to increase understanding of how these guidelines will be implemented (see also the “Rationale for Decision” section, page 7, and the “Response to Public Concerns” section on page 13).

In 2016 the Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille county commissioners formed the Tri-county Forest Group that has engaged in the land management planning process. County government, industry, conservation and environmental groups, and motorized recreation groups are included among those who now participate in this collaborative group. This group provided specific language for a motorized mixed use desired condition that is included in the revised land management plan.

STATE AGENCIES

Several Washington State agencies provide guidance and support toward forest and natural resource management pertinent to the Colville National Forest. These include Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and Washington Department of Ecology. The Forest held several meetings with these State agencies throughout the land management plan revision process.

In addition to information provided in coordination meetings, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Ecology submitted written comments on the draft revised land management plan. In response to these comments, the Forest worked to strengthen plan components and provide clarification on the effects of the revised land management plan on wildlife habitat and water quality.

Statewide assessments were also considered in the development of the revised land management plan, and the interdisciplinary team’s review is documented in the final EIS appendix B. The Forest worked collaboratively with the state to develop the State of Washington’s 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) for eastern Washington, which includes the Colville. The revised land management plan incorporates the overarching landscape scale strategy of the State’s Strategic Plan for eastern Washington, and supports the goals of protecting communities and values at risk, promoting rural economic development, monitoring and adaptive management.

The Washington State Wildlife Action Plan (2015) was used to help develop the list of species addressed in the species viability analysis. Information in the State’s Wildlife Action Plan also was used to identify habitat relations and risk factors for species, development of the plan components, and assess effects of the revised land management plan on these wildlife species.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Management of other Federal lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest was considered in the formulation of alternatives and their cumulative effects, including lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Bureau of Land Management. The Forest also coordinated with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Air Force on issues related to radio repeater access and existing permits for training opportunities.

The Forest consulted with the USFWS on Endangered Species Act-listed species and habitat that could be affected by the revised land management plan. A final Biological Opinion (BO) was provided to the Forest on October 26, 2017 (see section on “Findings Related to other Laws and Regulations”, page 28 below).

The Environmental Protection Agency provided written comments regarding vegetation management, riparian habitat, and best available science. In general, these comments were addressed by providing clarification about the programmatic nature of the revised land management plan. Specific concerns about stubble height and livestock grazing guidelines were addressed via the updates to the annual grazing use indicators guideline (see also the “Rationale for Decision” section, page 7, and the “Response to Public Concerns” section on page 13). Concerns regarding protection of large trees were addressed via a guideline for large tree management in the revised land management plan (see page 22).

Alternatives

This section describes the alternatives considered in this final ROD in order to provide important context for the decision being made. The Colville National Forest analyzed six alternatives in detail: no action, the proposed action, and four alternatives developed in response to issues raised by the public. These alternatives are described in detail in chapter 2 of the final EIS.

Alternative development was driven by the need for change, as described above. The primary difference between alternatives is in how the management areas with different emphases were distributed across the landscape to address one or more of the revision topics, such as timber harvest or motorized access.

All action alternatives represent, to varying degrees, the principles of multiple-use and ecological and economic sustainability. The alternatives provide basic protection of forest resources and comply fully with applicable laws, regulations, and policies. In addition, all action alternatives would:

- Meet the purpose and need for change or address one or more significant issues;
- Provide sustained multiple uses, products, and services in an environmentally acceptable manner (including leasable and locatable minerals, timber, livestock forage, and recreation opportunities);
- Retain existing designated areas (for example, wilderness areas, scenic byways, national scenic trails;
- Retain all existing permitted activities and facilities;
- Protect heritage resources;
- Recognize the unique status of American Indian tribes and their rights retained by trust and executive order with the United States, including consultation requirements;
- Conserve soil and water resources and not allow significant or permanent impairment of the productivity of the land;
- Provide protections for riparian areas;

- Contribute to the recovery and viability of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and plant species;
- Maintain air quality that meets or exceeds applicable Federal, State, and/or local standards or regulations;

In addition, a monitoring strategy and the following plan components are included in all alternatives: desired conditions, objectives, standards and guidelines, and suitability of uses. The plan components are defined in chapter 1 and described in detail in chapters 2 and 3 of the revised land management plan.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

In addition to the no action alternative and the proposed action, the Forest Service developed four action alternatives, which respond to the needs for change and issues identified by the public. Acres listed for each alternative description are approximate.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The no action alternative reflects current management direction under the existing 1988 land management plan, as amended. It provides the basis for comparing the existing condition to the proposed action and the alternatives.

- This alternative includes direction from INFISH and Eastside Screens amendments. Harvest of trees over 21-inches in diameter would continue to be prohibited;
- Scheduled timber harvest would be suitable on 52 percent of the Forest. Incidental timber harvest for specific resource benefit would be allowed on an additional 31 percent of the Forest. The ASQ for the plan area under the Eastside screens would be 18 MMBF. The PWSQ volume would be 41 MMBF, with an estimated wage contribution of \$19,335,000.
- Planned ignitions (prescribed fire) would continue to be suitable on 97 percent of the Forest (outside of congressionally designated wilderness). Unplanned ignitions (wildland fire use) would be suitable on 90 percent of the Forest;
- There would be no recommended wilderness under the no action alternative. The Salmo-Priest Wilderness is and would continue to be congressionally designated (31,400 acres);
- Approximately 11 percent of the Forest would be managed for non-motorized recreation opportunities;
- Would include riparian habitat conservation areas and the priority watershed network established under INFISH. It would manage toward the eight riparian goals established under INFISH.

PROPOSED ACTION

The June 2011 proposed action was developed to address the need for change, and considered early public participation that began in 2003. The emphasis of this alternative is to apply active vegetation management in a dynamic landscape approach to increase vegetation resilience and move the landscape toward desired conditions.

Landscape ecology concepts would be applied to provide for ecological resilience to disturbances, including the effects of climate change. New science related to the recovery of terrestrial and aquatic threatened and endangered species would be applied.

- Vegetation requirements in Eastside Screens would be addressed with desired conditions to be within the historic range of variation (HRV) by stand size class. Down and coarse wood and biological legacies are addressed in a similar manner. The Eastside Screens 21-inch diameter limit would be replaced by structural stage and wildlife habitat direction;
- Scheduled timber harvest would be suitable on 63 percent of the Forest. Timber harvest would be allowed for other resource benefit on an additional 20 percent of the Forest. The ASQ would be 67.6 MMBF, and annual PWSQ volume would be 62 MMBF, with an estimated wage contribution of \$31,224,000;
- Planned and unplanned ignitions would be suitable on 100 percent of the Forest;
- An additional 101,400 acres of wilderness would be recommended (including the Kettle Crest). Existing inconsistent uses (such as mountain bike and chainsaw use) would continue in recommended wilderness management areas until such time as designated as wilderness by Congress;
- The proposed action would adopt the 2008 Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy, replacing INFISH with a long-term strategy that uses best science and aligns species and water quality recovery plans. It would focus on desired conditions for aquatic and riparian function and watershed condition. The proposed action would include a key watershed network, replacing the priority watersheds established under INFISH.

ALTERNATIVE P (SELECTED ALTERNATIVE)

Alternative P is similar to the proposed action in the overall vegetation management approach and outputs, as well as backcountry recreation management approach. This alternative has 39,700 fewer acres of recommended wilderness than the proposed action.

- Vegetation requirements in Eastside Screens would be addressed with desired conditions to be within Historical Range of Variability by stand size class. Down and coarse wood and biological legacies would be addressed in a similar manner. The 21-inch diameter limit would be replaced by structural stage and wildlife habitat direction, and a guideline for large tree management;
- Scheduled timber harvest would be suitable on 63 percent of the Forest. Timber harvest would be allowed for other resource benefit on an additional 19 percent of the Forest. The ASQ would be 67 MMBF, and annual PWSQ volume would be 62 MMBF, with an estimated wage contribution of \$31,224,000;
- Planned and unplanned ignitions would be suitable on 100 percent of the Forest;
- An additional 61,700 acres of wilderness would be recommended. Existing inconsistent uses (such as mountain bike and chainsaw use) would continue in recommended wilderness until such time as designated as wilderness by Congress. No new motorized or mechanized recreation opportunities would be allowed;
- Approximately 80,300 acres would be managed as the Kettle Crest Recreation Area. This management area allocation would protect outstanding recreation opportunities in a semi-primitive setting while allowing continued motorized and mechanized recreation opportunities;
- Alternative P would increase riparian protection through plan components developed under the Colville Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy, and expand the key watershed network by including Cee Cee Ah Creek as a key watershed.

ALTERNATIVE R

Alternative R was developed to address concerns from conservation groups, and emphasizes a large-scale reserve approach for late-successional forest structure and a passive management approach to reach desired conditions.

- Eastside Screens 21-inch diameter limit on cutting live trees would be retained. Down and coarse wood and biological legacies would be addressed per Eastside Screens direction;
- Scheduled timber harvest would be suitable on 12 percent of the Forest. Timber harvest would be allowed for other resource benefit on an additional 70 percent of the Forest. The ASQ would be 7.5 MMBF, and annual PWSQ volume would be 14 MMBF, with an estimated wage contribution of \$6,692,000;
- Planned and unplanned ignitions would be suitable on 100 percent of the Forest;
- An additional 209,000 acres of wilderness would be recommended (including the Kettle Crest). Existing inconsistent uses (such as mechanized, motorized, and rental cabins) would not be allowed to continue in recommended wilderness. Approximately 24 percent of the Forest would be suitable for non-motorized recreation opportunities. Backcountry and backcountry motorized management areas represent 2 percent of the Forest;
- Alternative R would use a similar aquatic strategy approach as the proposed action alternative through incorporation of a modified version of the Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy (2008). It would include a key watersheds network.

ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B was developed based on recommendations from the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, and points of consensus with public workgroups. It is designed to address the concerns of multiple constituencies in one alternative by balancing land allocations between areas emphasizing active management (timber management zones) (43 percent), a mix of active and passive management (restoration areas) (31 percent), and passive management (recommended and designated wilderness) (23 percent). Where plan components were not identified by the collaborative group, the 1988 land management plan (no action alternative) would provide plan direction (remain unchanged).

