

South End Motor Vehicle Management Environmental Assessment

Response to the Comments on the EA Received May 25-June 26, 2011

Notification for the South End Motor Vehicle Management Environmental Assessment (EA) was published in the Colville Statesman-Examiner¹ May 25, 2011. That notification started a 30-day comment period, where the public was invited to review and comment on the proposal and EA. Twenty-seven individuals, couples and groups contacted us during the 30-day comment period; 24 provided substantive comments². Five comments are from groups, 1 is from a local government.

The complete text of all comments is contained within the analysis file, available from Bill Shields at the Colville Headquarters Office, 765 South Main, Colville, WA 99114. All comments are available in electronic format.

The following table contains the names of those who provided substantive comments. David Heflick (CNW) and Jeff Juel (TLC) submitted identical comments.

Table 1. Those who provided substantive comments within the 30-day comment period

Hugh Bartleson	Vicki Gish	Yvette Olsen	Mark Smith
Mike Blankenship, Tri-County Motorized Recreation Association	David Heflick, Conservation Northwest	Eric Ostby	Marla & Jerry Stephenson
Bob & Ginger Blount	Annette Hepler	Curtis & Pamela Ott	Stevens County Commissioners
Norris Boyd	Jeff Juel, The Lands Council	Merrill Ott	Don Tryon
Steven Christian	Howard Justice	Bradley Parrish	Dave & Jennette Urban
Judith Clark	William Lupton	Gary Prewitt, Eastern Washington ATV Association, Inc	Eric Weatherman, ACTNOW

COMMENTS SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

Sixteen commenters support the proposed action. Supporters are:

- Hugh Bartleson
- Mike Blankenship, Tri-County Motorized Recreation Association
- Howard Justice
- William Lupton
- Eric Ostby

¹ Paper of record for the Colville National Forest.

² Donald Sherry requested another copy of the letter; Paul Yelk asked where a map of the Forest Plan management areas could be obtained; Paul Sieracki requested a paper copy of the EA.

- Bob & Ginger Blount
- Norris Boyd
- Steven Christian
- Gary Prewitt, Eastern Washington ATV Association, Inc
- Mark Smith
- Curtis & Pamela Ott
- Merrill Ott
- Bradley Parrish
- Marla & Jerry Stephenson
- Stevens County Commissioners
- Eric Weatherman, ACTNOW

The primary reason they support the project is because of the expansion of routes open to OHVs.

Hugh Bartelson, Merrill Ott and Eric Weatherman (ACTNOW) specifically support the need to do something about dispersed camping. Mike Blankenship (TRMRA), Curtis Ott and Gary Prewitt support the project overall, but are concerned about the proposal for dispersed camping. Other comments about dispersed camping start on page 2.

COMMENTS OPPOSED TO THE PROPOSAL

Four commenters oppose the proposed action.

- David Heflick, Conservation Northwest
- Jeff Juel, The Lands Council
- Don Tryon
- Dave & Jennette Urban

The primary reasons they oppose the project are:

- The belief that any increase in the number of people using OHVs in this area will result in an increase in resource damage from illegal and/or off-road activities.
- With regard to enforcement and resource damage from illegal and/or off-road activities, our enforcement, monitoring and response has been poor in the past and this project provides no guarantees that enforcement, monitoring and response would improve.

Dave Heflick/Jeff Juel (CNW/TLC) support addressing the resource damage from dispersed camping, and support the concept of “ a responsible, enforceable, and rational OHV route system” provided it does not contribute to illegal activities, damage to the land, or harass quiet recreationists.

Some specific parts of the proposal were identified for particular opposition. Heflick/Juel and Don Tryon discuss specific road proposals.

COMMENTS REGARDING THE PROPOSAL FOR DISPERSED CAMPING

1. Oppose Restrictions on Dispersed Camping

Mike Blankenship (TCMRA)

TCMRA’s only concern is the reduction of dispersed recreation sites. Our club members understand the need to remove sites for ecological reasons but believe those sites should be relocated. This reduction

and ever growing number of off highway vehicles (OHV) users and the close proximity to Spokane may be a conflict to responsible riding and camping.

Judith E Clark

In regards to sensitive areas which I assume is close to creeks, the cattle are in and through these creeks all of the time. In fact, when it is really hot, I have seen them just standing in the creeks. I am not clear on how campers cause anymore of a problem.

Annette Hepler

Regarding campsites near streams: I want to continue to be able to camp near streams in order to water my stock. Historical use of this should not be refused. As the area is open to livestock grazing, streams are a necessary part of watering that livestock. Those of us who come to recreate should be able to continue to camp where this is possible.

Curtis and Pamela Ott

It seems that this project has more to do with camping problems that need addressing and it appears that much needs to be done to address those issues. We question the term “dispersed camping” about how it might affect such campouts as family get together where we might need 8-12 sites in the same campsite, for tents, trailers, etc.

Response: Part of the purpose and need for this project was to address resource damage caused by dispersed camping (EA page 6). Under the Forest Plan, as modified by the Inland Native Fish Strategy, dispersed camping is to be adjusted so that Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs) may be attained, and so that native fish are not adversely effected (EA page 10-11). Along the fish-bearing streams, the Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCA) is 300 feet, slope distance. The elimination of dispersed camping within the RHCA would have eliminated camping along most of the North Fork Chewelah Creek, Middle Fork Calispell Creek, Winchester Creek, Tacoma Creek, Cusick Creek, and Ruby Creek. Working with the Fish Biologists and Recreation Staff, we opted to regulate camping along those streams in lieu of full closure. Access to streams for watering horses will still be available. In some cases, stock may need to be led across the road from the campsite to the water source.

In the Chewelah Creek drainage, a variety of sites were designated to accommodate both large and small groups. Where feasible, campsites closed due to riparian concerns were relocated within the drainage, resulting in the net loss of one campsite.

Reductions to the existing number of inventoried campsites within the Tacoma and Calispell Creek drainages are required to meet the RMO’s for those creeks. In these drainages, there is insufficient land base between the road and the creek to adjust the existing dispersed camping use patterns and associated impacts so that RMO’s may be attained. Likewise, land on the opposite side of the road from the creek is either already being used for dispersed camping or not conducive (slope, vegetation, etc.) to camping. In these two drainages, it is possible that dispersed campers will be displaced to another drainage during peak use periods.

2. Support Restrictions on Dispersed Camping

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

Whereas we support designation of dispersed campsites, the EA does not guarantee that the signs and other necessary restrictions will be evident on the ground, so that the situation will really be improved. In addition, the EA provides no indication of the method of signage to be employed, which will enormously affect the efficacy of the signage, which will in turn affect the efficacy of the proposed rehabilitation efforts.

Additionally, we support proposed Forest Service (FS) actions that restore damage due to unregulated and under-regulateddispersed camping on the Forest, and welcome agency proposals to do so for this specific project area.

Gary Prewitt (EWATVA)

Dispersed camping has long been a tradition within the Colville National Forest and this desired alternative lays out a workable plan to protect resources, especially riparian, while maintaining the camping and day use tradition long enjoyed by local residents and visitor alike.

Eric Weatherman (ACTNOW)

The project provides for access to campsites and reduces user conflicts for bicyclist, back country horsemen and berry pickers.

The project provides for access to dispersed camping and quality hunting and fishing areas for those who have difficulties accessing some of or more remote areas.

Hugh Bartleson

I believe this project will provide a reasonable compromise in addressing water quality issues due to dispersed camping, timber sales, and future recreation opportunities.

Merrill Ott

The camping revisions are important to the overall success of the proposed action. Having seen the damage inflicted upon the environment in certain areas, I believe the proposed action is a positive step towards reducing impacts, improving camping experiences, and restoring the damaged areas back to a healthy environment that can withstand the pressures of the public.

3. The Current Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) and Dispersed Camping

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

We urge you to include an alternative that does not allow the 300-foot exemption for motorized access to dispersed camping areas. This could encourage the irresponsible riders and drivers out there to go off-road almost anywhere they want, and would make enforcement of violations more difficult.

The EA is inconsistent with NEPA in its failure to fully analyze an alternative that prohibits all such off-road travel. The Table 4 “Public Desired Condition” for dispersed camping doesn’t demonstrate a desire for driving motor vehicles away from roads anyway. If it’s okay to damage the soil and vegetation driving

a pick-up 300 feet from a road in order to camp, what in the minds of drivers would make them have any qualms about driving an additional 150 feet?

The recent Forest Plan amendment (the on-the-ground impacts of which have never been analyzed) allowing 300 feet of off-road motorized vehicle use along any open road opened the door to a Pandora's Box of activities now playing out as shown by all the illegal behavior and ecological damage. It has caused an entire suite of new environmental impacts from an artifact of management the FS has not inventoried, as required by NFMA.

Howard A Justice

I do have some issues with the Dispersed Camping, particularly the 300 foot restriction! Some sites need to be considered individually.

Don Tryon

By the way, I paced the distance from the road to the common camp site in the meadow. It is less than 300 feet but more than 100 feet. So the first place I looked to assess the efficacy of a recommendation to restrict camping use to 100 feet does have a significant environmental advantage over a 300 foot distance. Personally, I prefer the 300 foot rule, but let's not claim the impacts are insignificant.

Response: The current MVUM allows vehicles to go up to 300 feet from the centerline of an open road for the purposes of dispersed camping. An alternative that would allow motor vehicles to travel 100 feet off of designated routes for the purpose of dispersed camping was considered, and dropped from further consideration (EA page 20-21). The proposed action limits motor vehicles to designated sites in areas where resource impacts are occurring. This will be more restrictive than the current MVUM in these areas. Prior to Forest Plan Amendment #31 and the 2008 MVUM off road motor vehicle use was unregulated (except in a couple management areas that do not occur within the planning area). Forest Plan Amendment #31 improved the situation by limiting not only the distance motor vehicles could travel off roads, but also the purpose for which they could travel off road (dispersed camping).

COMMENTS REGARDING THE PROPOSAL FOR OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ROUTES

4. Support Additional OHV Routes

Bob & Ginger Blount

They are pleased to see the loops.

Curtis and Pamela Ott

This appears to be a huge improvement over what we now have. By tying this in with the roads that Stevens County has opened and now Chewelah is possibly considering opening some or their entire city, this could be great alternative economy boost to this area.

We enjoy being able to ride some of the forest roads would rather meet other traffic on those narrow roads on our small vehicles than in our pickup truck. Sometimes with a pickup meeting another like size vehicle, it becomes a problem getting past each other

It looks like there could be the possibility of making a several day OHV camping experience from the South end of Stevens County to the Pend Oreille Lakes and return, because of the connectivity of the proposed road openings and proposed connecting trails.

