

NEWS RELEASE

Pacific Northwest Region - Colville National Forest
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Off-Roaders Damage Forest Meadow

Newport, WA - Over the Memorial Day weekend, several individuals drove their four-wheel drive vehicles off-road into a wet meadow in the Middle Fork Calispell Creek area. After a few minutes of spin-outs and tight turns, the vehicle operators left behind a muddy bog covering about 1.5 acres of the original meadow.

Wet meadows on the Colville National Forest provide foraging opportunities for big game and essential habitats for native amphibian and invertebrate species. They also provide habitat for most of the rare plant species found on the forest. Wetland soils are soft and fragile, making them easily damaged. Vehicles driven through these sites can quickly tear up the vegetation, compact the soil, and leave deep ruts. Exposed soils may also dry out and become colonized by noxious weeds that rob big game of foraging opportunities. Once these fragile meadows are damaged it can take many years for them to heal.

While the road adjacent to the damaged wet meadow is open to all vehicles, cross-country travel on the Colville National Forest is prohibited as identified on the forest's Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). An investigation into this mudding incident is on-going. Individuals responsible for such damage to natural resources can be fined and may also be required to pay the full cost of restoring the site.

The Colville National Forest requests your help in protecting fragile wetlands. Please report off-road violations to the Forest Supervisor's Office at 509-684-7000 (weekdays) or 509-685-6900 (weekends). Copies of the Colville National Forest MVUM are free of charge and available at any forest office.

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