- Eastside Screens 21-inch diameter limit on cutting live trees and the large-scale reserve approach for late-successional forest structure would be retained. Additional plan components would limit timber harvest in late-successional structure to dry plant association groups only;
- Scheduled timber harvest would be suitable on 37 percent of the Forest. Timber harvest would be allowed for other resource benefit on an additional 46 percent of the Forest. The ASQ would be 13.9 MMBF, and annual PWSQ volume would be 37 MMBF, with an estimated wage contribution of \$17,428,000;
- Planned and unplanned ignitions would be suitable on 100 percent of the Forest;
- An additional 220,300 acres of wilderness would be recommended (including the Kettle Crest). Existing uses that are inconsistent with wilderness values (such as mechanized and motorized uses, and rental cabins) would not continue in recommended wilderness management areas;
- Approximately 24 percent of the Forest would be suitable for non-motorized recreation opportunities. Backcountry and backcountry motorized management areas represent 1 percent of the Forest;
- Alternative B would retain and integrate INFISH, including the priority watersheds, and continue management of riparian habitat conservation areas similar to the no action alternative.

ALTERNATIVE O

Alternative O would balance land allocations, similar to alternative B, between areas emphasizing active management (responsible management areas) (39 percent), emphasizing a mix of active and passive management (restoration areas) (34 percent), and emphasizing passive management (backcountry and recommended/designated wilderness) (25 percent). Where plan components were not identified by the collaborative group, the 1988 land management plan (no action alternative) would provide plan direction (remain unchanged).

- Eastside Screens 21-inch diameter limit on cutting live trees and the large-scale reserve approach for late-successional forest structure would be retained. Additional plan components would be included to limit mechanical restoration treatments (timber harvest) to a one-time entry;
- Scheduled timber harvest would be suitable on 33 percent of the Forest. Timber harvest would be allowed for other resource benefit on an additional 49 percent of the Forest. The ASQ is 12.2 MMBF, annual PWSQ volume would be 38 MMBF, with an estimated wage contribution of \$17,465,000;
- Planned and unplanned ignitions would be suitable on 100 percent of the Forest;
- An additional 15,900 acres would be recommended as wilderness (Salmo-Priest Adjacent). Existing inconsistent uses (such as mountain bike and chainsaw use) would continue in recommended wilderness until such time as designated as wilderness by Congress. No new motorized or mechanized recreation opportunities would be allowed;
- Approximately 21 percent of the Forest would be suitable for non-motorized recreation opportunities. Backcountry and backcountry motorized management areas represent 21 percent of the Forest;
- Approximately 99,000 acres would be managed as the Kettle Crest Recreation Area. This management area allocation would protect outstanding recreation opportunities in a semi-primitive setting while allowing continued motorized and mechanized recreation opportunities;
- Alternative O would adopt the Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy (2008) similar to the proposed action. It would include a key watersheds network.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

Federal agencies are required by NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Public comments received in response to the proposed action provided suggestions for alternative methods for achieving the purpose and need. Some of these alternatives may have been outside the scope of this revision effort or duplicative of the alternatives considered in detail. More than sixteen alternatives or variations of alternatives were considered, but dismissed from detailed study for reasons summarized in chapter 2 of the final EIS and in the response to public comments (final EIS, appendix E).

RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

After considering the analysis of all the alternatives, and the alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study, I believe a reasonable range of alternatives was carefully evaluated based on the need for change and compliance with the NEPA.

Although consideration of budget constraints reduced the variation in the effects of the actions across the alternatives, the analysis in the final EIS covered a full spectrum of management intensity ranging from a preservation emphasis in alternative R to a more balanced approach of increased commodity output, with non-motorized and motorized recreation emphasis in alternative P. All action alternatives are realistic, implementable, and responsive to the revision topics.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The NEPA regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Forest Service policy (Forest Service Handbook 1909.15) defines environmentally preferable as: "An alternative that best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA. ... Ordinarily this is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources."

I find, based upon the laws and regulations guiding National Forest System management, that alternative P is the environmentally preferred alternative. Although alternative R would allow the fewest mechanical ground-disturbing activities and lowest acres allowing motorized use, it does not address the six goals of NEPA (outlined below) as well as alternative P does. I base my finding on the following comparison showing how the alternatives address the goals of Section 101 of NEPA:

1. Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustees of the environment for succeeding generations

The selected alternative emphasizes moving forest conditions toward desired future conditions, while contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. The timber harvest levels under the selected alternative provide the Colville's sustainable share of products and public uses, while having a higher probability of improving and restoring vegetation for future generations than other alternatives considered in detail (see final EIS, chapter 3, Forest Vegetation). The revised land management plan supports jobs and income for local communities through increased timber harvest to support the robust forest products industry while sustaining and restoring important ecosystems; providing a framework to promote partnerships and cooperative agreements to accomplish more work on the ground; and providing for a community-based approach to manage livestock grazing, recommend new wilderness areas, and provide access to Forest resources.

2. Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings

The selected alternative achieves maintenance of a safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing Forest better than the other alternatives, because it provides the best mix of resource utilization, active and passive management, and motorized and non-motorized recreation uses along with the safeguards provided by standards and guidelines for maintaining water quality, scenery, and wildlife habitat. The selected alternative also provides greater timber harvest levels compared to the no action alternative and maintains access to important recreational areas better than alternative R.

3. Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences

The beneficial uses that are most varied between alternatives include timber production, aquatic management and a reasonable balance between motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. The selected alternative achieves a higher level of beneficial uses than the other alternatives. While the proposed action provides almost the same level of wood fiber production as the selected alternative, it provides less flexibility and fewer provisions for aquatic restoration and maintenance. The selected alternative provides for greater assurance of maintenance of large trees across the landscape over time. This improves the health of our forests and watersheds, enhances wildlife habitat, and reduces undesirable and unintended consequences. Additionally, the selected alternative (alternative P) provides a reasonable balance between motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities by allowing for motorized use on 75 percent of the Forest, while the proposed action alternative would allow for motorized use on 73 percent of the Forest. It should be noted that non-motorized uses also are available in areas suitable for motorized use.

4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment, which supports diversity and variety of individual choice

Part of preserving our historic and cultural national heritage is recognizing that humans are a natural aspect of our national heritage. Humans have utilized the physical and cultural resources offered by the Colville National Forest for thousands of years. Recognizing that, I find that the best way to preserve that heritage, and the environment that supports diversity and variety of choice, is to manage for a national forest that provides a balance between the physical resource use and the appropriate protection of cultural and historic resources. Based upon collaborative public efforts, tribal consultation, and the effects of each alternative displayed in the final EIS, I find that all alternatives meet this goal. However, the selected alternative adopts a landscape-scale approach, including the Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy, and an adaptive monitoring strategy. It provides the best balance of uses between alternative R's emphasis on wilderness values and protection of backcountry and the proposed action's emphasis on achieving desired conditions through mechanical means. The selected alternative provides the best balance to preserve our natural heritage.

5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use, which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities

The public demands a variety of products and uses that can be provided by their national forests. National Forest System lands and resources contribute to local economies and the quality of life in the region. The final EIS alternative analysis compares the various values the public uses to determine their quality of life, varying from economic resource extraction values (timber harvest and minerals) to less tangibly defined resources such as recreation, wilderness values, and backcountry protection. I find that the selected alternative best achieves the balance sought in this goal by increasing timber volumes and jobs, maintaining livestock grazing, keeping 75 percent of the Forest open for motorized access, and at the same time designating 6 percent of the Forest as recommended wilderness.

6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources

I find the selected alternative enhances the quality of renewable resources and provides sustainable use of renewable resources. The standards and guidelines and the management area allocation under the selected alternative provides for levels of resource use that are greater than current levels under the no action alternative, while providing protection measures and maintaining areas as backcountry or recommended wilderness. While the proposed action provides the same level of resource use, it does not provide plan components that maintain and enhance wildlife habitat to the same degree as does the selected alternative (alternative P). Alternative R emphasizes more passive management and greater amount of backcountry and recommended wilderness, but it does so at the expense of resource utilization and does not achieve as much vegetation restoration as the selected alternative.

Changes between Draft and Final EIS

As a result of public comment on the draft EIS, new information, and additional analyses, some changes were made between the draft and final EIS. A summary of these changes may be found in the final EIS, chapter 1. Excluding minor editorial changes, clarifications, and typographical errors, modifications made between the draft and final EIS are summarized here:

- All alternatives were updated to add more description, more details about the public involvement process, a table describing suitability of uses for each management area, and information about a new land acquisition;
- Alternative P was updated:
 - ◆ The Kettle Crest Special Interest Area was changed to the Kettle Crest Recreation Area;
 - ◆ The Cee Cee Ah watershed was added to the Key Watershed Network and the management area was changed to Focused Restoration;
 - ◆ Approximately 7,000 acres of recommended wilderness were changed to Back Country or General Restoration management areas;
 - ◆ Updates were made to the Colville Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy;
 - ◆ An updated discussion was added about climate change;
 - ◆ Discussions of yellow-billed cuckoo and wolverine were added;
 - ◆ Terminology for terrestrial and aquatic species was updated;
 - ◆ Several new appendices were added.

Using Best Available Science

The development of the final EIS and the revised land management plan was based on consideration of the best available science throughout the planning process. The interdisciplinary team comprehensively reviewed available scientific research and other information relevant to the resource areas addressed.

Scientific conclusions were drawn from well-supported data sources and data availability was disclosed. Scientific sources were cited, responsible opposing views were discussed, incomplete and unavailable information was acknowledged, and scientific uncertainty and risk was addressed in relevant portions of the final EIS or project record. In addition, specific modeling and analysis methods were documented as appropriate.