We are members of organized OHV groups and cherish more areas for legally being able to ride. We enjoy being able to ride some of the forest roads.....

Eric Weatherman (ACTNOW)

ATV groups appreciate the effort in making a motorized recreation opportunity that connects the Chewelah valley to the Pend Oreille valley in a user friendly system with a quality recreation experience.

The cattlemen appreciate a useable system that will encourage motorized users to enjoy a quality, designated route and avoid meadows, sensitive areas, and conflicts with livestock.

Sportsmen appreciate the additional access, particularly elderly and disabled sportsmen. The project provides for access to dispersed camping and quality hunting and fishing areas for those who have difficulties accessing some of or more remote areas.

Gary Prewitt (EWATVA)

Our members and much of the public have long awaited the connecting of OHV travel routes together to create a quality family recreation experience. The looping and connecting of OHV routes will reduce non-conformance and the public's confusion as to where OHV's can and cannot be used. It will also reduce the burden on Forest Service Law Enforcement personnel.

Marla and Jerry Stephenson

I am in my middle 70's. I have two steel artificial knees. I have arthritis in my left wrist. My problem is my brain still wants to go places & see mountain tops. I can no longer hike. Riding my atv is my only activity that allows me the freedom to be outside and enjoy the sights & smells of this wonderful earth. I would hope that you would already have surmised that I do this slowly, prudently & with great care.

Merrill Ott

A major plus of the proposed action is the creation of loop roads and trails that interconnect to form long rides without back-tracking. This is a major desire of the groups that like to form up over the weekends for a day trip, or weekend outing. Having loops of various lengths and of moderate to low challenge will bring a lot more families here to use this system.

Mike Blankenship (TCMRA)

We believe that this is a good start for the improvement of and protection for the ecological values within the project area while providing for motorized recreation.

Norris D Boyd

This action would provide a substantially improved recreation experience for forest users in this area.

Stevens County

It will provide much-needed connectivity between small communities.....

5. Oppose Additional OHV Route

Dave and Jennette Urban

Although I agree that maybe some roads and trails need to have a connecting loop, however, I feel that this plan goes to extremes in opening too many areas.

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The Lands Council (TLC) and Conservation Northwest (CNW) are supportive of developing a responsible, enforceable, and rational OHV route system that provides an enjoyable experience for law-abiding OHV riders without contributing to further illegal activities, damage to the land, or harassment of existing non-OHV related recreational activities.

Don Tryon

The Forest Service should provide a reasonable amount to the off-road motor vehicle crowd. A reasonable amount doesn't mean turning the forest into a destination OHV area to attract as many tourist riders as possible to the forest to benefit local communities.

Response: An analysis of proposals to open roads to mixed use, and to adopt or construct OHV trails was conducted. Some proposals were dropped (EA Appendix C). The proposals that made it through the screen are in the proposed action. The potential to increase illegal off-road travel was considered in the screen (see Appendix C table item nos. 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 37, 47, 50, and 52).

COMMENTS REGARDING THE PROPOSED ACTION AND THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

6. Whether the adaptive management component is adequate

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The Proposed Action's "adaptive management" feature involving opening some routes to OHVs only when existing bad behavior is "reduced" is not specific enough—what criteria must be met to trigger the judgment of "reduced" anyway? The same goes for the rest of the new mixed use routes:

All "Mixed Use" routes would be monitored for off-road vehicle travel. If off-road vehicle travel by OHVs continues at high levels or increases significantly, steps would be taken to reduce off-road travel. These steps include increased education, increased enforcement, increased signing, physically blocking the off-road access, and possibly changing the designation to "Highway Vehicles" only.

The EA provides no meaningful threshold or metric for what constitutes "continues at high levels" or "increases significantly." Additionally the EA provides no assessment of the success/failure rate of

“physically blocking the off-road access.” Our field surveys, fully documented with photos and GPS waypoints, lead us to the unavoidable conclusion that the success rate of the physical closure methods employed by the CNF is somewhere around 10%.

The EA implicitly acknowledges that the Proposed Action would open a Pandora’s Box simply by the fact that there are few or no provisions for taking back the new OHV opportunities if the misbehavior and damage continues or increases. The Proposed Action includes no clear, measurable thresholds that, once crossed, would trigger revocation of any increased OHV access. The FS doesn’t even make a commitment to shut down the documented illegal “Play Areas” or “Challenge Areas.” And based on the estimation of costs (71-75), the FS is not making any commitments to construct closures of illegal OHV access points onto closed roads or user-created trails.

Response: The proposed action includes active measures to reduce resource impacts through physical closure and rehabilitation of user-created routes and vastly improves the education, enforcement, and monitoring that will occur in the project area. An intensive monitoring plan (EA page 28-30) would be implemented in accordance with Forest Service Manual 7717 (Monitoring and Revision of Designations). The monitoring plan in the proposed action includes specific, repeatable measures which would inform future actions associated with this project (such as route closures, education and enforcement strategies, etc.). In fact some actions (such as the designation of routes around Phillips Lake and other areas) would not occur until monitoring shows that conditions have improved over baseline conditions.

OHV riders typically ride 15 to 80 miles per day and prefer a system of connected loops (EA page 52). One consequence of having a generally poor quality route system in the planning area is a preponderance of illegal, off-road and off-route use (EA page 54). The proposed action would create a legal system of OHV routes that meets the needs of most OHV riders. The vastly improved motorized recreation opportunities within the planning area would thus also likely contribute to increased compliance among OHV users (Vail & Heldt, 2004). A focus on closing and rehabilitating user-created and illegal routes; educating the public via signs, brochures, and supplemental navigation maps; and enforcing the MVUM at strategic times and places would serve to effectively reinforce already improved compliance due to the designation of a higher-quality OHV system (EA page 61).

7. Whether a non-motorized alternative should have been developed and analyzed

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The FS’s bias against quiet recreational experiences is evident in that there is no alternative that would provide that type of trail experience on national forest land in the project area, although there were numerous proposals from mountain bikers, hikers, and horseback riders during phase 1 and phase 2 travel-management planning meetings. There is ample discussion of what constitutes quality motorized recreation experience, but no analysis that discloses the impacts of all the noise and high velocity travel on people who prefer trail experiences to be quiet and contemplative, observing wildlife that are displaced by such disturbance.

Yvette Olsen

As an avid outdoors enthusiast, I am a non-motorized user of the Colville National Forest. I went to the meetings related to the South End issues and I am aware that there are currently zero trails designated for non-motorized use. It seems that my previous efforts to represent and encourage project leaders to respect non-motorized use has been ignored.

Don Tryon

As a recreation plan it is not comprehensive and does not articulate with any non-motorized recreation opportunity. I note the recreation table in the EA indicates walking is far more popular than motorized recreation.

Response: The purpose and need is to address motor vehicle access (EA pages 5-6). A non-motorized alternative does not fall within the purpose and need. All of the routes designated for motor vehicles in the project area are also open to non-motorized users. Non-motorized users also have exclusive access to all the roads, trails, and areas that will be closed to motor vehicles.

8. Whether an alternative that reduces or prohibits off-road travel for the purposes of dispersed camping should have been developed and analyzed

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The EA is inconsistent with NEPA in its failure to fully analyze an alternative that prohibits all such off-road travel. The Table 4 “Public Desired Condition” for dispersed camping doesn’t demonstrate a desire for driving motor vehicles away from roads anyway. If it’s okay to damage the soil and vegetation driving a pick-up 300 feet from a road in order to camp, what in the minds of drivers would make them have any qualms about driving an additional 150 feet?

Jeff Juel (TLC)

We urge you to include an alternative that does not allow the 300-foot exemption for motorized access to dispersed camping areas. This could encourage the irresponsible riders and drivers out there to go off-road almost anywhere they want, and would make enforcement of violations more difficult.

Response: Alternative 2 – No Action would eliminate all mixed-use designations within the planning area. Under this alternative, travel up to 300 feet off of designated roads solely for the purpose of accessing dispersed camping sites could still occur, although only by highway-legal vehicles. An alternative that changed the MVUM with regard to travel distance for dispersed camping was considered, and dropped from further development and analysis (EA page 20-21). The resource analysts found little change in the effects (see EA appendix B).

9. An alternative that only contains restoration/education/outreach should have been developed and analyzed

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

In addition, the EA's analysis of Alternative 2 illegally skews it against being chosen. The rationale provided for excluding Alternative 3's restoration, education, outreach, and enforcement actions from Alternative 2—that the FS would lack effective PR and project fundability if it doesn't provide vastly increased OHV access—is flimsy, and prematurely excluded consideration of a restoration-only alternative that decoupled desperately needed rehabilitation work from vastly expanded OHV use.

Response: This alternative would not meet the purpose and need (EA page 5-6).

10. The proposed action should have been developed using a different process

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

In summary, TLC and CNW maintain that none of the action alternatives presented in the EA provide a valid solution to the significant travel management problems in the South End project area. In spite of the many concerns we identified with the CNF's application of the Vail & Heldt study, the study itself seems to contain a potential recipe for a meaningful and effective solution to managing motorized recreation on the CNF. Perhaps if various stakeholders were to reach common ground on a proposal incorporating all of the components of the approach outlined in Vail & Heldt, finding the funding to properly implement and sustain the solution would be more likely.

Response: The Forest used a facilitated, open, public collaborative process to develop the proposed action and alternatives (EA pg. 12-16 and Analysis File:External Communication:Public Meetings). It is unfortunate that CNW and TLC did not participate in the three public meetings that were held for this project, however comments received by members of these groups and others were used in the development of the proposed action and alternatives.

11. Whether Alternatives 1 and 2 are viable and should have been considered

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The design and explanation of Alternative 1 (“No Change”) and Alternative 2 (“No Action”) are confusing and illogical. It is not “no action” under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) if an alternative would change some aspect of management, as does Alternative 2. On the other hand, Alternative 1, in proposing no change, IS actually the No Action alternative. Alternative 2, since it would prohibit OHVs from legal travel on open Forest roads, is an action alternative that might better be entitled something like “Eliminating Mixed Use.”

The EA fails to even provide a rationale for including Alternative 2 in the EA. Perhaps it could be rationalized because the FS's survey indicated that only 6.4% of those surveyed engage in OHV use and/or motorized trail activity as their main activity (EA at 49). Or perhaps this has been included because the FS realizes the adoption of the mixed use routes in the MVUM was done without NEPA and

so here is a post-hoc attempt at doing the analysis that should have been done before. Regardless, the EA must provide the FS's rationale.