For the Colville National Forest, scientific studies in this analysis included science supporting the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (Quigley et al. 1996, 1997), a project initiated in 1993 to “develop a scientifically sound ecosystem-based strategy for management of eastside forests.” A final EIS and proposed decision for the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project were published in December 2000. In January 2003, the Regional Executives for the Forest Service, Forest Service Research, the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding completing the project and agreed to cooperatively implement the Interior Columbia Basin Strategy (Strategy), to use the scientific findings of the Strategy’s science, and to integrate new information and best available science as they are developed.

The Strategy was updated in 2014, incorporating the science data and resource information developed by the Interior Columbia Basin Management Project, as well as more recent science, into land use plans (Forest Service land management plans and Bureau of Land Management resource management plans) and project implementation. The Strategy identifies key principles that are relevant to future planning efforts including an update of ecological principles. The revised land management plan has been designed to be responsive to the guidance and expectations identified in the Strategy. For more information on the Strategy, including expectations for incorporating guidance from the Strategy in land management plan revisions, refer to the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project website at: https://icbemp.gov/html/ICBEMP_Frameworkmemorandum-and-strategy_2014.pdf

In addition, the specialists on the interdisciplinary team have used and referenced appropriate scientific information, models, and data to develop the analyses and conclusions in the final EIS. This science has been continually updated throughout the land management plan revision and environmental analysis process. The final EIS explains how scientific information has been compiled and used. Each resource section analyzed in chapter 3, Environmental Consequences, discloses the methods used and cites the scientific sources relied on to disclose the effects of the alternatives.

Findings Related to Laws and Regulations

The Forest Service manages the Colville National Forest in conformance with many laws and regulations. I have reviewed the statutes specific to individual resources as described in chapter 3 of the final EIS, and I find this decision represents the best possible approach to both harmonizing and reconciling the current statutory duties of the Forest Service. The revised land management plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. Following are summaries of how the revised land management plan addresses compliance with some of the more prominent applicable laws and regulations.

NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT

The NFMA requires the development, maintenance, amendment, and revision of land management plans for each unit of the National Forest System. These plans help create a dynamic management system so that an interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences will be applied to all future actions on the unit (16 U.S.C. 1604(b), (f), (g), and (o)). The Forest Service is to ensure coordination of the multiple uses and sustained yield of products and services of the National Forest System (16 U.S.C. 1604(e)(1)).

The NFMA requires the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate regulations for developing and maintaining land management plans. On April 9, 2012, the Department of Agriculture issued a final planning rule for National Forest System land management planning (2012 Rule) 77 FR 68 [21162-21276]. According to transition language of the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(3), the responsible official may elect to use the provisions of the prior planning regulations (1982 Planning Rule, dated September 30, 1982, and as amended³) to prepare plan revisions initiated prior to the effective date of the regulations. The Colville elected to use the provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule for the plan revision.

The 1982 Planning Rule under 36 CFR §219.7(c) requires the review of planning and land use policies of other Federal Agencies, State and local governments and Indian tribes. This review includes (1) consideration of the objectives of these entities as expressed in their plans and policies; (2) an assessment of the interrelated impacts of these plans and policies; (3) determination of how the Forest's revised land management plan should deal with impacts identified; and (4) where conflicts with Forest Service planning are identified, consideration of alternatives for their resolution. The interdisciplinary team's review of these plans is documented in the final EIS appendix B.

ESTABLISHMENT OF FORESTWIDE MULTIPLE-USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, DESIRED CONDITIONS, AND QUANTITIES OF GOODS AND SERVICES (1982 PLANNING RULE, 36 CFR 219.11(B))

Forestwide goals, termed in this plan as desired conditions, and objectives are defined in chapter 1 and listed by resource in chapter 2 of the revised land management plan. The "quantities of goods and services" are defined in the objectives located in chapters 2 and 3 of the revised land management plan. Chapter 3 of the revised land management plan lists objectives for the desired conditions, by management area. I believe the desired conditions and objectives provide sufficient multiple-use goals for management and resource protection. I find the objectives were developed in an interdisciplinary manner, and provide for maintenance or achievement of the revised land management plan's desired conditions.

All lands administered by the Colville National Forest, except those currently withdrawn from mineral entry, will still be open to mineral development, and as such, the Forest Service will process proposed plans of operation in accordance with law, regulation, and policy

³ The 1982 provisions can be found online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/nfmareg.html>.

ESTABLISHMENT OF MANAGEMENT AREA DIRECTION (MULTIPLE-USE PRESCRIPTIONS) WITH ASSOCIATED STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (1982 PLANNING RULE, 36 CFR 219.11(c))

The revised land management plan allocates 13 management areas across the Colville National Forest, each with specific management direction. The management areas span a continuum of management emphasis from a passive approach with little human-caused change, to more active management with substantially more human-caused change, designed to sustain the social, economic, and ecological attributes of the Forest. The management area prescriptions include specific desired conditions, objectives, standards and guidelines, which are listed by management area in chapter 3 of the revised land management plan. Unless otherwise stated in the revised land management plan, forestwide desired conditions, objectives, standards and guidelines also apply to all management areas.

Land within the Colville may be assigned to more than one management area. For example, the Kettle Crest Recreation Area overlays backcountry and backcountry-motorized management areas. Riparian management areas and nationally designated trails are other examples where direction from more than one management area may apply to the same part of the Forest. In such cases, the most restrictive plan direction applies to the area of overlap.

The emphasis of each management area is described in chapter 3 of the revised land management plan and in chapter 2 of the final EIS, under the alternative descriptions. Total percentage and acres of each management area are shown in bold. I find the management areas provide a reasonable range of management direction for the Colville National Forest.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS FOR ADDITIONS TO THE WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

Specific direction for the management and protection of wilderness characteristics in recommended wilderness is included in the revised land management plan and complies with the planning regulations (36 CFR 219) and agency policy (Forest Service Handbook 1900). I am recommending the addition of 6 percent of the Forest for wilderness. These areas include portions of Abercrombie-Hooknose (29,300 acres), Bald Snow (17,400 acres), and Salmo-Priest Adjacent (14,900 acres) inventoried roadless areas. Components of the revised land management plan direct that current uses in these areas, including mountain biking and chainsaw use, may continue so long as the wilderness characteristics and potential for each area recommended remains intact until congressional action is taken or the area is released from consideration through a future plan amendment or revision.

These preliminary administrative recommendations are consistent with my responsibilities under 36 CFR 219.17. These recommendations will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation. Until such time Congress chooses to act to designate these areas, these areas will be managed as recommended wilderness under the revised land management plan.

DETERMINE SUITABILITY AND POTENTIAL CAPABILITY OF LANDS FOR RESOURCE PRODUCTION (TIMBER AND GRAZING) (1982 PLANNING RULE, CFR 219.14 AND 219.20)

Suitability of lands for timber production and suitability and capability of lands for grazing are defined in part by management area standards and guidelines. The revised land management plan identifies 63 percent (656,600 acres) of the Forest as suitable for scheduled timber production. These suitable acres fall within general restoration and focused restoration management areas.

In response to an instruction, capability of lands for cattle and sheep grazing were recalculated. Approximately 628,740 acres are capable of producing forage for cattle, while 777,152 acres are capable of producing forage for sheep (these areas overlap in many places). Of this, approximately 281,999 acres are suitable for grazing cattle, and 348,030 acres are suitable for grazing sheep, based on allotments and management area allocations. Livestock grazing is identified as a suitable use in all management areas except for research natural areas and administrative sites. I have determined the processes used for assessing suitability and potential capability for livestock grazing and timber production are consistent with my responsibilities under the 1982 Planning rule for livestock (36 CFR 219.20) and for timber (36 CFR 219.14).

NFMA DIVERSITY AND VIABILITY REQUIREMENTS

The NFMA also requires that land management plans “provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives, and within the multiple-use objectives of a land management plan adopted pursuant to this section, provide, where appropriate, to the degree practicable, for steps to be taken to preserve the diversity of tree species similar to that existing in the region controlled by the plan” (16 U.S.C. §1604 §6 (g)(3)(B)). The 1982 Planning Rule requires that “Forest planning shall provide for diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species consistent with the over-all multiple-use objectives of the planning area” (36 CFR 219.26). In addition, land management plans shall provide direction to manage fish and wildlife habitat to maintain viable⁴ populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area (36 CFR 219.19).

My interdisciplinary team identified the species that occur on the forests, determined which of those species have special concerns, narrowed down which species could be affected by forest management, screened the risks to species through a coarse filter (ecosystem diversity), and developed additional plan components where necessary through a fine filter approach (species diversity).

The overall goal for ecological sustainability is to sustain native ecological systems and support diversity of native plant and animal species. The focus in the sustainability analysis was on species that are of regional or local concern as indicated by documented threats to populations or habitats. Native vertebrates and invertebrates known to occur on land administered by the Colville National Forest also were considered. In addition to viability, the revised land management plan establishes surrogate species that represent the habitats and risk factors that relate to a broader group of species.

⁴ For planning purposes, a viable population shall be regarded as one that has the estimated numbers and distribution of reproductive individuals to ensure its continued existence is well distributed in the planning area (36 CFR 219.19).

There are over 30 surrogate terrestrial and aquatic species listed for the revised land management plan. The final EIS (chapter 3) documents how the revised land management plan provides for diversity and viability of these surrogate species.

My review of the planning process and the final EIS indicates the revised land management plan and its preparation meet requirements for NFMA viability, per 36 CFR 219.19, and diversity, per 36 CFR 219.26. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with the act.

ESTABLISHMENT OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS THAT PROVIDE A BASIS FOR PERIODIC DETERMINATION AND EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (2012 PLANNING RULE)

The monitoring plan, described in chapter 4 of the revised land management plan, is consistent with the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.11(d) and 219.12(k). Each monitoring question links to one or more goals, desired conditions, or objectives. However, the monitoring program strives to be realistic in terms of budget and capacity and does not include a monitoring question for every plan component. The monitoring requirements will provide the information necessary to evaluate implementation of the revised land management plan and will facilitate adaptive management in response to monitoring results and other new information.

Within one year of signing this ROD, the Colville National Forest will develop a monitoring implementation plan

RESEARCH STATION DIRECTOR CONCURRENCE

Consistent with the Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1921.04.b.4 and 4063.04.b.1.b, revised land management plan components for experimental forests and research natural areas were reviewed by the Station Director, Pacific Northwest Research Station. The Station Director, by April 24, 2017 letter, has approved the revised land management plan's management direction for experimental forests and research natural areas.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES PROTECTION ACT

The purpose of the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 is to provide protection for archaeological resources found on public lands and Indian lands of the United States. The legislation provides civil and criminal penalties for those who remove or damage archaeological resources in violation of the prohibitions contained in the act. The act prohibits the removal of archaeological resources on public lands or Indian lands without first obtaining a permit from the affected Federal land manager or Indian Tribe, and requires Federal agencies to develop plans to survey lands under their management to determine the nature and extent of archaeological and cultural resources.

The revised land management plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. Compliance with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800 regulations also meets the intent of this act by requiring assessments and surveys to identify the presence of historic properties within the area of potential effect for site-specific activities and to assess their effects on these resources. In addition, the Colville National Forest will continue to consult with tribes during site-specific management activities that may impact cultural sites and cultural use.

The revised land management plan includes desired conditions, standards, guidelines, and management focus provisions to consider the effects of project and management activities to American Indian rights, interests, and cultural resources. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with this act.

CLEAN AIR ACT

According to the Clean Air Act of 1990, the Forest Service has the responsibility to protect the air, land, and water resources from the impacts of air pollutants produced within national forest boundaries and to work with states to protect those same resources from degradation associated with the impacts of air pollution emitted outside of national forests.

The revised land management plan does not create, authorize, or execute any activities with the potential to alter air quality, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities such as prescribed burning. Forestwide desired conditions and guidelines include direction for meeting air quality standards established by Federal and State agencies during prescribed burns. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with this act.

CLEAN WATER ACT

The intent of the Clean Water Act of 1972 is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. The revised land management plan does not create, authorize, or execute any ground-disturbing activity, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities. The revised land management plan contains direction to ensure all site-specific projects meet or exceed State water quality standards by implementing best management practices prepared under guidance of the Clean Water Act. Implementation of the revised land management plan is expected to contribute to protecting or restoring the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of surface and ground water within the Colville National Forest in accordance with the Clean Water Act. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with this act.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended is to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species and threatened species depend may be conserved and to provide for the conservation of such endangered species and threatened species. Section 7(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of listed species. In addition, the Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to ensure that any agency action does not jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species or adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat (Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(2)). The Endangered Species Act also requires the USFWS and Forest Service, respectively, to base the biological opinion and subsequent agency action on the use of best scientific and commercial data available [16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2)].

In accordance with Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act, USFWS identified the listed and proposed threatened or endangered species and their critical habitats that may be present on the Forest. A biological assessment was prepared by the Forest to assess the revised land management plan's effects on the identified terrestrial, aquatic, and plant species and their critical habitats.

The terrestrial portion of the biological assessment found implementation of the revised land management plan *may affect, and is likely to adversely affect*, woodland caribou, Canada lynx, grizzly bear, yellow-billed cuckoo and the candidate species whitebark pine and the proposed wolverine. The biological assessment also determined that implementation of the revised land management plan may *adversely affect* designated critical habitat for woodland caribou. The biological assessment outlines the specific reasons why implementation of the revised land management plan may have short-term adverse effects to these species and critical habitat, but result in overall net conservation and recovery benefits.

The aquatic portion of the biological assessment found implementation of the revised land management plan *may affect, and is likely to adversely affect*, bull trout and its designated critical habitat. The biological assessment outlines the specific reasons why implementation of the revised land management plan may have short-term adverse effects to this species and its critical habitat, but result in overall net conservation and recovery benefits.

The USFWS issued a biological opinion for the revised land management plan on October 24, 2017. The biological opinion determined that the actions as proposed are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of Canada lynx, woodland caribou, grizzly bear, yellow-billed cuckoo, wolverine, whitebark pine, or bull trout, and are not likely to destroy or adversely modify critical habitat for woodland caribou or bull trout. No incidental take was issued by USFWS associated with the revised land management plan's programmatic actions, as incidental take is to be assigned, as necessary, for future, site-specific projects. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with the requirements of this act.

FOREST AND RANGELAND RENEWABLE RESOURCES PLANNING ACT

The procedures of the 1982 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12(f)(6)) require that at least one alternative be developed that responds to and incorporates the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act Program's tentative resource objectives for each National Forest as displayed in Regional Guides. However, in 2001, the Pacific Northwest Region's Regional Guide was retracted. Therefore, for purposes of ensuring consistency with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, we designed all action alternatives to support the broad resource objectives of the Forest Service's Strategic Plan for 2015–2020. The Strategic Plan was developed in lieu of a Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act Program, and was completed in accordance with the Government Performance Results Act and the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with this act.

MULTIPLE USE SUSTAINED YIELD ACT

Consistent with the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528–531), the Forest Service manages the National Forest System to sustain the multiple use of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term health and productivity of the land. Resources are managed through a combination of approaches and concepts for the benefit of human communities and natural resources. As demonstrated in the final EIS and as required by the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, this revised land management plan guides sustainable, integrated resource management of the resources on the Colville National Forest in the context of the broader landscape, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with this act.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects of new projects and programs. The plan revision's environmental analysis and public involvement process complies with the major elements of the requirements set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). These include (1) considering a broad range of reasonable alternatives, (2) disclosing cumulative effects, (3) using high-quality and accurate scientific information, (4) consideration of long-term and short-term effects, and (5) disclosure of unavoidable adverse effects.

The Colville National Forest considered a broad range of alternatives in the final EIS and has compiled a comprehensive record of the effects relevant to the alternatives considering best scientific information. The revised land management plan adopts all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm. These means include provisions for providing the ecological conditions needed to support biological diversity and standards and guidelines to mitigate adverse environmental effects that may result from implementing various management practices. The revised land management plan includes monitoring requirements and an adaptive management approach to assure needed adjustments are made over time.

The revised land management plan does not represent an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. The revised land management plan is a programmatic level planning effort and does not directly authorize any ground-disturbing activities or projects. Future ground-disturbing activities and projects will be made consistent with the revised land management plan and will be subject to additional site-specific public involvement, environmental analysis, and pre-decisional review processes. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with the act and Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations.

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires each Federal agency to take into account the effects of its actions on historic properties, prior to approving expenditure of Federal funds on an undertaking or prior to issuing any license. Furthermore, an agency must afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (an independent Federal agency created by the act) an opportunity to comment on any of the agency's undertaking that could affect historic properties. National forests must work closely with the appropriate scientific community and American Indian Tribes concerning cultural resources. In addition, the laws and policies that govern cultural resource protection on Federal lands are coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Officer in Washington who serves in an advisory capacity.

The revised land management plan is a programmatic level planning effort and does not directly authorize any ground-disturbing activities or projects. Future site-specific projects undertaken in response to direction in the revised land management plan will fully comply with laws and regulations that ensure protection of heritage resources. The revised land management plan includes forestwide desired conditions, standards, and guidelines for cultural resources to fully integrate heritage resource management with other management activities. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with this act.

ROADLESS AREA CONSERVATION RULE (36 CFR 294)

Management direction for inventoried roadless areas is compliant with the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B, published at 66 Fed Reg. 3244-3273). The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule includes a prohibition on road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas, and prohibitions on timber cutting, sale, or removal except in certain circumstances. The revised land management plan is a programmatic level planning effort and does not directly authorize any road construction, reconstruction, or timber removal. The revised land management plan also contains guidelines for road construction and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas. Therefore, the revised land management plan is fully compliant with this rule.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act establishes a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with three classes of river systems: wild, scenic, and recreational. The purpose of the act was to protect select rivers “...for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations” and to “preserve select river’s free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values.”

Evaluation of the eligibility of rivers and streams for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was conducted during the preparation of the revised land management plan as required by the act and Forest Service Manual policy (FSM 1924.03). The Forest has identified two rivers systems as eligible for wild and scenic designations. Five miles of the South Fork Salmo River are eligible as a Wild river, and three miles of the Kettle River are eligible as a recreational river. These rivers were also found eligible under the 1988 land management plan. I will continue to manage these rivers, totaling eight miles on Forest lands, as eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. In addition, management area direction in the revised land management plan provides protection for the outstandingly remarkable values identified for those rivers identified as eligible. Therefore, the revised land management plan is compliant with this act.

WILDERNESS ACT

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be administered in such a manner as to leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. It provides the statutory definition of wilderness, how areas are assessed for addition to the wilderness system, and management requirements for congressionally designated areas.

Evaluation of existing wilderness and areas recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System was included in the environmental analysis for the revised land management plan. The revised land management plan provides direction for designated wilderness through goals, desired conditions, standards, guidelines, and suitability that preserves the wilderness character of designated wilderness. Therefore, the revised land management plan is compliant with this act.

Pre-Decisional Administrative Review Process (Objection Process)

This decision to approve the revised land management plan for the Colville National Forest was subject to the objection process identified in 36 CFR Part 219 Subpart B (219.50 to 219.62). A 60-day objection period on the draft ROD, revised land management plan, and final EIS was initiated on September 7, 2018, with the publication of the notice of the opportunity to object in the newspaper of record, *The Seattle Times*. The Forest Service received 20 timely objections; objections addressed a wide range of issues and reflected a high degree of previous engagement in the planning effort.