In addition, the EA's analysis of Alternative 2 illegally skews it against being chosen. The rationale provided for excluding Alternative 3's restoration, education, outreach, and enforcement actions from Alternative 2—that the FS would lack effective PR and project fundability if it doesn't provide vastly increased OHV access—is flimsy, and prematurely excluded consideration of a restoration-only alternative that decoupled desperately needed rehabilitation work from vastly expanded OHV use.

Response: Both Alternatives 1 and 2 are forms of 'no action'. Alternative 1 would continue the existing MVUM including roads previously designated for mixed use. Based on previous comments by Dave Heflick regarding Forest Plan Amendment #31 (see letters from Dave Heflick, Conservation Northwest, to Rick Brazell, Forest Supervisor, dated March 14 and May 10, 2008), Alternative 2 was developed to consider the impact of designating the existing mixed use roads. All the alternatives that were analyzed are implementable. The proposed action clearly addresses the purpose and need for the project better than Alternatives 1 and 2.

12. Whether the concept of 'rewarding irresponsible and illegal behavior' should have been used to develop project alternatives

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juell (CNW & TLC)

In our scoping comments we questioned the wisdom and propriety of rewarding the irresponsible and illegal behavior of creating unauthorized motorized routes by designating and adopting them. The EA fails to recognize this as a legitimate and significant issue that should be driving project alternatives.

Response: The proposal does not reward irresponsible and illegal behavior. Not all the proposals were adopted. No play areas were adopted. Roads that currently have issues with illegal travel (see comment page D-7) were not included.

13. Change FR 3128030 to "mixed use"

Eric Ostby

The only suggestion I would like to make is to include the short section of road between Parker Lake County Rd. #2441 and the Power Line just north of Parker Lake. On my map it is labeled 030. This would allow us to make another short loop ride around the lake and easier access to the power line road.

Response: It is too late to add routes to the proposed action. This suggestion will be forwarded to the Newport Ranger District Recreation Staff for future consideration.

14. Include OHV access to Calispell Peak, Chewelah Peak and other roads to former lookout towers

Curtis and Pamela Ott

One thing that we find lacking is being able to attain the heights of the broad view from Calispell Peak, Old Dominion Mountain, Chewelah Peak and other roads and trails that go up to former Lookout tower sites.

Response: Many of the peaks that have provided viewpoints in the past (Calispell Peak, Little Calispell, Dirty Shirt) are on private land; the Forest has no authority to designate those routes. Chewelah Peak is under a Special Use Permit and has several developments on the summit (communication equipment, ski area improvements). The road to Timber Mountain lookout (FR 2700625) was closed to all motor vehicles in 2009 because of continuing vandalism to the structure. OHV access to one viewpoint was included (Trail T-1-1).

15. Change all open roads to ‘mixed use’.

Bob & Ginger Blount

They don’t understand why a road might be open to highway vehicles and not OHVs.

Stevens County

There will, however, still be many open Level II roads that will not be available to OHV use. This will affect hunters that like to use the ATVS for access and game retrieval.

Response: We analyzed routes individually, and routes that are not considered suitable were identified, along with the rationale. This is documented in the EA Appendix C.

16. Drop FR 9535230 from the proposed action

Don Tryon

The first time I talked to your former boss about this project he pointed out that the plan emphasized loop roads and trails in order to avoid off-highway vehicle use on dead end roads. He stated that those were the roads where a lot of problems existed and it is hard to stop the illegal use because a forest officer has to run down those dead end roads and catch the violators in the act, which is hard to do. So exactly why should the dead end, serve no purpose 9535-230 road be open to off-highway vehicle use? I read where it will remain restricted until barriers are established. It is already heavily bermed. An illegal loop trail consisting of the closed 9535-245, the closed 9535-230 and the closed 9535-170 roads has been established, is being maintained and actively used by law violators. In order to stop this behavior, the 9535-230 road has to be closed. You have to close the loop to halt the abuse.

Response: The Forest agrees there is an illegal route which extends off the end of the 9535-230 road and follows the old road up to the top of Iron Mountain and connects with other closed roads in the drainage below. The 9535-230 road was analyzed by specialists and it was determined that there was no resource reason to close the road to legal OHV use since the road

is currently open to highway vehicles. Recognizing that the dead-end route would be difficult to patrol, the decision was made to include the 9535-230 road on the MVUM only when existing illegal OHV access off the end of the road was stopped. While the road is currently bermed, berms constructed in the past to stop full-size vehicles are not as effective on modern OHVs. As a result, this road may require a new closure device (berm or gate) at a location in which the terrain does not allow for access around the closure. Until then, the 9535-230 will be closed to OHVs. When an effective closure device is installed, or illegal use stops occurring through a combination of improved legal routes, education, and enforcement, your concern will also be addressed.

17. Drop trail T-10-10 from the proposed action

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juell (CNW & TLC)

The Proposed Action would open Forest Roads 4300470 and 4300471 (EA at 22) and then connect them with one third of a mile of new trail (Table 10) to form one of those desired OHV travel loops. The EA at p. 30 and elsewhere admits that the two roads are already in poor condition, meaning that it would be better to obliterate them. Instead, the EA poses that some later monitoring could “determine if the connector is warranted.” Why does the FS believe that opening Forest Roads 4300470 and 4300471 to cars, trucks, motorcycles and OHVs wouldn’t inevitably make the situation worse? And furthermore, who really believes that once these roads are open to mixed use, the OHV users wouldn’t make this connection on their own while the FS “monitors,” leading the FS to feel justified in then simply designating it as legal, as the Proposed Action does with 4.5 miles of other illegal, user-created routes? This is an example of another version of the Proposed Action’s Pandora’s Box.

Response: In recognition of the problems with FS Road 4300471, trail T-10-10 will not be built until FR 4300471 is reconstructed to improve drainage.

18. Drop FR 9535090 from the proposed action

Don Tryon

The 9535-090 road: I am opposed to reconstructing the closed portions of the road and constructing an off-road motor vehicle route through an Old Growth land allocation. This is why the existing road was closed in the first place. In direct conflict with management direction, motor vehicle use is being encouraged in this instance.

Response: The table on page 7 of the EA states: MA-1 Motorized trails may be built within old growth units only when other reasonable alternatives do not exist. Existing trails may be maintained. New trails are permitted if beneficial to wildlife habitat. The Purpose and Need of the project is to connect communities. This entails connecting the Leslie Creek area with the Iron Mountain area. Several alternatives to connect the Leslie Creek roads to the Iron Mountain Road (FR 9535) were considered (Appendix C table item 20). This is the only feasible route. Since this is an existing roadbed, designating it as a trail and performing maintenance meets the MA-1 direction. Concerns for wildlife would only apply if woodcutting occurred. As a trail, this

is not expected to occur and therefore the wildlife report does not list this trail as a negative effect to wildlife.

19. Include more camping on the Ninebark Road (FR 4347)

Howard A Justice

Rd 4347 (Ninebark) for mixed use is positive for loop connection. The negative is that this area has been till now overlooked. With the proposals to close some campsites on the Co. Roads 2022 and Co. road 2030 there will be increased camping impact that need consideration along Rd 4347. Note: Appendix B table 2 (Additional Note: user created campsite: R42E, Township 32N Sec 17 -- corners of secs 17, 18, 19 & 20). Alternative sites need to be considered along Rd 4347.

Response: At this time the amount of camping along the Ninebark Road (FR 4347) is light. Additional camping opportunities were not identified as needed by the planning team. The project area will be monitored and if need exists, new dispersed may be created.

COMMENTS REGARDING RESOURCE DAMAGE AND ENFORCEMENT

20. The Proposal Would Increase or Decrease Illegal Motorized Activity and Resource Damage

Dave & Jennette Urban

I am familiar with the damage that has been caused by ATV's being operated in unauthorized areas. I feel a considerable part of this plan will only contribute to the problem.

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

On the other hand, we strongly oppose actions that would result in a high likelihood of increasing illegal motorized vehicle activity and its associated financial costs, ecological damage and disturbance. We also do not support the FS taking actions that would result in new ecological damage and disturbance related to increasing even legal motorized activities.

Don Tryon

When I go to the forest I see motor vehicle abuse, illegal motor vehicle abuse. Lots of it. It will take money and time to solve the problem. Money is something the federal government doesn't have.The agency is going to have less money to manage with, so it is unreasonable to believe they will do a better job of managing the South End Plan than they are doing with the motor vehicle management plan they have now.

Bob & Ginger Blount

They didn't think that OHV routes increases illegal OHV activity.

Steven B Christian

I can see where opening sections of roads would assist people in "staying on the trail" vs making their own trails.

Merrill Ott

It will take some time to get ATV users educated, but the effort will result in a healthier forest. I believe in the concept of having a wider area to disperse traffic, ultimately decreasing impact in some areas that need rehabilitation.

Gary Prewitt (EWATVA)

The looping and connecting of OHV routes will reduce non-conformance and the public's confusion as to where OHV's can and cannot be used. It will also reduce the burden on Forest Service Law Enforcement personnel.

Response: See response to comment #6 above.

21. Comments Regarding Current Enforcement, and Monitoring

Bob & Ginger Blount

They said they have seen OHVs in Big Meadow campground, and nobody to stop them. They thought the ambassador program and an OHV ranger were good ideas – especially an OHV ranger that could actually ticket offenders.

Judith E Clark

There are old four wheeler trails all over this area. Since these are off of the road, how are these going to be monitored to keep motorized vehicles off?

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

We like the idea of increased monitoring for damage from motorized activity and dispersed camping, and the idea of increasing patrols and taking new law enforcement actions regarding illegal motorized activity.

A major premise of the Proposed Action is that a significant increase in legal OHV travel opportunities, in combination with the proposed education, outreach, monitoring, and enforcement, will result in significantly reduced illegal OHV activity and associated ecological damage. This premise's foundation is already cracked and crumbling, evidenced by the FS's demonstrated and foreseeable inability to adequately monitor motorized activities, enforce violations, rigorously limit existing opportunities for lawless motorized recreationalists, and clarify existing closures on the ground for law abiding recreationalists.

The increase in legal OHV travel opportunities would be guaranteed by implementing the Proposed Action. However, only when combined with effective monitoring, education, law enforcement and planning to respond to continuing violations could there be anything close to a guarantee that violations and associated damage would not occur. With the admitted lack of funds for monitoring, enforcement, signs, education, etc. and no detailed, reliable means for achieving the budget for those activities in the EA, no such guarantees can be made.

In short, the Proposed Action relies upon monitoring and mitigation activities that the agency admits it cannot adequately fund, and/or whose effectiveness the EA exaggerates.