The Forest Service's reviewing officer, with assistance from an administrative review team, carefully reviewed the objectors' concerns as well as the final EIS, the revised land management plan, the draft ROD, and associated planning record. To address the objectors' main topics of concern, a 3-day objections resolution meeting was held on April 24–26, 2019, in Colville, Washington, with objectors and interested parties to discuss objection issues and seek resolution. The objections resolution meeting was well-attended by objectors and interested persons, and productive discussions were led by the reviewing officer in an effort to resolve objectors' concerns. Meeting participants identified issues that needed additional clarification or modifications, and, for certain issues, the objectors and interested persons reached resolution on how to address a concern. For other issues, the reviewing officer granted a brief, additional period outside of the meeting for additional discussion between objectors. The reviewing officer carefully listened to and participated in the meeting's discussions, identified areas where modifications to planning documents should be made, documented areas of resolution, and considered additional input from objectors that was developed in response to the objections meeting. Written instructions for the objection issues were then provided to the responsible official on July 3, 2019. The written instructions are the final decision by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the objections.

The written instructions set forth the reasons for the 45 separate instructions and contained guidance to the responsible official. Three categories of instructions were identified: instructions based on information discussed at the objections resolution meeting as well as information developed by the reviewing officer's administrative review team; instructions to address potential resolutions made during the objections resolution meeting; and a list of other items that were discussed during the objections resolution meeting that the reviewing officer requested the region to consider. The following three subsections highlight some of the objection issues that received substantial attention during the objections resolution meeting and how the responsible official responded. Appendix A summarizes the instructions by the reviewing officer, and the responsive modifications that have been completed by the responsible official to the ROD, final EIS, revised land management plan, and to the planning record.

INSTRUCTIONS FROM OBJECTIONS MEETING AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Based on the information learned by the reviewing officer at the objections resolution meeting, and the intensive review conducted by the reviewing officer's administrative review team, instructions were issued that required review of new information, modifications to plan components, and additional explanations in the ROD, final EIS, revised land management plan, and to the planning record. Several examples of issues that were discussed at the objections resolution meeting, the associated instructions, and how the instructions were addressed, are highlighted by topic in the narrative below.

NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT

Some objectors indicated that standard FW-STD-WR-01, about properly functioning watersheds, was unclear as to whether it applied to all projects or only new projects. These objectors also identified the need to provide definitions of terms or substantive criteria associated with this standard, including “impaired function” and “functioning at risk”. Based on the learning that took place during the objections resolution meeting, standard FW-STD-WR-01 in the land management plan was changed to a guideline and the wording was revised from “shall” to “should”. Additionally, terms such as “impaired function” and “functioning at risk” are now referenced to a footnote that describes where definitions and criteria may be found.

Some objectors were concerned that timber volume measurements were not available in the revised land management plan, even though these measures are required by the 1982 Planning Rule. These measures, including allowable sale quantity and long-term sustained yield, were defined and added to desired condition FW-DC-RFP-01, Commercial Products, in the revised land management plan.

Some objectors were concerned that the standard FW-STD-WR-04, Aquatic Invasive Species, was not strict enough in its requirement that aquatic sampling equipment “should” be disinfected, and that the term “must” should be used instead. The wording of standard FW-STD-WR-04 was modified to be stricter and now indicates that aquatic sampling equipment “must” be disinfected.

Some objectors discussed their concern that the terms “adequate forage” in standard FW-STD-LG-02, Elk and Deer Summer and Winter Range, was too vague and might be impactful to livestock grazing opportunities. The instruction associated with this discussion provided the opportunity to either define “adequate forage” or to remove the standard altogether. After review and consideration, the region decided to eliminate this standard. The revised land management plan was updated to reflect this decision.

RECOMMENDED WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

An objector expressed concern about identifying a schedule to complete the eligibility re-evaluation of Sullivan Creek as a Wild and Scenic River. Discussion during the objections resolution meeting included the understanding that, in light of the recent dam removal and associated habitat restoration, Sullivan Creek is in a state of recovery. The region added language about re-evaluation of Sullivan Creek to the new Wild and Scenic Rivers appendix (appendix K) to the final EIS. Language was also added to the revised plan land management plan that states the Forest will complete an eligibility review of Sullivan Creek once restoration work in the creek corridor has been completed.

RECREATION AND GRAZING

Some objectors expressed concern regarding conflict between grazing and recreation use on the Forest, and requested that requirements be added to the revised land management plan to minimize these conflicts. Changes were made to plan components to minimize conflicts between livestock and recreation use, including a new desired condition FW-DC-LG-04 to minimize conflicts while maintaining financially and operationally viable grazing operations, and a new guideline FW-GDL-LG-03 stating that braided trails resulting from grazing should have reassurance markers installed at intersections or the non-system trail, where practical, should be restored or blocked if doing so would successfully reduce livestock use and trail braiding over the long term.

Salting, water development design, and turn-out or gathering locations should be addressed in the development of annual grazing plans to avoid livestock impacts to system trails, recreation areas, scenic vistas, etc. Finally, to address this concern, an objective FW-OBJ-LG-02 was added that targets the installation of directional signs on 75 percent of recreational trails where trailing cattle have resulted in a braided trail system.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Objectors asked for clarity around how many acres of Forest would be managed for Canada lynx habitat, and the number of acres of grazing allotments that may be impacted by the revised land management plan's Canada lynx protections. In particular, there was a concern that Canada lynx standards FW-STD-WL-02 to FW-STD-WL-06 could indirectly affect permitted grazing use due to changes in vegetation patterns. The region conducted an analysis of the impacts on livestock grazing from Canada lynx standards and determined there was very little overlap of lynx habitat with grazing allotments, and therefore very little impact would occur. This analysis and finding were documented and placed in the planning record.

RANGE

Objectors expressed concern regarding the interpretation of the procedure included in the document, *Rangeland Suitability for Livestock Grazing at the Forest Plan Level and Standards for NEPA Display (Rev. 3/6/03)* with respect to guidance related to calculating forage production when determining range capability. The reviewing officer provided instructions to review the forage production analysis guidance in this 2003 document, and correct any misinterpretation of this guidance. A new analysis of forage production and range suitability was completed, consistent with the guidance in the 2003 document, and incorporated into the planning record and the final EIS, appendix G.

Some objectors were concerned that Standard MA-STD-RMA-01 Riparian and Aquatic Conditions was too stringent, and would limit flexibility in new activities in certain situations. The reviewing officer directed the region to consider whether the agency wanted to use the term "shall" or "should" in standard MA-STD-RMA-01, as "shall" provides more stringent limitations on subsequent decision space than "should." After consideration, the region determined a less stringent term would provide more flexibility, therefore, the wording was changed from "shall" to "should," and the standard was changed to Guideline MA-GDL-RMA-01.

WATER QUALITY

Objectors expressed concern about how road density was calculated, as this may allow more roads to occur in a watershed if certain roads are excluded from the calculation. Language on criteria for including or excluding roads was clarified in the final ROD (see page 9) and added to the final EIS. A footnote was added to desired condition MA-DC-FR-05 to define a hydrologically stabilized road, and another footnote was added to desired condition MA-DC-FR-05 to further clarify that roads included in the calculation may be modified depending on the road management situation.

RESOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED

The reviewing officer focused much of objections resolution meeting discussions on resolutions identified by the objectors. While attendees worked hard to come to resolution acceptable to all objectors, resolution was not possible for many of the complex and divided-opinion issues. The following highlights some the issues that were resolved during the objections resolution meeting, and how the Forest addressed the instruction associated with the potential resolution.

- Several objectors were concerned that new requirements for riparian management areas would preclude ongoing, diverse uses of those riparian areas. A resolution was identified to confirm that diverse and active use of these areas is allowable. Language was added to the background information of the riparian management area section of the revised land management plan confirming that diverse, active uses are supported in riparian zones.
- Standard FW-STD-VEG-02 was discussed during the resolution meeting, particularly whether it applied to ongoing or just to new management actions, and whether it applied to all habitat-disturbing or just to ground-disturbing activities. A potential resolution was identified that this standard should only apply to new, ground-disturbing activities. The revised management plan was updated to confirm that standard FW-STD-VEG-02 applies to new activities, and wording in this standard was changed from habitat-disturbing to indicate it only applied to ground-disturbing activities.
- As a result of discussions during the objections resolution meeting about new road construction and hydrologic impacts from existing roads, concern was raised that terminology associated with impacts from existing roads was too vague in standard MA-STD-FR-01. A potential resolution was reached to modify standard MA-STD-FR-01 to indicate that only existing roads that diminish hydrologic function will be subject to this standard. The revised land management plan was updated to modify wording of standard MA-STD-FR-01 from "affect" to "diminish", to specifically indicate that the standard only would be applied to those existing roads that diminish hydrologic function.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Many additional items were discussed during the objections meeting, and the reviewing officer instructed the region to consider addressing many of these additional items as they would improve the quality of the final decision and revised land management plan. The following are examples of some of these other issues.

Some objectors were concerned that objective FW-OBJ-VEG-01 which indicated 6,000 to 12,000 acres treated annually to move forest structure to desired conditions, isn't sufficient to achieve desired conditions, and may constrain future timber harvest. The reviewing officer instructed the region to consider adjusting this objective to a target of 18,000 to 25,000 acres per year. After review and consideration to determine if a higher acreage value would be more efficient to move forest structure toward desired conditions at landscape scales, objective FW-OBJ-VEG-01 has been modified, increasing the objective for acres treated to 18,000 to 25,000 acres annually. A corresponding change was also made to table B-1 List of Proposed Actions in appendix B of the revised land management plan.

Many objectors were proud of the collaborative work being done with the Forest, and suggested that more emphasis be provided in the planning documents on the Forest's collaborative successes. The reviewing officer instructed the region to use the final ROD to tell the story of the recent success of the Forest in accomplishing restoration work, the innovation, and the alternative funding sources that have come with the innovation, and that budget should not be a constraining factor in the management of the Colville National Forest. The final ROD has been updated to place emphasis on the benefits of collaboration, such as in the "Forest and Community Setting" section (page 1). Additionally, information on restoration work, innovation, and alternative funding sources will be added to a social and economic assessment that will be collaboratively developed post-decision.