Furthermore, the EA acknowledges that it has not met Forest Plan requirements to regularly produce monitoring reports and make them available to the public for over a decade. Clearly the CNF lacks the capacity or commitment to meet current monitoring requirements, let alone the additional workload that would be required by the massive expansion of OHV routes in the project area. Therefore, and as pointed out below, much of the EA's analysis of Alternative 3 impacts and benefits are flawed.

Don Tryon

You may be aware the camp site in the wet meadow near the intersection of road 9535 and 9535-300 was used during turkey season. The meadow is always damp early in the year and frequently suffers significant vehicle damage from mud boggers or campers. the site should be fenced and signed for at least a year to give the shrubs a chance to become established and grow, and to break the pattern of use.The only way to halt the periodic damage to the wet meadow is to close the site when wet, or restrict vehicle and camping activity to the area accessed by the second way.

You will remember me pointing out the illegal road construction involving cutting trees to circumvent the substantial berms designed to halt access to the 9535-310 road. Still, no action has been taken to halt access to this closed road. The illegal road construction took place in 2007. Since then the road has been frequently used by firewood cutters, hunters, ATV and motorcycle riders all months of the year. The amount of illegal use on this road is surprising, considering the modest recreational use of this part of the forest.

Frankly, this is one of the three reasons I have no faith in the proposed South End plan. If the Forest Service can't close a road that was opened illegally four years ago and apparently has made no effort to halt illegal use, then where is the credibility? I find it remarkable such a well used illegal ATV trail can exist on a road system that is entirely closed to off-highway vehicles, which is another reason I have no faith in the South-End Motor Vehicle Management Plan. What I object to is the substantial amount of abuse associated with motorized recreation. The forest Service has a 40 year history of poor management of motorized recreation. This is my third reason for opposing the South End plan.

Nancy, remember when we were driving back down 9535-230 on the field trip and Eric remarked that a recreation person wouldn't visit a road like that more than once a year, if that often. You have been to the end of the road, seen the ATV and motorcycle tracks circumventing the berms closing the road. The use is more prominent already this spring. How do you propose to halt that abuse? It would take barriers, signs and hardnosed law enforcement. Hardnosed doesn't mean one visit a year.

The first time I talked to your former boss about this project he pointed out that the plan emphasized loop roads and trails in order to avoid off-highway vehicle use on dead end roads. He stated that those were the roads where a lot of problems existed and it is hard to stop the illegal use because a forest officer has to run down those dead end roads and catch the violators in the act, which is hard to do. So exactly why should the dead end, serve no purpose 9535-230 road be open to off-highway vehicle use? I read where it will remain restricted until barriers are established. It is already heavily bermed.

An illegal loop trail consisting of the closed 9535-245, the closed 9535-230 and the closed 9535-170 roads has been established, is being maintained and actively used by law violators. In order to stop this behavior, the 9535-230 road has to be closed. You have to close the loop to halt the abuse.

Dave and Jennette Urban

Although the plan appears to have many controls on abuse of the area, I feel that it is mostly an enforcement problem. I feel that this plan is only going to increase many of the environmental abuse problems.

Response: The analysis identified enforcement as a significant issue (EA pg. 14) and analyzed the effects (EA pg. 64-66). The Forest does not anticipate receiving more money for this project (EA pg. 14); however, with planning completed the Forest is better positioned to compete for grants (EA pg. 14), to patrol on OHVs (EA pg. 65-66), and to utilize an OHV Ambassador program (EA pg. 66).

22. Comments Regarding Education and Cooperation with Local Motorized Groups

Merrill Ott

I believe our clubs in this region will be very cooperative with the USFS to help foster better use of the limited resources the USFS is helping to manage, and synergize our region as a desirable family recreation area to visit and enjoy.I believe you will find reduced damage, increased use of roads, and a lot less contentious public.

I believe the efforts to create an “Ambassador” program with the two major ATV clubs in the region will go a long ways towards promoting responsible recreation use of the national forest and its resources.

The ATV clubs can be instrumental in their “Ambassador” program through passing out educational materials and providing a “deterrent” effect upon those members of the public who would disregard the rules. By having a presence of people who are cooperating with the USFS in preserving and protecting the resource, those who would seek to damage it will find it very unattractive to be in the presence of those protecting the resource. Perhaps we can hope that this will aid the law enforcement arm of the USFS.

Bob & Ginger Blount

They said they have seen OHVs in Big Meadow campground, and nobody to stop them. We discussed the potential for an ambassador program and an OHV ranger. They thought both were good ideas – especially an OHV ranger that could actually ticket offenders.

Curtis and Pamela Ott

As best as time would allow us, we also support the proposed ambassador program.

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

We support the FS improving relations with motorized recreationalists via the establishment of an OHV Ambassador Program, clarifying the MVUM both as provided in paper and on the FS’s MVUM website, and increasing outreach to schools and the public at various events.

COMMENTS REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION

23. The Forest Service Does Not have the Money to Implement the Proposal

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

Whereas we support designation of dispersed campsites, the EA does not guarantee that the signs and other necessary restrictions will be evident on the ground, so that the situation will really be improved. In addition, the EA provides no indication of the method of signage to be employed, which will enormously affect the efficacy of the signage, which will in turn affect the efficacy of the proposed rehabilitation efforts.

The EA does not explain why the logical step of requesting more allocated funding for law enforcement and other needed management and restoration activities isn't being undertaken.

We request that your NEPA document disclose any problems related to possibly inadequate funding for enforcement of the existing travel restrictions.

The increase in legal OHV travel opportunities would be guaranteed by implementing the Proposed Action. However, only when combined with effective monitoring, education, law enforcement and planning to respond to continuing violations could there be anything close to a guarantee that violations and associated damage would not occur. With the admitted lack of funds for monitoring, enforcement, signs, education, etc. and no detailed, reliable means for achieving the budget for those activities in the EA, no such guarantees can be made.

In short, the Proposed Action relies upon monitoring and mitigation activities that the agency admits it cannot adequately fund, and/or whose effectiveness the EA exaggerates.

Don Tryon

It will take money and time to solve the problem. Money is something the federal government doesn't have.The agency is going to have less money to manage with, so it is unreasonable to believe they will do a better job of managing the South End Plan than they are doing with the motor vehicle management plan they have now.

Response: As disclosed in the EA (pg. 14), the Forest does not have additional funding to implement this project. The costs were estimated (EA pg. 71-75). Once the planning is completed, we expect to attract volunteers and compete for grants to assist in the implementation.

24. The Forest Service can use volunteers to implement, reducing the costs

Merrill Ott

Certainly there will be expenses to signage, but, again I believe this is a project of a sort that volunteers from the clubs could be engaged in.

COMMENTS REGARDING ECONOMIC IMPACTS TO THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

25. Comments regarding the potential for the proposal to benefit the local communities

Hugh Bartleson

Additionally, local economies will realize short term and long term benefit due to increased revenues from the timber and recreation industries.

Bob & Ginger Blount

They repeated that the local communities would benefit from more OHVs – the riders would buy stuff and eat out.

Norris D Boyd

In addition, it also enhances the economic environment for both Pend Oreille and Stevens County by providing much improved experiences for OHV users. This improved experience enhances both counties reputations as destinations for OHV users and thus increases revenues from these individuals.

Steven B Christian

As a motorsports enthusiast, I spend several thousand dollars per year out of the area, due to limitations of access. Encouraging staying closer to home and spending their \$\$ supporting their local small town economies will be beneficial in our current state of economy (i.e. additional tax revenues).

William Lupton

The Colville National Forest South End Project is possibly the first viable proposal I have seen that has a chance of making a significant economic contribution to Stevens County. Expanding the camping and recreation opportunities within the Colville National Forest will bring the potential of longer stays, more of a vacation than a day trip. Plus the activities will depend more on the local economy for logistic support (food, fuel, accommodations, repair materials, etc). I for one see the possibility of the tremendous positive impact on tourism this project could have within Stevens County. The potential exists to become a "summer destination" to enjoy our natural resources.

Curtis and Pamela Ott

This appears to be a huge improvement over what we now have. By tying this in with the roads that Stevens County has opened and now Chewelah is possibly considering opening some or their entire city, this could be great alternative economy boost to this area.

Merrill Ott

Additionally, I believe the increased access to the forest service roads that are being designated for ATV travel will be a boon to the economic welfare of the area.

Stevens County Commissioners

It Has the potential to boost local economies in many areas.

Eric Weatherman (ACTNOW)

Local governments will benefit from the added commerce this project will encourage by connecting communities and creating a quality recreation experience visitors will want to participate in.

26. Whether the Forest Service should play a role in economic benefits to the local communities

Don Tryon

The Forest Service should provide a reasonable amount to the off-road motor vehicle crowd. A reasonable amount doesn't mean turning the forest into a destination OHV area to attract as many tourist riders as possible to the forest to benefit local communities. Recreation is recreation, not economic development.

1. **Response:** Communities adjacent to National Forest System lands have long benefitted economically from their proximity to the National Forest, either through timber sales, grazing, mining, or use by recreationists. For decades, a portion of timber receipts were returned to counties comprised of large percentages of National Forest System lands. In recent years, as timber receipts have declined, funds have been returned to rural counties through the Secure Rural Schools Act grant funds. As recently as 2010, "enhancing the ability of rural communities to stay on the landscape by ensuring rural wealth" was a top priority of the Secretary of Agriculture and Chief of the Forest Service. This goal was further emphasized through the work completed in 2010-2011 through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

As more traditional industries (i.e. timber and mining) have reduced over the past couple of decades, recreation opportunities and use has grown. One way to define a sustainable recreation program is one that finds the balance between the social/political, environmental, and economic/fiscal spheres of sustainability. Since 2010, the Colville National Forest has been working with a group of interested parties (private citizens/businesses, Chambers of Commerce, government entities, Tri-County Economic Development District, etc.), now known as the Northeast Washington Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Team (NEWSTART), in order to identify recreation opportunities that could enhance the economies of Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. Improved trail systems, including motorized OHV trails, was identified as a potential source of revenue (business and tax) for the three counties.

COMMENTS REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

27. NFMA Requires an Inventory of Undeveloped Campsites

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The EA does not demonstrate consistency with the NFMA requirement that the FS “inventory” undeveloped campsites, etc. (EA at 8).

Response: The Forest maintains an inventory of dispersed campsites (available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/data-library/gis/colville/index.shtml> DispersedRecPoint). This inventory was reviewed and updated during the planning process (EA pg. 55).

28. An “Entire suite of new environmental impacts from an artifact of management” has not been inventoried as required by NFMA

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The recent Forest Plan amendment (the on-the-ground impacts of which have never been analyzed) allowing 300 feet of off-road motorized vehicle use along any open road opened the door to a Pandora’s Box of activities now playing out as shown by all the illegal behavior and ecological damage. It has caused an entire suite of new environmental impacts from an artifact of management the FS has not inventoried, as required by NFMA.

Response: The effects of the 300-foot travel zone for dispersed recreation are described as part of the existing conditions. EA Appendix B analyzes the effect of changing the off-road travel distance for dispersed camping (EA pg. 20-21).

29. This is a Major Federal Action requiring an EIS

Don Tryon

The South End plan is a land allocation plan. The plan allocates an extensive portion of the forest to an intensive motorized recreation allocation. As such it is a major federal action and a FONSI is not appropriate.

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

On the other hand, we strongly oppose actions that would result in a high likelihood of increasing illegal motorized vehicle activity and its associated financial costs, ecological damage and disturbance. We also do not support the FS taking actions that would result in new ecological damage and disturbance related to increasing even legal motorized activities. Given the likelihood of significant impacts, the Proposed Action is obviously a “major federal action” requiring the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Response: The Travel Management Rule does not require an inventory of illegal and off-road activities (FR vol. 70 no. 216 pg. 68268, 68269). A travel analysis was conducted (EA pg. 35) and

an analysis of off-road and illegal travel was conducted (EA pg. 39-45). A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was prepared (see the Decision Notice and FONSI) explaining why this is not a major Federal action requiring an EIS.

COMMENTS REGARDING THE SPECIFIC RESOURCE ANALYSES

30. The analysis of off-road travel is flawed

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

First, the vegetation in the landscapes within which the geospatial tools were demonstrated in Werstak was far more open than in the South End project area.

Response: The Travel Management Rule does not require a complete inventory of user-created OHV routes, nor a baseline use data, prior to travel management planning (see FR vol. 70, No. 216 pages 68268, 68269, and WO OHV Route and Area Designation Guide, 2005).

Werstak's work was done in a drier area with less vegetative cover. That is why the analysis used a variety of techniques to identify OHV trails and use areas (EA page 40).

As described in the Analysis of Off-road and Illegal On-road Travel, off-road OHV trails have been mapped by various people over the years, and some areas of OHV activity are well known. Some of the material gathered for this analysis were in the form of sketch-maps or descriptions of activity, some was GPSed. In many cases, only part of a trail was walked or GPSed. In some cases, the information was a point, where an OHV trail left a road or a point where an OHV trail was encountered while traveling cross-country (for example, some material was collected while doing soil transects, and while conducting stand exams). The major contributors include Nancy Glines, Karen Honeycutt, Rob Lawler, Nan Berger, Karen Soenke, and Mike Mumford – but material was contributed by many people over the years. Lance Stegman GPSed some OHV routes in 2008. Don Tryon, Jerry Cline and Eric Bakken provided information about OHV use areas. All the public proposals were field-checked, because many are already being used.

All this material was gathered together into a single geodatabase which contains many redundant covers.

After this material was pulled together, the 2005, 2008, and 2009 1 meter NAIP color imagery, and the 2000 aerial photography³³ was used to identify any other routes, and to complete routes where the ground-data (above) was incomplete. Since many of the OHV routes in forested areas are old roads (homestead era, old temporary, and other unauthorized roads), they are evident on the imagery.

Setting aside the question of the validity of the data generated by CNF's GIS analysis and assuming for the moment that the data was highly accurate, the CNF interpreted the data in a manner not only inconsistent with Werstak, but fatally flawed. The CNF's determination of the percentage of the planning area's acreage containing an illegal ATV routes was based on the errant mathematical assumption that the percentage of grid cells containing evidence of illegal use (based on photo interpretation) translates directly to the percentage of the project-area containing illegal routes.

³³ 2000 is our most recent aerial photography.

Response: The percentage of ‘affected cells’ does not equal the ‘affected area’ – it overestimates the true number. The analysis overestimated the area in OHV trails. As the cell size decreases, the estimate is closer to the true value. That would mean more than 94% of the planning area does not contain off-road or illegal on-road travelways.

But again, for a moment, let’s assume that the data *was* accurate. In order to come to the above conclusion, the CNF would need to compare the current level of illegal activity stemming from mixed-use roads to *baseline* data collected *prior* to mixed-use designation. There is no indication in the EA that such baseline data exists. Secondly, there are metrics other than density of illegal routes by which illegal use must be measured. Another important metric is the frequency of use of the illegal routes. So even if the CNF had a valid baseline inventory of illegal routes, it would also need valid data—both baseline and current—for the *volume* of use on illegal routes in order to determine the extent of correlation between mixed-use designations and increased illegal ATV use. Again, there is no indication in the EA that such data exists.

Response: The Travel Management Rule does not require a complete inventory of user-created OHV routes, nor baseline use data, prior to travel management planning (see FR vol. 70, No. 216 pages 68268, 68269, and WO OHV Route and Area Designation Guide, 2005). This analysis was done to better understand why some areas experience high levels of non-conformance while other areas do not. This analysis was done to better understand why some areas experience high levels of non-conformance while other areas do not. The purpose of the analysis is to help the Forest, and the public, to understand where the ‘problem areas’ are, and to shed some light on the circumstances that foster/facilitate/create these ‘problem areas’ – so that the Forest can avoid recreating these circumstances in the future. Given the purpose, the analysis was conducted with the available data.

Furthermore, even in the event of a valid conclusion that there is no correlation between mixed-use designations and increased illegal use, in the absence of adequate enforcement and monitoring it would be just as easy to conclude that the reason for the lack of correlation is that many ATV users make no distinction between legal and illegal travel on forest roads.

Response: This is possible. Perhaps it should not come as a surprise that riders who have no regard for the rules regarding off-road travel also have no regard for the rules regarding the vehicles allowed on the road (EA page 65). Currently, most of our enforcement has been regarding OHV use on roads open to highway vehicles only (*ibid*). Alternatives 1 and 2 would not change this situation. Alternative 3 switches the enforcement emphasis to off-road travel, creates a system that is amenable to using an ‘OHV ranger’, and creates a system that local OHV organizations are interested in ‘ambassadoring’.

31. Comments Regarding the Economic Analysis

William Lupton

I was comparing the EA with some done in the past in other areas. Many of those included some form of assessment of the financial impact to the surrounding community (both negative and positive). I realize that such an assessment is difficult and time consuming however it provides another measure of the projects value. Additionally it might assist the Forest Service in justifying some of the necessary expenditures involved in implementation.

Response: While provision of recreational opportunities is well correlated with economic development (see response to # 26) the Forest does not have the resources (personnel or data) or need to conduct a robust economic analysis of the impact of this project on surrounding communities.

32. Comments Regarding the Recreation Analysis

Don Tryon

The EA states that off-highway motorized and associated camping recreation use is high, but it also states that downhill skiing is the highest recreational use on the forest, which implies that OHV use can't be that great. Data is needed. How many users are we talking about?

Response: The National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey (NVUM) data is summarized Forest wide and is not representative of the use that occurs in the project area. Proxy sites, such as 49° North Ski Area and concession operated campgrounds, have the highest level of accuracy in the NVUM process since use is recorded daily. Other activities, such as dispersed camping and OHV use, is based on a stratification process to determine high, moderate, and low use days and is also dependent on the number of people willing to stop and take a survey. As a result, proxy site data has a higher level of confidence than the data collected from non-proxy sites. In addition, NVUM uses many categories to describe similar types of activities which may have lead to confusion (i.e. "motorized trail activity", "OHV use", "other motorized activities", and "driving for pleasure") by survey participants. How people interpret these categories also affects the percentage of users reflected by the survey results. As represented in the EA, it is the professional opinion of the Newport and Three Rivers Ranger District's recreation staff that dispersed camping and OHV use is high within the planning area and on the increase. Exact use numbers for both types of activities are not available.

Don Tryon

There are four, not three, camping sites along Twelvemile creek. All of them are lightly used. I have never seen any of them used by people who come to the forest to drive motorcycles or ATVs. Only one of the sites was used as a camping site more than a dozen years ago and I don't believe one of them has been used for two years. Camping is almost exclusively during hunting seasons.

Response: These observations are noted and the GIS cover revised.

Annette Hepler

As a hiker and equestrian, I enjoy many of the off-road and existing trails (many of these are cow trails, and legal or former 4 wheel, motorcycle trails) and I certainly want to continue to use these. I personally have no issue with sharing the same trails.

I protest to being refused access to use any new addition or loop routes that are made available for OHV use, of which I have had the use of prior to this revision.

Response: This project only addressed motorized vehicles, and proposes no changes to where horses or walkers may travel. Horses may continue to use the existing roads, OHV and motorcycle trails, and may travel cross-country. The Forest is not proposing to limit the type of use on the proposed OHV trails. Horses, hikers, mountain bikers, etc. will be allowed on the proposed new additions, loops, and trails.

Judith E Clark

The motorized vehicles drive really fast on these roads which is dangerous to both the cattle and to horseback riders.

Response: Motor vehicles often drive fast. This includes both highway and off-highway vehicles. Part of the mitigation associated with the proposed action is to post mixed use roads (those allowing OHVs) with safety signs that remind visitors to share the road and drive at a lower rate of speed.

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juell (CNW & TLC)

The EA fails to disclose that Alternative 3 would allow more legal access at the entrance point for many currently illegal OHV routes, making it much more difficult to take enforcement actions to prevent or stop the illegal use. The EA also fails to disclose that an Alternative 2 benefit is that it would make it much riskier for lawless motorized recreationalists to access their favorite illegal routes.

Response: Alternative 2 would limit OHV use to only those trails identified prior to the adoption of the 2008 Motor Vehicle Use Map. As a result, OHV use would be legally excluded from the sections of the project area accessed only by Forest Service Roads except for the Batey-Bould and Middle Fork Calispell trail systems. However, the following open County roads would provide legal access to OHV users into and adjacent to the Forest: Bartelet, Burnt Valley, a portion of Flowery Trail, Leslie Creek, Major, Middle Fork Calispell, Mud Lake, North Fork Chewelah Creek, Parker Lake, Ruby Creek, Six Mile, Snook, Tacoma Creek, Trimble Creek/Jewel, and United Copper Mine. These County roads provide users with easy access to all four corners and the middle of the planning area, providing legal access to existing user created routes. Since Alternative 2 removes all legal OHV routes from the MVUM within the planning area, it is likely that OHV users on the County's road systems will use existing or yet to be created illegal routes on the National Forest to avoid being seen by Forest Service law enforcement on the Forest road system.