Objectors expressed confusion over the terms allowable sale quantity and projected timber sale quantity, how they were related to each other, and with concern that they may become a cap on future timber harvest. The reviewing officer instructed the region to consider clarifying what allowable sale quantity and projected timber sale quantity are and how they relate to each other. The revised land management plan contains definitions of allowable sale quantity and projected timber sale quantity, and the ROD was updated to explain what allowable sale quantity and projected timber sale quantity are, how they relate to each other, and how these estimates do not serve as a cap for future timber harvest planning.

Implementation

To ensure better consistency of projects, activities, and resource plans with the revised land management plan, I am adopting the consistency provisions as described at 36 CFR 219.15 of the 2012 Planning Rule. The following explains how new and ongoing projects and activities, and existing resource plans, will be made, as appropriate, consistent with the revised land management plan, per guidance in the 2012 Planning Rule.

The final ROD may be signed 30 days from the date of the publication of the notice of availability of the final EIS in the Federal Register, and the revised land management plan will become effective 30 days after the final ROD is signed (per 36 CFR 219.17(a), 2012 Planning Rule).

PROJECT AND ACTIVITY CONSISTENCY AND TRANSITION TO THE REVISED PLAN

As required by NFMA and the planning rule, subject to valid existing rights, all projects and activities authorized by the Forest Service after approval of this plan must be consistent with the applicable plan components (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)) as described at 36 CFR 219.15. Previously approved and ongoing projects and activities are not required to meet the direction of the revised land management plan and will remain consistent with the direction in the 1988 plan, as amended (USDA Forest Service 1986).

Direction in revised land management plan will apply to all projects that have decisions made on or after the implementation date of the final ROD. All projects and activities authorized by the Forest Service after approval of the revised land management plan, subject to valid existing rights, must be consistent with the revised land management plan. All subsequent project or activity approval documents will describe how the project or activity is consistent with the revised land management plan using the criteria identified in the revised land management plan (see "Consistency with Plan Components", pages 12 through 16 in the revised land management plan).

APPLICATION TO PROJECTS OR ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED BEFORE PLAN DECISION

A land management plan is used as a direction source for future projects, plans, and assessments. It is not expected that this revised direction be used to re-evaluate or change decisions that have been made under the 1988 plan. A smooth and gradual transition to the revised plan is anticipated, rather than one that forces an immediate reexamination or modification of all contracts, projects, permits, and other activities that are already in progress. As new project decisions, contracts, permits, renewals, and other activities are considered, conformance to the revised plan direction is expected.

Authorizations for occupancy and use made before this plan approval may proceed unchanged until time of reauthorization. At time of reauthorization, all permits, contracts, and other authorizing instruments must be made consistent with the land management plan, subject to existing valid rights, as provided at section 219.15(d) (2012 Rule).

APPLICATION TO EXISTING RESOURCE PLANS

Resource plans previously developed by the Forest Service that apply to resources or land areas within the analysis area will be reviewed for consistency with the revised land management plan components and, as soon as practicable, will be updated, as needed, to make such resource plans consistent with the revised land management plan components (per Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 section 21.41).

Maintaining the Land Management Plan and Adapting to New Information

AMENDMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES TO THE LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The revised land management plan may be amended at any time based on a preliminary identification of the need to change it. In addition, certain minor changes to the revised land management plan may be made administratively. The preliminary identification of the need to change the revised land management plan may be based on a new assessment, revised land management plan monitoring, or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances. The amendment and administrative change processes that will be followed for any future amendment or administrative change of this revised land management plan are described at 36 CFR 219.13(b) and (c) of the 2012 Planning Rule.

Adaptive Management

The revised land management plan is an integral part of an adaptive management cycle that will guide future management decisions and actions on the Forest. Adaptive management under the revised land management plan includes:

- Defining and measuring progress toward management objectives;
- Monitoring management outcomes and changing circumstances at the plan-level and broader-scale; and
- Revising management strategies accordingly.

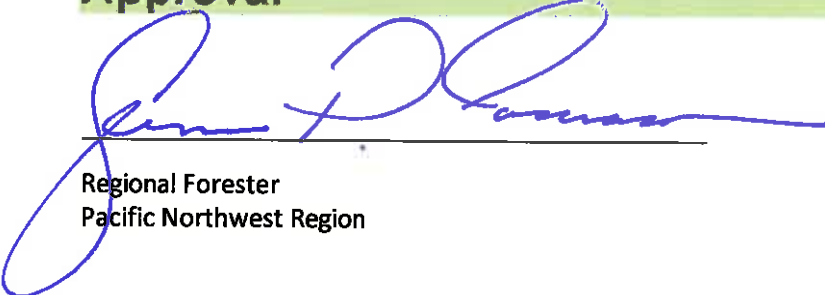
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The revised land management plan identifies measurable management objectives that will be monitored via the Forest's plan-level monitoring program. Additionally, broader-scale monitoring actions will contribute additional knowledge to this adaptive management cycle. This adaptive management cycle will enable the Forest to identify and respond to changing conditions, changing public desires, and new information, such as that obtained through research and scientific findings.

Contact

For more information, please contact Rodney Smoldon, Colville National Forest Supervisor, at 509-684-7015.

Approval



Regional Forester
Pacific Northwest Region

October 21, 2019

Date

Appendix A. Instructions and How They Were Addressed

Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<i>National Forest Management Act</i>	
1. Based on learning from the discussions during the resolution meeting, clarify language in FW-STD-WR-01. It is unclear if this standard applies to all projects or only new projects. Ensure terms such as "impaired function" and "functioning at risk" are linked to substantive criteria or definitions (revised Land Management Plan, pp.56).	<p>The revised land management plan was updated and the standard was changed to a guideline (now FW-GDL-WR-01. Properly Functioning Watersheds) to mirror the Washington Office recommendation for the companion standard MA-STD-RMA-01, also changed to a guideline. These two standards were companion standards and it didn't make sense to change one to a guideline and not the other. Both standards had wording that was more appropriate in a guideline.</p> <p>This language is intended to apply to new projects, and compliance with this component will be evaluated during the NEPA process. There is language in the ROD that speaks to how all standards and guidelines will be applied to new projects.</p> <p>Terms such as "impaired function" and "functioning at risk" are now referenced to a footnote that describes where definitions and criteria can be found and were added to the final EIS glossary. This is also reflected in the ROD.</p>
2. The current rationale in the DROD describing changes from INFISH and the Eastside screens does not describe the specific changes made, the scientific evidence or the rationale for the changes. Include these specifics in the explanation to strengthen the document.	<p>The ROD was updated to include additional information about changes between INFISH and the revised plan's aquatic and riparian direction, and the evidence and rationale for changes made. Language was included in the ROD that explains that Eastside Screens had several components that affected vegetation management, which have been replaced in the revised land management plan with a series of desired historic range of variation conditions, desired wildlife habitat conditions, and a guideline for large tree retention.</p>

⁵ Instruction based on information discussed at the objections resolution meeting as well as information developed by the reviewing officer's administrative review team.

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
3. Additional documentation should be provided clarifying how the 1982 Planning Rule and the 2012 Planning Rule applied to this revision.	Language was included in the ROD clarifying the only 2012 planning rule requirement for plan revisions under the 1982 planning rule is the content of the monitoring plan. This revised land management plan includes a monitoring plan per 36 CFR 219.12 of the 2012 planning rule. All other revised plan requirements are consistent with the 1982 regulations. However, where the 1982 planning rule does not provide definitions or process, the revised plan relies on the 2012 planning rule for those definitions and processes.
4. The Region should add measures for timber required by the 1982 Planning Rule (Allowable Sale Quantity and Long Term Sustained Yield) to the revised Land Management Plan.	The revised land management plan was updated to include measures for timber required by the 1982 Planning Rule (allowable sale quantity and long-term sustained yield). ASQ and LTSY numbers were added to FW-DC-RFP-01. Commercial products and a definition of each was added in a footnote.
5. The Region should revise the wording of FW-STD-WR-04 to replace the word "should" with "must."	The revised land management plan was updated to revise the wording of FW-STD-WR-04, replacing the word "should" with "must." Due to plan component numbering changes, this is now FW-STD-WR-03. This standard now reads: FW-STD-WR-03. Aquatic Invasive Species – Aquatic Resource Sampling. Aquatic sampling equipment must be disinfected prior to use in new stream or lake locations.
6. The Region should review and consider defining what constitutes adequate forage under FW-STD-LG-02 or eliminating the standard.	The revised land management plan has been updated and this standard was eliminated.
7. The Region should clarify how past monitoring was used to inform the forest plan revision.	Language is included in the ROD to clarify how past implementation as well as broad-scale monitoring (PIBO, forest health, insect and disease, Vision2020, grazing management) was used to inform the revised land management plan analysis and plan development.
<i>National Environmental Policy Act</i>	
8. The Region should more clearly explain why the recommended wilderness was modified between the draft revised land management plan and the final revised land management plan.	Detailed additional information was included in the ROD about the extensive field visits, and other review criteria that were used for adjusting recommended wilderness boundaries between the draft and final land management plan.
<i>Monitoring</i>	