Alternative 3 would make it legal for OHVs to travel across the planning area from north to south and east to west while enjoying numerous smaller loop opportunities. Many of the existing user created routes parallel this proposed designated road and trail system and will become redundant once the proposed system is implemented. These "illegal" routes were developed in many cases prior to the implementation of the MVUM when cross-country travel was legal and continue to be used by recreationists in the area. Once the proposed trail system is implemented, there will be no need for OHV users to continue to use "illegal" routes to access and enjoy their National Forest, resulting in less "illegal" use.

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

“Cumulative Effects” (EA at 58). There are many management activities and other actions that impact the recreational experience, but none of them are really analyzed for their cumulative impacts in this EA.

“Connectors are the only form of off-road travel that appears to be correlated with old timber sale harvest units... and mostly follow an old temporary road, skid trail, or fireline.” (EA at 44.) But the EA does not provide adequate cumulative effects analyses that examines ongoing or foreseeable vegetation management projects in the project area.

Response: The effects of vegetation projects, in general, are considered as part of the existing condition. The effect of individual projects on recreation is typically analyzed in the project EA. Recent vegetation management EAs have considered the potential to increase of facilitate off-road travel and have included practices to reduce the risk (see Gardin-Taco FEIS pg. 39, 63-70, 144, 182, 198, 215, 232-233; Quartzite FEIS pg. 2-26, 3-161, 162; Conger EA pg. 16, 34-35, 37, 64; Misery EA pg. 21, 23, 57, 59, 66, 71, 78, 80-83). As you can see, the emphasis on the interaction of OHVs and vegetation management has increased over the years.

“Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

In terms of substantiating this perspective, the EA offers only a single reference to a single study: *Governing Snowmobilers in Multiple-Use Landscapes: Swedish and Maine(USA) Cases* (Vail & Heldt, 2004)

Our review of Vail & Heldt reveals that the CNF was very selective in what it chose to include in the EA from the study. Vail & Heldt emphasize that improving motorized recreation opportunities will lead to less illegal activity only when the packaged with:

- user fees
- well-maintained trails
- user-friendly signage
- user policing
- high-quality trails
- easy detection of violators
- enforcement of rules with graduated sanctions against transgressors
- regular and thorough monitoring
- volunteer labor
- mutual obligations and ties among user groups and their members
- a manageably small number of participants
- safety education

Vail & Heldt also conclude that it requires up to 30 years of implementation of all the above to bring about a reduction in illegal user activity, stating: *our case studies suggest that, with three decades of behavior modification, a new snowmobiling ethic is spreading, reflected in a greater sense of responsibility toward landowners, other recreationists, and nature conservation.* (emphasis mine)

While the CNF admits in the EA that many of these components do not exist in the current context surrounding the South End proposal. We maintain that virtually none of the components are packaged with South End proposal. Furthermore, the EA acknowledges that there is no known source of funding that would allow the inclusion of these components and no suggestion that if such funding was identified, it would be available for 30 years.

Response: This proposal includes many of the features in Vail & Heldt – additional signage, user policing, improved route quality, regular and thorough monitoring, volunteer labor, ties between and among the user groups, and an education and enforcement plan. The Forest has no authority to modify the legal ramifications of breaking the law or to charge user fees within the project area.

The EA does indicate that *“grants and partnerships are expected to become available once the planning is completed,”* but offers no rationale for the expectation.

Response: Grants include the USFS challenge cost-share grant program. Since the majority of the costs are associated with riparian restoration a wide variety of grant sources may be available including the Salmon Recovery Fund Board, the Aquatic Lands Enhancement, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, North American Wetlands Conservation grants, and others. Many of these grantors will not fund planning. Likewise, State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants can be used to fund OHV rangers once a system of trails is in place. Other smaller grants from Tread Lightly and various manufacturers of OHVs may also be available for education and signing. These funds are not available to use in areas predominantly closed to OHV use. In addition, OHV volunteers from local clubs (i.e. Trail Ambassador Program) cannot be effectively used to help self-police the OHV user group if it is illegal for them to be on the routes they are attempting to provide education and enforcement on.

Vail & Heldt repeatedly emphasize that a satisfying OHV experience is, for many users, not nearly as much about the *quantity* of trails, but rather about the *quality* of trails. While the South End proposal adds nearly 200 miles of system *roads* (level-1 and level-2) over which ATV use would be authorized, it adds less than 6 miles of OHV *trails* (new routes, and “adopted” illegal routes) to the system. Currently, the project area contains only 7.5 miles of legal OHV trail riding—all on the Middle Fork Calispell trail. And, while we can find no reference to it anywhere in the EA, the CNF’s Power Lake vegetation project is considering converting this trail to a system road in order to access proposed timber harvest units. Such conversion would further reduce the relatively low level of challenge provided by the only OHV trail in currently in the project area. Thus, from a cumulative-effects perspective there would potentially be a net reduction in the *quality* of trail riding opportunities in the project area.

Response: Local OHV clubs and users that attended the public meetings at the Chewelah Peak Learning Center during the winter of 2009 indicated that providing for loop routes, connecting communities north/south and east/west, and providing for opportunities to ride directly from campsites were very important features in the development of an OHV trail system. These features have been provided for in the proposed action. It was also noted that some OHV users prefer riding trails over roads, but for most users the ability to access the Forest by OHV on a connected system of low-volume road would provide a drastic improvement to the quality of the system. Trail opportunities within the project area, as noted, are limited. However, the Forest does provide, in addition to the Middle Fork Calispell Trail System, challenging OHV/Jeep trail opportunities on the Twin Sisters, Mack-King and US Mountain trails on the Three Rivers Ranger District. The Middle Fork ORV Trail system is 20 miles long. The trail was a road constructed for a timber sale. Preliminary planning for the Power Lake Timber Sale is considering temporarily changing the trail back to a road (coincident status, when the trail was designated in the early 1990’s, the Forest Service did not have

the option of coincident status). Note that all the closed roads that would be opened for OHV use are coincident routes – future projects may also use those roads. The effects of future projects on recreation are considered in the project analysis.

Vail & Heldt maintain that while their study centers on snowmobiling, it is relevant to other forms of motorized recreation. However they include discussion of the difficulties of managing ATVs and the unique management challenges ATVs pose compared to other forms of motorized recreation:

- *The owners' longstanding relationship with the Rangeley Snowmobile Club is now threatened by a third party: all-terrain vehicle drivers, who trespass on snowmobile trails and logging roads in all seasons.*
- *ATVs undercut both recreational and industrial land uses, tearing up trails and causing timber stand damage, soil erosion, and vandalism*
- *The state has responded with increased mediation efforts and enforcement of ATV speeding and drunk driving laws. Its strategy is to tame ATVs, as it did snowmobilers in the 1970s, by offering trail grants, safety education, and other services as incentives for club formation and self-policing. Recruitment has been limited, however: trail grants are a weak incentive for "rational egoist" ATVs who can trespass on or off trail with a low probability of apprehension*
- *Symptomatic of the governance challenge, fewer than half of ATVs are state-registered*
- *The model's resilience is also being tested by two exogenous forces: the ATV boom and changing land ownership*
- *In contrast to Sweden's intense sledder-skier conflicts, Maine's principal type 3 conflict has snowmobilers on the receiving end of detrimental externalities caused by ATVs*

We contend that full comprehension of Vail & Heldt would lead the CNF to a different conclusion regarding the likelihood that the South End proposal will result in less illegal activity.

Response: The Forest recognizes the difficulty of controlling off-road travel by both off-road and highway vehicles (EA pg. 5-6), but still considers this a step in the right direction.

33. Comments Regarding the Safety analysis

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The obvious safety implications of increasing the number of inexperienced or untrained OHV drivers in the project area is just glossed over in the EA.

Response: A Motorized Mixed Use Analysis was conducted by a qualified engineer according to *EM-7700-30 Guidelines for Engineering Analysis of Motorized Mixed Use on National Forest System Roads*. This analysis was based on the existing state laws and conducted on a road-by-road basis. The analysis identified crash probability and crash severity (EA pages 67-68) for each road. High probability roads were identified (EA page 68) and appropriate mitigations included (EA pages 31 and 68).

Curtis and Pamela Ott

We enjoy being able to ride some of the forest roads would rather meet other traffic on those narrow roads on our small vehicles than in our pickup truck. Sometimes with a pickup meeting another like size vehicle, it becomes a problem getting past each other

Merrill Ott

Over the past years, since opening some of the county roads to OHV travel, there have been few, if any, reportable incidents or accidents involving ATV's. There have been situations involving riders operating off-road, and usually involved alcohol.

Gary Prewitt (EWATVA)

Since the publishing of the MVUM's for the Colville National Forest, statistics have shown very little to no conflict arising from mixed use of OHV's and other traffic on the same forest roads. It should also be noted that the same holds true for mixed use on local jurisdiction roads in the tri-county area as well.

Response: The safety analysis identified known accidents involving OHVs (EA page 67).

34. Comments Regarding the Fish and Water Analysis

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The EA states, of the WEPP modeled estimations of increase in soil erosion, "Sediment delivery is discussed in the Hydrology section of this chapter." However, the Water and Fish section fails to provide any corresponding quantitative estimates of sediment delivery to any stream.

Response: The WEPP model was used to quantify a range of impacts that could be present for sediment delivery, as presented in the soils section of the EA. WEPP was not utilized to quantify specific changes in sediment delivery as it pertains to water quality and fisheries. The limitations of the model prevent us from identifying changes in sediment that are specific to particular vehicle use. The Hydrology and Fish section of the EA does discuss the delivery of sediment in a qualitative manner (p.77-87). The purpose of this discussion on sediment was to provide the reader with a general understanding of the potential effects of sediment delivery to water quality and fisheries.

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The EA's conclusion that the Proposed Action would have no effect on water quality or fish is not supported by the facts. We would expect that the improvements in the dispersed camping situation would have desirable effects on water and fish. However the "no effects" conclusion is also heavily reliant upon the premise that a significant increase in legal OHV travel opportunities, in combination with the proposed education, outreach, monitoring, and enforcement, will result in significantly reduced illegal OHV activity and associated ecological damage. Elsewhere in these comments we explain why that premise is false, and this includes the lack of guarantee for effective funding for enforcement, restoration, and the described monitoring.

The EA states on p. 88: The current MVUM has about 60 miles of mixed use roads. These roads were reviewed to identify the effects of motorized mixed use on water quality or fish habitat. For most roads, motorized mixed use does not appear to change the traffic level enough to change erosion and sediment production. We question the likelihood of there being a review that could parse out the existing level of damage, accurately quantifying that attributable to OHVs and that to regular motor vehicle traffic.

The EA also states on p. 88: Some of the current motorized trails cause effects to fisheries. The trails go through wet areas, sandy soils, or unstable soils. They can become compacted, rutted, and erode into stream channels. Some of the trails cross the streams and these crossings can become avenues for sediment. The EA does not disclose which trails are causing that damage, nor does it include an alternative that would either close or rehabilitate the damage along those trails.

“The proposed action meets the intent of the INFISH standards and guidelines. The proposed action addresses these standards and guidelines.” (EA at p. 90, repeated at p. 91.) The courts have explicitly stated that the purpose of a NEPA document is to state the relevant Forest Plan standards, and specifically demonstrate how management actions are consistent with those standards. Statements such as “meets the intent” and “addresses” fall short of legal requirements.

Response: The Hydrology and Fisheries Report for the South End MVUM Project addresses the effects by each watershed. The effects calls area summarized on pages 67 and 68 of the Hydrology and Fisheries Report for the South End MVUM Project. The effects calls vary by watershed.

Page 27 of the Hydrology and Fisheries Report for the South End MVUM Project details the Forest Damage Response team, monitoring, and effectiveness of the techniques used to reduce unauthorized use.

The intent of this project is to improve the condition of forest lands ... funding cannot be guaranteed, but every attempt will be made to secure the necessary funding to complete the restoration work as presented. Determining the level of damage by vehicle type is impractical and does not change the necessity to restore those areas damaged by vehicular use. The proposed action moves us in a positive direction to managing and restoring the condition within the project area, unlike alternatives 1 and 2. The proposed action also moves us in the direction of meeting INFISH guidelines whereas alternatives 1 and 2 would not.

The cumulative effects in the fish and water report were amended to add clarification to how the effects calls were made. This is found on pages 66-68 of the Hydrology and Fisheries Report for the South End MVUM Project. The Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities are listed on page 34 and 35 of the EA. This list was used for the cumulative effects analysis.

OHV travel on lands outside the National Forest boundary is beyond the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, and beyond the scope of this analysis. Cumulative effects of all roads located within the National Forest Boundary, including roads under county jurisdiction, were analyzed as a group. Alternative 2 analyzes what the cumulative effects would be with the current MVUM rescinded.

Vicki Gish

There was a new trail purposed that I have a question about as it looks like it is going up a gully that is wet through early summer? It is off of FS road 9545. Just past Drummond Creek is an old road FS 360 to

the right going up the hill, the new trail proposed goes right off of the old road into a gully that is a seasonal creek on the map. It meets FS road 250 and back to FS 9521. Am I seeing that right on the map?

Response: Carmen Nielsen, Recreation, walked and GPSed the route, and it does not go up a stream nor cross a stream. The stream layer is incorrect.

35. Comments Regarding the Soil Analysis

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The same can be said of Forest Plan soil standards. The EA does not even mention the applicable standards, nor the laws and regulations—let alone demonstrate consistency. With few exceptions the Proposed Action will not rehabilitate damaged soils, and will facilitate the increase in area extent of damage and more loss of soil productivity. And although there are many other management activities and other actions that impact soil quality and soil productivity, once again, none of them are analyzed for their cumulative impacts in this EA.

Response: Forest Plan standards are addressed in the Soil Report pages 32-33 and summarized in the EA page 99.

SOIL, WATER, AND AIR

1. **National Forest System lands will be managed under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield without permanent impairment of land productivity.**
 - a. **The total acreage of all detrimental soil conditions should not exceed 20 percent of the total acreage within the activity area including landings and system roads. Consider restoration treatments if detrimental conditions are about 20 percent or more of the activity area. Detrimental soil conditions include compaction, puddling, displacement and severely burned soil.**
 - c. **Identify areas of high soil erosion or mass failure potential and evaluate probable impacts of resource development.**
6. **Revegetate, cut and fill slopes, and other large areas of disturbed soil as quickly as possible with vegetation suitable for the management goals of the area.**

The analysis area for this project is on a watershed basis. A GIS analysis was conducted to assure total detrimental soil conditions remain below 20%. Areas of high erosion and mass failure potential were identified. Areas of high mass failure potential are not included in the proposed action. Areas of high erosion potential were addressed through practices to minimize impacts (in addition, see EA pages 31-32, EA Appendix C, and Soil Report pages 27-29). Practices to minimize erosion include design, water control, surfacing, and revegetation of disturbed lands.

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The increases in noxious weeds and other invasive species have a direct adverse effect on land and soil productivity, yet that indirect effect is hardly even mentioned.

Response: See the response to #37. Since no increase in weeds is anticipated, no further analysis was needed.

36. Comments Regarding the Wildlife Analysis

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

For wildlife, the “no effects” conclusion for practically every species is predicated upon the false premise that a significant increase in legal OHV travel opportunities, in combination with the proposed education, outreach, monitoring, and enforcement, will result in significantly reduced illegal OHV activity and associated wildlife disturbance.

Response: The EA (page 105) recognizes that motor vehicle use on roads and/or trails has the potential to disturb wildlife. The project area currently has 410 miles of routes open to highway vehicles. The disturbance associated with use on these roads is part of the existing condition and will continue under any alternative. The primary change under the proposed alternative is to allow OHV use on 248 miles of those roads. Allowing mixed use on selected roads is not expected to change the existing level of wildlife disturbance currently associated with those roads.

And once again, although there are many other management activities and other actions that impact wildlife abundance and distribution, none of them are analyzed for their cumulative impacts in this EA. The inadequate cumulative effects analyses contribute to the situation where no meaningful disclosure of the impacts of the current level of motorized traffic on wildlife can be found.

Response: The current level of motorized use was assessed as part of the existing condition. Analysis of any reductions in the current level of use was outside the scope of this EA. Cumulative effects to wildlife are discussed in each species profile in the EA (Chapter 3).

“Changes in public motorized access (firewood gathering) within the project area have bearing on the management of snags and downed logs...” (EA at 101). Availability of snags and downed logs affects most of the Colville National Forest MIS and TES species, including barred owls, pileated woodpeckers, marten, three-toed woodpeckers, beaver, Canada lynx, white-headed woodpeckers, great gray owls, northern goshawks, wolverines, fisher, and Townsend’s big-eared bats.

Allowing full-sized vehicles to drive 300 feet from roads has already resulted in loss of snags otherwise not accessed, and allowing new motorized access will disturb unquantified acres of nesting, denning, and foraging habitat. Yet the EA illogically concludes that there are, and would be, “no effect” to these species.

Response: Vehicle access up to 300 feet off roads is for the purposes of dispersed camping. Off-road travel for the purposes of firewood cutting is already illegal and will remain so. This is part of the existing condition and was analyzed as such. Closing broad areas to firewood cutting to protect snags was outside the scope of the EA.

The EA does not demonstrate consistency with Management Area 1 Standards and other direction (EA at 7). The EA also does not demonstrate that the FS has managed the project area consistent with all the other relevant Forest Plan standards and habitat requirements for other MIS and TES species. The EA does not even mention all the applicable Forest Plan wildlife standards and habitat requirements.

Response: The Forest Plan (4-70) allows for motorized use within the MA-1 management area if habitat integrity is not compromised. The EA tiers to the Forest Plan, therefore all Forest Plan wildlife standards and habitat requirements are incorporated in the analysis.

Don Tryon

The 9535-090 road: I am opposed to reconstructing the closed portions of the road and constructing an off-road motor vehicle route through an Old Growth land allocation [MA-1]. That is why the existing road was closed in the first place. In direct conflict with management direction, motor vehicle use is being encouraged in this instance.

Response: The Forest Plan (4-70) allows for motorized use within the MA-1 management area if habitat integrity is not compromised. The EA (page 111) identifies firewood cutting as the primary impact to barred owl habitat. The MA-1 area is currently closed to firewood cutting, and will remain so under the preferred alternative.

37. Comments Regarding the Weeds Analysis

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

The EA says of the Proposed Action, “noxious weeds populations are not likely to spread substantially and could likely decrease.” This “likely decrease” scenario is unlikely and is without support in the EA anyway. And what “spread substantially” would constitute is not explained. The EA doesn’t even simply state how many more acres of national forest land could see new invasions of noxious weeds, nor how many linear miles or roads and trails along which new invasions would occur. There isn’t even any quantitative discussion of the existing situation.

The costs and the short- and long-term effectiveness of the CNF’s noxious weed treatment program are not disclosed. Increases due to the Proposed Action are likewise omitted.

Response:

Current treatments of noxious weeds populations combined with more managed recreational use may limit ground disturbance throughout the project area, therefore reducing the opportunity for noxious weeds to spread or establish in new areas. There is no reasonable method for attempting to quantify how many new acres could potentially be infested as a result of the proposed action. There are too many variables that could affect when and where a new infestation could establish including but not limited to: timing and distribution of rainfall, climatic conditions, disturbance, livestock and wildlife use, and recreational use. Noxious weeds are already common along many roads and trails within the project area, the areas that are not currently infested are not likely to become infested because site conditions and existing vegetation are adequate at preventing the establishment of noxious weeds.

Similarly, cost and effectiveness of treatments of noxious weeds can vary greatly from year to year. Certain populations of noxious weeds may be reduced or eliminated while new areas can become invaded. Varying climatic conditions from year to year can impact the growing season, growth rate, and ability of noxious weeds to establish. Noxious weeds populations are expected to remain relatively stable as new populations establish and other populations are reduced or

eliminated. The proposed action is not likely to increase the cost or need for noxious weeds treatment throughout the project area.

38. Comments Regarding the Range Analysis

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

Additionally, in spite of the EA's acknowledgement that the impacts of heavy dispersed camping alter livestock use patterns, there is no mention of the potential connection to the upcoming NEPA analysis for the renewal of the Calispell grazing permit reauthorization.

Response: The effects of motorized recreation on livestock grazing is discussed in the EA pg. 5, 79, and 114. Practices are included in this EA to manage livestock in a motorized recreation environment (EA pg. 30-33).

The cumulative effect of recreation on grazing is discussed in the Cusick Gardiner AMP EA (pg. 17-19); Calispell AMP EA (pg. 20-21, 28-29); Chewelah Complex AMP EA (pg. 36, 44-46). These allotment plans include projects and strategies designed to draw cattle away from the streams and wetlands.

On-going grazing allotments were identified in the EA (pg. 32).