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Instruction⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
9. The Region should revise the monitoring plan to adequately address the effectiveness of the monitoring question(s) to fully comply with the 2012 Planning Rule monitoring requirements.	After the revised plan has been finalized, the Forest will review the issue paper and supporting documentation, and then the Forest will create a <u>post signature</u> Monitoring Plan Implementation Guide as recommended in the issue paper, that will ensure the revised land management plan's monitoring plan is consistent with the 2012 Planning Rule's monitoring requirements.
<i>Inventoried Roadless</i>	
10. FW-GDL-VEG-05. "Prohibition on Timber Cutting, Sale, or Removal in Inventoried Roadless Areas and FW-GDL-AS-06. Prohibition on Road Construction and Reconstruction in Inventoried Roadless Areas" directly quote the Roadless Rule. We recommend these Guidelines refer to complying with the Roadless Rule in effect at the time of project-level decisions.	The plan was updated, and language revised in the two guidelines FW-GDL-VEG-05 and FW-GDL-AS-06 to replace a direct quote from the roadless rule with new text that states "...activities will comply with requirements of the Roadless Rule in effect at the time project-level decisions are made. As of the implementation of this forest plan, the Roadless Area Rule in effect is the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule." The intent is to provide current direction as well as flexibility going forward.
<i>Recommended Wild and Scenic Rivers</i>	
11. Provide documentation indicating a reasonable review has been completed for each river from the 1988 study and conditions have not changed. If conditions have changed, describe why these are not significant enough for eligibility re-evaluation.	The 1990 Wild and Scenic Rivers eligibility determinations, as well as any recently acquired waters, were reviewed by an interdisciplinary team for any changed conditions that should be addressed in the revised plan. The list of identified changes and the eligibility determination on whether ORVs existed or not were added to the Wild and Scenic Rivers appendix (Appendix K) to the final EIS. Appendix K also was updated with a short write-up on why changes to Sullivan Creek and Big Sheep Creek did not result in changes to their existing eligibility determinations, as well as additional details on the process used to complete the Wild and Scenic Rivers review.
12. Identify a schedule to complete the eligibility re-evaluation of Sullivan Creek in light of the dam removal and critical habitat listing; and work with interest groups for the re-evaluation.	Language was added to the Wild and Scenic Rivers appendix (Appendix K) to the final EIS, and language was also added to the revised plan for the forest to complete an eligibility review of Sullivan Creek once restoration work is completed.
<i>Recommended Wilderness</i>	

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Instruction⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<p>13. The Region should review the 2009 National Visitor Use Monitoring report for mountain bike use in areas recommended for wilderness designation in the revised Land Management Plan. We suggest the Region revise the monitoring plan to establish current baseline indicators and a frequency of measure consistent with revised Land Management Plan components. Consider modifying standards MA-STD-RW-02 and MA-STD-RW-03 so that results of monitoring use do not trigger the need for a new decision.</p>	<p>National Visitor Use Monitoring surveys do not provide site specific use data and cannot be used to determine mountain bike use in a given portion of the forest, such as a single recommended wilderness area. Therefore, the 2009 National Visitor Use Monitoring data was not used to determine base levels of mountain bike use in areas recommended for wilderness designation. Proposed monitoring of trailhead registration will provide the forest with an indicator (percentage of actual use) of current average mountain bike use over the first 3 to 5 years of plan implementation. After year 5, trail registration data will be used to provide general mountain bike use trend information (up, down, static).</p>
	<p>Monitoring item 2 will be conducted as described to identify areas where mountain biking may affect wilderness values and prompt conversations around adaptive management of that inconsistent use.</p> <p>STD-RW-02 has been deleted. STD-RW-03 was split with the first two sentences remaining as a standard. The 3rd sentence was moved to GDL-RW-02; the word “will” was changed to “may”; and the words “or trail system” was added after “recommended wilderness.” The above changes were made so that monitoring results would not trigger the need to consider a new decision.</p>
Minerals	
<p>14. The Region should consider adding language to the ROD assuring the public that all lands, except those currently withdrawn from mineral entry, are still open to mining development and as such the Forest Service will process proposed plans of operation in accordance with law, regulation, and policy.</p>	<p>The ROD was updated to add language assuring the public that “All lands administered by the Colville National Forest, except those currently withdrawn from mineral entry, are still open to mineral development, and as such, the Forest Service will process proposed plans of operation in accordance with law, regulation, and policy.”</p>

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<i>Recreation and Grazing</i>	
15. The Region should consider modifying plan component language related to grazing to specify measures to minimize conflicts between livestock and recreation use in allotment management plans.	The following plan components were added to the Livestock Grazing section of the revised land management plan: A desired condition was added (FW-DC-LG-04) to the plan stating the intent to minimize conflicts while maintaining financially and operationally viable grazing operations. An objective was added (FW-OBJ-LG-02) to install reassurance markers on 75 percent of trails where trailing cattle have resulted in a braided trail system. A guideline was added (FW-GDL-LG-03) stating that salting, water development design, and turn-out/gathering locations should be addressed in the development of annual grazing plans to avoid livestock impacts to system trails, recreation areas, scenic vistas, etc. The new guideline also indicates reassurance markers should be installed where trail braiding exists and braided trails should be restored or blocked if actions are unsuccessful over the long term.
<i>Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species</i>	
16. The Region should review the new Canada lynx studies referenced by objectors (i.e., Kosterman 2014, Holbrook et al. 2018, Vanbianchi et al. 2017) and document the importance of these new studies.	The new studies were reviewed and a memo was written for the project files that discusses how plan components in the revised land management plan address information from these studies. No changes to the plan components for Canada lynx were necessary.
17. The Region should clarify how the Best Available Scientific Information (BASI) for Canada lynx was considered, selected, and incorporated into Forest Plan documents.	A memo was written for the project files that discusses how BASI for Canada lynx was considered, selected and incorporated in the development of the revised land management plan and final EIS.
18. The definition of suitable habitat and habitat-disturbing activities should be clarified or standard FW-STD-VEG-02 could be removed or incorporated (without the survey and protection requirements) into guideline FW-GDL-VEG-01.	The revised land management plan was updated to include a definition of the term suitable habitat. However, since the list of botanical species changes every few years a description of suitable habitat was not added. The Forest botanist maintains a species list with suitable habitats that is updated regularly, based on BASI. The wording of FW-STD-VEG-02 was changed and habitat-disturbing activities is now ground-disturbing activities.

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<p>19. It is unclear how many acres would be managed for Canada lynx habitat and the number of acres of grazing allotments that may be impacted. In particular, Canada lynx standards FW-STD-WL-02 to FW-STD-WL-06 could indirectly affect permitted grazing due to changes in vegetation patterns. The Region should clarify how many acres of grazing allotments may be impacted by these standards, particularly FW-STD-WL-06 which requires certain lands to be managed to >500 stems per acre.</p>	<p>The Standards listed in this instruction only apply to the Kettle-Wedge lynx core area. There are 127,079 acres of lynx habitat in the Kettle-Wedge lynx core area. Of that, 16,493 acres (13 percent) are in the early structure type where the FW-STD-WL-06 would apply. Within the early structure type, 7,812 acres (47 percent) have over 500 trees per acre. This is 6 percent of the total amount of lynx habitat in the area to be managed for Canada lynx (Kettle-Wedge lynx core area). Most of the 7,812 acres of early structure with >500 trees per acre occur in the White Mountain fire area and a few other fire areas; nearly all of it is within a Backcountry management allocation where mechanical thinning would not occur. A memo was written for the project file that discusses the amount of lynx habitat that intersects with grazing allotments, including further clarification of the scope of the wildlife standards and effects on grazing. The results show very limited overlap of lynx habitat with grazing allotments. Please see the memo for the percent of each allotment that overlaps with lynx habitat. No changes were made to these standards. The standards mentioned in the instruction do not preclude grazing. Reducing stem density to 500 trees per acre may enhance animal movement and increase understory forage production.</p>
MIS/Surrogate	
<p>20. The Region should clarify the connection between surrogate species and management indicator species (MIS).</p>	<p>A memo was written for the project files that documents the selection criteria used to identify MIS species and the connection between surrogate species and MIS. The revised land management plan was updated to provide clarification on which species are MIS and which are surrogate (Appendix C).</p>
<p>21. The Region should clarify how surrogate species meet the MIS regulatory requirements in both the aquatic and wildlife sections of the revised Land Management Plan, as well as the terminology used.</p>	<p>A memo was written for the project files that clarifies how selection of and analyses for MIS species met the regulatory requirements for MIS. The clarification addressed the terminology applied to different species.</p>

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
22. The Region should address how the Colville approach meets the following 1982 Planning Rule requirement (36 CFR 219.19 (a)(2)): "Planning alternatives shall be stated and evaluated in terms of both amount and quality of habitat and of animal population trends of the management indicator species."	A memo was written for the project files that discusses how both the amount and quality of habitat of MIS were addressed in the analysis of the effects discussion of the different alternatives. The memo also addressed how habitat was used as an indicator of population trends for MIS.

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<p>Range</p> <p>23. The Region should take a closer look at their interpretation of the procedure included in the document, <i>"Rangeland Suitability for Livestock Grazing at the Forest Plan Level and Standards for NEPA Display (Rev. 3/6/03)"</i> with respect to guidance related to forage production. The Region should correct any misinterpretation of this direction, particularly with respect to the following statement from the final EIS:</p> <p><i>"Range capability guidance suggests that lands incapable of producing 200 lbs./acre/year of forage be removed next. Because much of the potential forage resource occurs on transitory range in holes in the forest canopy, the team believed that this standard was inappropriately high. In such situations, levels of forage production are unlikely to reach the specified level on an acreage basis because, due to dense tree cover, up to 75 percent of an acre may produce little forage. A threshold of 50 lbs./acre/year is used instead. Within the soil resource coverages for the Forest, lands classified as shallow soils were removed from consideration at this stage because of inherent productivity limitations. " (final EIS, Vol. III pp. 1334)</i></p>	<p>The analysis was re-done. The new analysis is consistent with the national direction found in the "Rangeland Suitability for Livestock Grazing at the Forest Plan Level and Standards for NEPA Display (Rev. 3/6/03)" document. Updated information was incorporated in the Grazing Specialist Report and the final EIS including appendices.</p> <p>The language below was deleted from the final EIS Volume III, Appendix G:</p> <p>"Because much of the potential forage resource occurs on transitory range in holes in the forest canopy, the team believed that this standard was inappropriately high. In such situations, levels of forage production are unlikely to reach the specified level on an acreage basis because, due to dense tree cover, up to 75 percent of an acre may produce little forage. A threshold of 50 lbs./acre/year is used instead."</p>

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<p>24. Relative to Term Grazing Permits, the following excerpt from the DROD, is not consistent, as stated, with 36 CFR 222.4(a)(7):</p> <p><i>"Contracts, authorizations of occupancy and use, or other instruments subject to annual operating instructions or operating plans will be made consistent with all applicable revised land management plan direction through the annual operating instructions or annual operating plan during the operating season after the final ROD for the revised land management plan is signed." (DROD, page 37)</i></p>	<p>Grazing permits will be modified to incorporate understood and known direction contained in the revised plan. For direction that is reliant on additional information and monitoring, like MA-GDL-RMA-12 Annual Grazing Use Indicators, language in the ROD reflects that permits for on-going uses will continue under direction contained in the existing permits that are compliant with the 1988 plan until such time as a project-level analysis is completed that incorporates revised land management plan direction.</p>
<p>25. The Region should consider whether the agency wants to use the term "shall" or "should" in MA-STD-RMA-01 as one provides more stringent limitations on subsequent decision space than the other.</p>	<p>The revised land management plan was updated and this standard changed to a guideline (now MA-GDL-RMA-01.) The wording in the guideline changed from "shall" to "should."</p>
Water Quality	
<p>26. The Region should review how road density is calculated and clarify criteria for including or excluding certain roads in the calculation.</p>	<p>Language on criteria for including or excluding roads was clarified in the ROD and added to the final EIS. A footnote was added to further clarify that roads included in the calculation can be modified depending on the road management situation.</p>
Late and Old Structure	
<p>27. The Region should clarify how wildlife connectivity is maintained as it relates to management of large trees.</p>	<p>A memo was written for the project files clarifying that large trees are a component of late-successional habitats and how the plan components address connectivity of late-successional habitats. The revised land management plan components are adequate to provide habitat connectivity for wildlife species associated with late-successional habitats, of which large trees are a primary component.</p>
Resolution Meeting Outcomes	
Watershed and Riparian	
<p>28. Improve or add Desired Condition that active management in riparian zones will remain supportive of diverse uses.</p>	<p>Language confirming that diverse, active uses are supported in riparian zones is included in the background information of the riparian management area section of the revised land management plan.</p>

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<p>29. Several objectors agreed to meet as a part of the Tri County Forest Group to work on proposed changes to certain language in the Desired Conditions for water resources (specifically FW-DC-WR-01, 02, 03, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, and 11). The original proposal was to changed "contribute" to "protect and enhance" or "maintain and restore". In a letter dated May 28, 2019, the group documented they had met and decided to not propose changing the language.</p>	<p>There is nothing to address.</p>
<p>30. FW-STD-VEG-02 was discussed during the resolution meeting, particularly whether it applied to ongoing or new management actions. My subsequent discussions with the planning team indicated this standard is intended to apply to new projects. I would like the Region to add language clarifying the standard applies to new ground disturbing projects.</p>	<p>The wording in the revised management plan for standard FW-STD-VEG-02 was changed from habitat-disturbing activities to ground-disturbing activities. FW-STD-VEG-02 applies to new activities.</p>
<p><i>Forest Products/Silviculture/Old Growth</i></p>	
<p>31. Objectors were concerned the revised Land Management Plan indicated a much lower level of timber harvest than what the Colville National Forest has been producing. During the resolution meeting, we discussed the way the Colville team currently plans out future vegetation management, including timber harvest, under the umbrella of the Forest Plan. As a result of this conversation, we agreed the Forest would post their most current long term Vegetative Management Plan on their website and update the website as plans are adjusted over time.</p>	<p>The current long-term Vegetative Management Plan was posted on the Forest's public-facing website at the following address: https://www.fs.usda.gov/resources/colville/landmanagement/resourcemanagement The Forest website will continue to be updated as vegetative management plans are adjusted over time.</p>

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<i>Recommended Wilderness</i>	
<p>32. The Northeast Forest Coalition and Washington Cattleman agreed to collaborate to add language to the recommended wilderness standards/guidelines. This was completed and the proposed language was included in a letter dated May 28, 2019, from the Tri County Forest Group. The Region should consider this language as quoted from the letter:</p> <p>"MA-STD-RW-02. Uses inconsistent with wilderness character</p>	<p>The revised land management plan was updated to remove the standard MA-STD-RW-02 and modify the suitable uses table in the Recommended Wilderness section to add new or additional "types of mechanized uses" to the Mechanized Recreational Use, summer line.</p> <p>MA-STD-RW-03 (now MA-STD-RW-02 due to plan component numbering changes) was modified to remove the last sentence and the intent of this sentence was incorporated into MA-GDL-RW-02, but written to be a guideline.</p> <p>A member of the interdisciplinary team talked on the phone with the interested stakeholders to make sure that the changes made above meet the intent of their suggested language.</p>

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<p>Recreational mountain bike use and the use of chainsaws for trail maintenance on existing National Forest System Trails are allowed in recommended wilderness. If monitoring suggests an increase of user-created mountain bike trails, mountain bike use will be curtailed in recommended wilderness. See Chapter 4, monitoring.</p> <p>Infrastructure related to grazing and range allotments, such as fences, water troughs and livestock trails, are allowed in recommended wilderness and can be constructed, reconstructed and maintained using chainsaws and other mechanized tools. The construction or reconstruction of deteriorated infrastructure is permissible through a district-level authorization.</p> <p>The use of motorized equipment for needed grazing management, such as rescuing sick animals, injured people, and placement of feed is allowed in recommended wilderness along with aircraft use for delivering range improvement supplies and wildlife management purposes. The use of motorized equipment shall be expressly authorized in the grazing permits for the area involved."</p> <p>I encourage the Region/Forest to work with this group on finalization of the above quoted language.</p>	
<p>33. The Tri County Forest Group also agreed to look at the recommended wilderness boundaries. The group was unable to reach consensus. Therefore, I am not instructing the Region/Forest to modify any boundaries.</p>	<p>Nothing to address.</p>

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
<i>Focused Restoration</i>	
34. As a result of discussions during the objection resolution meeting, I would like the Region to change the wording of MA-STD-FR-01 (revised Land Management Plan, pp. 107) from "affect" to "diminish."	The revised land management plan has been updated and the wording of MA-STD-FR-01 was changed from "affect" to "diminish."
Other items discussed during objection meeting	
<i>In the Land Management Plan</i>	
35. Consider increasing the objective for acres treated annually from 6,000-12,000 up to 18,000-25,000 in Table B-1.	The land management plan has been updated and FW-OBJ-VEG-01 modified, increasing the objective for acres treated annually from 6,000-12,000 to 18,000-25,000. A corresponding change was also made to the table in Appendix B of the plan.
<i>In the Record of Decision</i>	
36. The Colville National Forest has worked in a collaborative way to create a very successful shared stewardship model that has added value and stability to the communities that rely on the Forest. I would like the Region to add the story of the value of collaboration and how it resulted in the current successful management of the Colville National Forest.	This information on shared stewardship and its positive influence on communities is discussed in the ROD and will be added to the social and economic assessment that will be developed post-decision.
37. Tell the story of the recent success of the Forest in accomplishing restoration work, the innovation, and the alternative funding sources that have come with the innovation. In addition, this should include language specifying because of alternative funding sources, budget is not a constraining factor in the management of the Colville National Forest.	Additional language regarding the innovative approach to managing the Forest was added to the ROD. This information on restoration work, innovation, and alternative funding sources will be added to the social and economic assessment that will be developed post-decision.
38. State that with site specific analysis at the allotment scale, an increase in grazing capacity could be permissible.	This information on site-specific analysis and increases in grazing capacity are permissible are discussed in the ROD, and will be further defined in allotment adaptive management strategies.

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Instruction ⁵	How Instruction Was Addressed
39. Consider adding language identifying the value of mining to the local economy and community.	This information on the value of mining will be included in the social and economic assessment that will be developed post-decision.
40. Add an explanation of Allowable Sale Quantity, Projected Timber Sale Quantity, etc., and how it is/is not connected to each other, and to the other direction in the Forest Plan.	The revised land management plan has been updated to include an explanation of allowable sale quantity and projected timber sale quantity, their connection to each other, and to other direction in the plan. This is described clearly in the ROD
41. Based on comments from objectors, clarify how future travel management decisions, including winter travel planning, will be made.	Information was included in the ROD about how future travel decisions will be made (site by site basis). For example, winter travel planning will be considered along with other forest priorities and will begin as soon as practicable.
42. Because of discussions at the objection resolution meeting, consider adding language specifying that not meeting one of the annual grazing use indicators is not the basis for a notice on non-compliance to the permittee(s).	Language will not be added to the revised plan or ROD as this is often dependent on individual circumstances. The components in MA-GDL-RMA-12 will not be defined and incorporated in permits until a project-level analysis is completed and determining the response to failing to meet annual use indicators will be determined through that process or through administrative remedies.
43. In response to objectors concerns, the Region should correct the language in the ROD to reflect that Term Grazing Permits must be modified, and Allotment Management Plans amended to comply with revised Forest Plan direction.	Transition language in the final ROD has been modified so that projects authorized under the 1988 Forest Plan will continue to be implemented under that plan, unless there is a compelling reason to bring them into compliance with the revised plan. In that case, project-level NEPA would be required. This would be applicable to all types of projects, including Allotment Management Plans and grazing permits.
44. Objectors believe the value of grazing was not emphasized enough. I would like the Region to consider acknowledging the value of grazing.	This information on the value of grazing will be included in the social and economic assessment that will be developed post-decision.
45. After the Plan is signed, consider working with the collaborative and your communities to design a socio-economic assessment.	This commitment to collaboratively develop a social and economic assessment, and a brief description of what it would look like, has been included in the ROD.

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<i>Additional Request (not an instruction)</i>	
<p><u>Request from the Tri County Forest Group (this request was not an instruction, but was associated with this Group's active participation in the April 2019 resolutions meetings and therefore addressed here):</u></p> <p>The Tri County Forest Group stated, in a letter dated 7/8/19, that they would like to write management plans for each specified Inventoried Roadless and Recommended Wilderness Areas and are requesting this be stated in the ROD. This would be done with consultation with the Forest Service. Each management plan would include the agreed upon grazing language for recommended wilderness, a fire management plan, a trail clearing plan, etc.</p>	<p>Language regarding the Forest's intention to work with the Tri-county Forest Group to create management strategies for recommended wilderness and inventoried roadless areas was included in the ROD.</p>