Cumulative effects of the proposed action in an area of livestock grazing is discussed EA (Hydrology and Fish report pg. 66-68⁴, soil pg. 97-98, sensitive plants (pg. 112),

39. Comments Regarding the Cumulative Effects Analysis (no specific resource)

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

"Cumulative Effects" (EA at 92-93). There are many management activities and other actions that impact water quality and fish habitat, however once again, none of them are analyzed for their cumulative impacts in this EA. The discussion here is about direct and indirect impacts of the Proposed Action, despite the section's acknowledgment that "A cumulative effect results from the incremental effect of the action, when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes the other actions and regardless of land ownership on which the other actions occur." (Emphasis added.)

A proper and thorough analysis of cumulative effects is extremely important given the situation in the Project Area, which—as the EA admits—includes much human-induced damage to streams, riparian areas and fish populations, and lack of attainment of Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs) along miles of project area streams. In particular, in spite of our repeated requests, cumulative-effects analysis has yet to be conducted on the impacts of recent designations made by local county governments authorizing ATV travel on county roads accessing and/or passing through the CNF and the 600+ miles of system roads that CNF has recently designated as mixed-use. In fact, no analysis of even the individual impacts of either set of designations has ever been conducted.

⁴ The Hydrology and Fisheries Report was amended to expand the discussion of the cumulative effects of grazing.

Response: Previous mixed use designations of County and Forest Service roads were analyzed as an existing condition. Alternative 2 and the proposed action proposed changes to these designations which were analyzed for their effects. Other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions, both federal and non-federal were researched and considered by specialists in their reports. The activities that trigger cumulative effects vary by resource and are disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA.

David Heflick (CNW)

During the meeting, we maintained that there is potential for significant environmental impacts resulting from the combined effect of the 2008 MVUM and recent mixed-use designations on county-administered routes made by Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties. We requested that NEPA analysis be conducted to determine the impacts of nearly 1000 new miles of mixed-use roads on the CNF, as well as the cumulative impacts of the county designations that have been “reasonably foreseeable” for the last three years.

Response: This analysis considered the cumulative effects pertinent to each resource. The recreation analysis considered the cumulative effect of mixed use at the Forest level (EA page 63).

Don Tryon

Does the recreational target shooting adversely impact hunting and other recreational users in general? Yes! I don’t want to stop recreational shooting in the National Forests, but the impacts are substantial. It means something has to be reduced. Impacts are always cumulative.

Response: All resource analysts were asked to consider the possibility for cumulative effects from recreational shooting; and none identified a nexus for a cumulative effect. Without more information regarding the nature of these potential cumulative effects, no additional analysis was conducted.

40. Comments Regarding the Transportation Analysis

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

“The proposal would open about 8 miles of existing NFS roads that are closed to all motorized vehicles.” (EA at 12.) The EA must disclose the reasons why those roads have been closed, or were closed to begin with, citing the various relevant past NEPA documents.

Response: The following table displays the information requested. As you can see, most of these roads were either closed because of the Forest Plan or the last project in the area kept them closed because they were closed before. The 1988 Forest Plan new Service Level D roads would be closed after the activity is complete-- Standards and Guidelines, Transportation #6 – (Forest Plan pg. 4-58). The Forest generally recloses roads after the activity is complete, unless a reason surfaces to keep the road open. Only FR 9535090 was closed due to a resource concern

– to prevent firewood cutting in the MA-1. The response to the wildlife comments discusses why it is acceptable to have an OHV trail but not an open road (see pg. 100-111).

Table 2. Information about roads proposed to be opened to OHVs

Road	Total Miles	Miles to be Opened	NEPA Document	RMO signed	Closure Reason
4300121		0.3	McPherson EA	2000	Closed prior to project
4300311		0.5	Quartzite EA	2004	Forest Plan
4300470		1.1	Conger EA	2009	Closed prior to project
4342650		0.2	There is no RMO on file for this road.		
9521017		2.1	Brewer EA	1998	Closed prior to project
9521255		1.1	Chewelah EA	1997	Forest Plan
9535090		1.6	Addy EA	1997	To prevent firewood cutting in an MA-1
9545360		0.4	There is no RMO on file for this road.		
9545901		0.7	Brewer EA	1998	Closed prior to project

41. Other Comments Regarding Resource Analyses

Dave Heflick & Jeff Juel (CNW & TLC)

And despite the emphasis on many issues evident from the wording of the cited Forest Plan standards (EA at 8 – 11), the EA fails to explicitly and adequately address consistency with those standards, instead tending to make vague, blanket statements of Forest Plan consistency.

Response: The EA summarizes information from the specialist reports. The specialist reports address consistency with those standards.

With regard to specific Forest Plan standards listed in Chapter 1.

Forest Plan Amendment #31

Allow motor vehicle use only on designated roads, trails, and areas.

Limited use of motor vehicles solely for the purpose of dispersed camping would be allowed within a specified distance of certain designated routes, as determined in conjunction with the designation of routes open to motor vehicle use.

No changes are proposed in any alternative (EA pg. 21-30).

1988 Colville National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan

Recreation

1. Recognize undeveloped campsites, outstanding scenic, geological, botanical areas or areas where concentrated recreation use occurs as being significant in providing dispersed recreation opportunities. Inventory, evaluate, and manage these sites.

2. Limit regulation, constraint, and supervision of recreation use to the minimum necessary for resource protection, visitor satisfaction, and safety.
11. Encourage partnership arrangements with user groups and other recreation providers to develop and maintain a diverse and balanced range of recreational services and facilities.

The proposed action recognized undeveloped campsites, and updated their inventory (EA pg. 55). Campsite regulation is only proposed in areas with resource damage or high risk for resource damage (EA pgs. 25-27). The proposal encourages partnerships (EA pg. 25).

Trails

1. Develop and manage trail system as a recreation facility. Plan trail difficulty levels to complement Recreation Opportunity Spectrum management objectives.
3. Cooperate with state and counties on development of trail systems where appropriate.
10. Ensure that ORV use is managed to mitigate their impacts on other resources, promote safety of users, and minimize conflict with other uses.

The proposed action develops a trail system, including trailheads. Compatibility with the ROS classification was considered (EA pg. 62). The Forest has coordinated with the Counties (EA pg. 13). Practices are included to 'mitigate' impacts on other resources (EA pg. 30-33).

Wildlife

7. No actions that are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any plant or animal species or cause the need for listing any species threatened or endangered, will be authorized, funded, or carried out by the Colville National Forest. When evaluating the potential effects of an activity on any species, the species status, its dependency on the affected habitat, and the extent or limitation of the habitat, will be evaluated as they influence the viability of populations within the Forest or the range of the species. The Biological Evaluations have been completed and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred.

Biological Evaluations have been prepared (Analysis File:Wildlife: June 11, 2010 ; Fish: July 22, 2011, Botany: July 19, 2010). US Fish and Wildlife has concurred (Analysis File:External Communications:August 29, 2011).

Fisheries

4. Road crossings of Class I and II streams and fish-bearing Class III streams will be the minimum necessary. Existing crossings will be used whenever possible. New crossings will be located at areas of the least possible stream gradient. Stream crossing structures will provide the least resistance to upstream fish passage. Drainage from roads will be dispersed prior to entering streams.
5. Maintain the general character of aquatic and riparian habitat features. Maintain a natural source of large woody debris to provide structural fish habitat.
7. Maintain water quality parameters within the range of good fish habitat conditions, and within Washington State water quality standards.

Soil, Water and Air

3. Comply with State requirements in accordance with the Clean Water Act for protection of waters of the State of Washington in conformance with the Clean Water Act, regulations, and federal guidance issued thereto.

Riparian

1. Special attention shall be given to land and vegetation for approximately 300 feet from the edges of all perennial streams, lakes and other bodies of water. No management practices causing detrimental changes in water temperature or chemical composition, blockages of water courses, or deposits of sediment shall be permitted within these areas which will seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat.

2. Emphasize protection and improvement of soil, water, vegetation, fish, and wildlife resources while managing the riparian areas under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. Give preferential consideration to riparian dependent resources when conflicts among land use activities occur.

b. Off-road vehicle use is restricted to essential crossings.

g. Road construction in riparian zones will be limited to stream crossings unless determined otherwise by site-specific analysis. Numbers of stream crossings will be minimized and they will be constructed to minimize sedimentation and to allow fish passage where appropriate. The needs of native fishes will normally be emphasized over those of introduced ones.

i. Meet the requirements of Executive Orders: 11988, Floodplain Management; and 11990, Protection of Wetlands.

No new stream crossings are proposed (EA pg. 91). Riparian conditions and large wood are improved (EA pg. 93). The project complies with the State water quality standards and the Clean Water Act (EA pg. 94). Special consideration was given to the lands within 300 feet of perennial streams (EA pg. 77-93). Activities are proposed on floodplains or wetlands would not harm them (Hydrology and Fisheries Report (pgs. 48-68). Transportation

1. Provide and maintain public road and trail access to National Forest System lands. User safety will be the primary emphasis.

2. Road construction and reconstruction standards will be the minimum necessary to meet user and resource needs.

3. Coordinate transportation planning and road management with state and local agencies and intermingled landowners.

8. Designate roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use through the Motor Vehicle Use Map and in conformance with ROS designations for specific areas. Manage motor vehicle use to minimize resource damage and to promote public safety.

User safety was considered and practices included to emphasize safety (EA pg. 66-69). No roads will be constructed. The project was designed with consideration of the needs of intermingled and adjacent owners (EA pg. 12-14 and Appendix C). Implementation will be through the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), and is consistent with the ROS designations (EA pg. 62).

Inland Native Fish Strategy

RF-2 For each existing or planned road or trail, meet the Riparian Management Objectives and avoid adverse effects to inland native fish by –

- Minimize road in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas.
- Consider regulating traffic during wet periods to minimize erosion and sediment delivery.
- Avoid sediment delivery to streams from road surfaces. Consider techniques such as outsloping and routing road drainage.
- Avoid disruption of natural hydrologic flow paths.

RM-1 Design, construct and operate recreation facilities, including trails and dispersed sites, in a manner that does not retard or prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs) and avoids adverse effects on inland native fish. Relocate or close recreation facilities where RMOs cannot be met or adverse effects on inland native fish cannot be avoided.

RM-2 Adjust dispersed and developed recreation practices that retard or prevent attainment of RMOs or adversely affect inland native fish. Where adjustment measures such as education, use limitations, traffic control devices, increased maintenance, relocation of facilities, and/or specific site closures are not effective in meeting RMOs, eliminate the practice or occupancy.

RA-4 Prohibit storage of fuels and other toxicants within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas.

The need to address dispersed camping in riparian areas was part of the purpose and need (EA pg. 5), and was addressed by the proposal (EA pg. 25-28). The effects on each Riparian Management Objective is discussed (EA pg. 93).

By addressing dispersed camping in riparian areas, public storage of fuels and other toxicants would be reduced.