

122 Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action

123 The Forest Service prepared this programmatic draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) in
124 compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal laws
125 and regulations. This DEIS discloses the environmental impacts that would result from the
126 proposed action and alternatives. This document is organized into four chapters:

- 127 • **Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action.** This chapter includes the history of the
128 proposal, the purpose of and need for action, and the agency’s proposal for achieving that
129 purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of
130 the proposal and how the public responded.
- 131 • **Chapter 2. Alternatives, including the Proposed Action.** This chapter provides a more
132 detailed description of the agency’s proposed action and alternative methods for achieving
133 the stated purpose. These alternatives were developed based on significant issues raised by
134 the public and other agencies. Finally, this section provides a summary table of the
135 environmental consequences associated with each alternative.
- 136 • **Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.** This chapter
137 describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other
138 alternatives. This analysis is organized by resource area, significant issues, and
139 environmental component.
- 140 • **Chapter 4. Consultation and Coordination.** This chapter provides a list of preparers and
141 agencies consulted during the development of the DEIS.
- 142 • **Appendices.** The appendices provide more detailed information to support the analyses
143 presented in the DEIS.
- 144 • **Index.** The index provides page numbers by document topic.

145 Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be
146 found in the project planning record located at the Colville National Forest Supervisor’s Office.

147 Background

148 The Colville National Forest is managed by the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department
149 of Agriculture (USDA). As required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976
150 (16 U.S.C. 1604, et seq.), the Forest Service currently manages Colville National Forest under a
151 land management plan (forest plan) approved in 1988. The 1988 forest plan, including its
152 amendments, is the main document that guides Forest decision-making with respect to managing
153 natural resources (e.g., soil, water, vegetation, and ecosystems) and human uses (e.g., recreation,
154 thinning, livestock grazing, firewood gathering, special use permits, and search for solitude) of
155 the Colville National Forest. The Newport Ranger District is still part of the Kaniksu National
156 Forest, but has been administered by the Colville National Forest since 1974. Throughout this
157 document, the terms “Colville National Forest” and “Forest” refer to both the Colville and that
158 portion of the Kaniksu National Forest that Colville National Forest administers.

159 The Colville National Forest is proposing to revise its 1988 forest plan. Per direction in the
160 NFMA and its implementing regulations found in 36 CFR 219, every national forest must revise
161 its land management plan:

- 162 • Every 10 to 15 years;
- 163 • When conditions or demands in the area covered by the plan have changed significantly;
- 164 • When changes in agency policies, goals, or objectives would have a significant effect on
165 forest level programs; and
- 166 • When monitoring and evaluation indicate revision is necessary.

167 During the 25-year life of the forest plan, economic, social, and ecological conditions have
168 changed. New laws, regulations, and policies are in place. Congressional direction, court
169 decisions, conservation agreements, recovery plans, and scientific findings contribute to changed
170 management conditions and support the need for revision. Endangered Species Act species
171 listings have been updated, and new information based on monitoring and scientific research is
172 available.

173 Due to these changed conditions and the age of the plan, the Colville National Forest began the
174 process of revising its plan in 2003. During this process, the Forest developed multiple
175 programmatic strategies (or alternatives) for revising its plan. A summary of these alternatives
176 (chapter 2) as well as analysis of the environmental consequences (chapter 3) they pose are the
177 focus of this draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).

178 Development of the Proposed Action

179 The Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests began a joint forest plan revision effort
180 in 2004, with community workshops, county representative meetings, and tribal consultation. In
181 June 2011, the scoping of the proposed action was initiated with the Federal Register Notice of
182 Intent to Prepare an EIS and Revised Forest Plan. That scoping notice indicated the Forests would
183 be revising under the provisions of the National Forest planning regulations in effect prior to
184 November 9, 2000, referred to in this document as the 1982 Planning Rule. (See the following
185 hyperlink for the 1982 procedures: <http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/nfmareg.html>.)

186 On May 9, 2012, the agency established a new planning rule (the 2012 Planning Rule). The 2012
187 Rule also provides transition language at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(3), allowing the responsible official
188 to elect to use the provisions of the prior planning regulations to prepare plan amendments and
189 revisions. The responsible official has elected to continue to follow the provisions of the planning
190 regulations in effect prior to May 9, 2012, as indicated in the 2011 Notice of Intent. However, in
191 consideration of transition time requirements, the Forest will develop the monitoring plan per 36
192 CFR 219.12 of the 2012 Rule.

193 In 2014, after review of public input and the feasibility of the combined process, the regional
194 forester determined that separating the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests'
195 revision efforts was the best way to reflect public input and resource needs. While the analyses
196 for the forests are still considering all public comments received to date, the Colville DEIS and
197 future documents will reflect issues and alternatives specific to the Colville National Forest. The
198 Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest is completing a separate analysis and draft revised forest
199 plan specific to its resource needs and public input.

200 The proposed revised forest plan updates the desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines,
201 special areas, suitability, and monitoring requirements that will guide management of the Colville
202 National Forest for the next 10 to 15 years. It also changes the description and allocation of the
203 management areas to achieve forestwide desired conditions and to provide opportunities for a

204 range of activities. The proposed revised forest plan accompanying this DEIS addresses the need
205 for changes as described below.

206 Planning Area

207 The 1.1-million-acre Colville National Forest is located in the northeastern corner of Washington
208 State within Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille Counties. Ranger district offices are located in
209 Republic, Kettle Falls, Metaline Falls, and Newport, and the supervisor's office is located in
210 Colville (see figure 1).

211 Waters from the Colville National Forest feed Lake Roosevelt on the Columbia River, which is
212 impounded by the Grand Coulee Dam, the largest power-supplying dam in the United States. The
213 Grand Coulee Dam generates 21 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity per year, supplying power to
214 Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, California, Nevada, New Mexico,
215 Utah, Arizona, and Canada. Hydropower and flood control on the Columbia River are governed
216 by the Columbia River Treaty between the United States and Canada. In addition, two
217 hydropower projects have acreage on the Colville National Forest on the Pend Oreille River.
218 Boundary Dam generates one-third of Seattle City Light's power, and Box Canyon Dam supplies
219 power for Pend Oreille County.

220 Plant species data include about 2,400 vascular and nonvascular plant and fungi taxa that occur
221 on the Forest and vicinity. Of those, 38 have been identified as Pacific Northwest Region
222 sensitive species. The moonwort species, *Botrychium lineare*, occurs here at the only site in
223 Washington State, thriving on the Colville National Forest. In addition, two wildflower-viewing
224 sites are documented and described for public recreation opportunities. The wide range of
225 geological and soil types, precipitation, and elevations spanning warm valley bottoms to cold
226 mountain peaks create a diverse assortment of plant communities.

227 Three hundred twenty-three known species of vertebrate wildlife occur in the Forest, including 73
228 species of mammals, 234 birds, 9 reptiles, and 7 species of amphibians. Thirty-one species or
229 sub-species of fish inhabit Colville National Forest waters. Unique wildlife species such as red-
230 tailed chipmunk, northern bog lemming, and woodland caribou live on the Forest. The Selkirk
231 Mountains and Kettle River Range are also the only place in America where woodland caribou,
232 moose, elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer share the same habitat. Northeastern Washington is
233 home to approximately 65 percent of Washington State's white-tailed deer population, a majority
234 of them on the Colville National Forest.

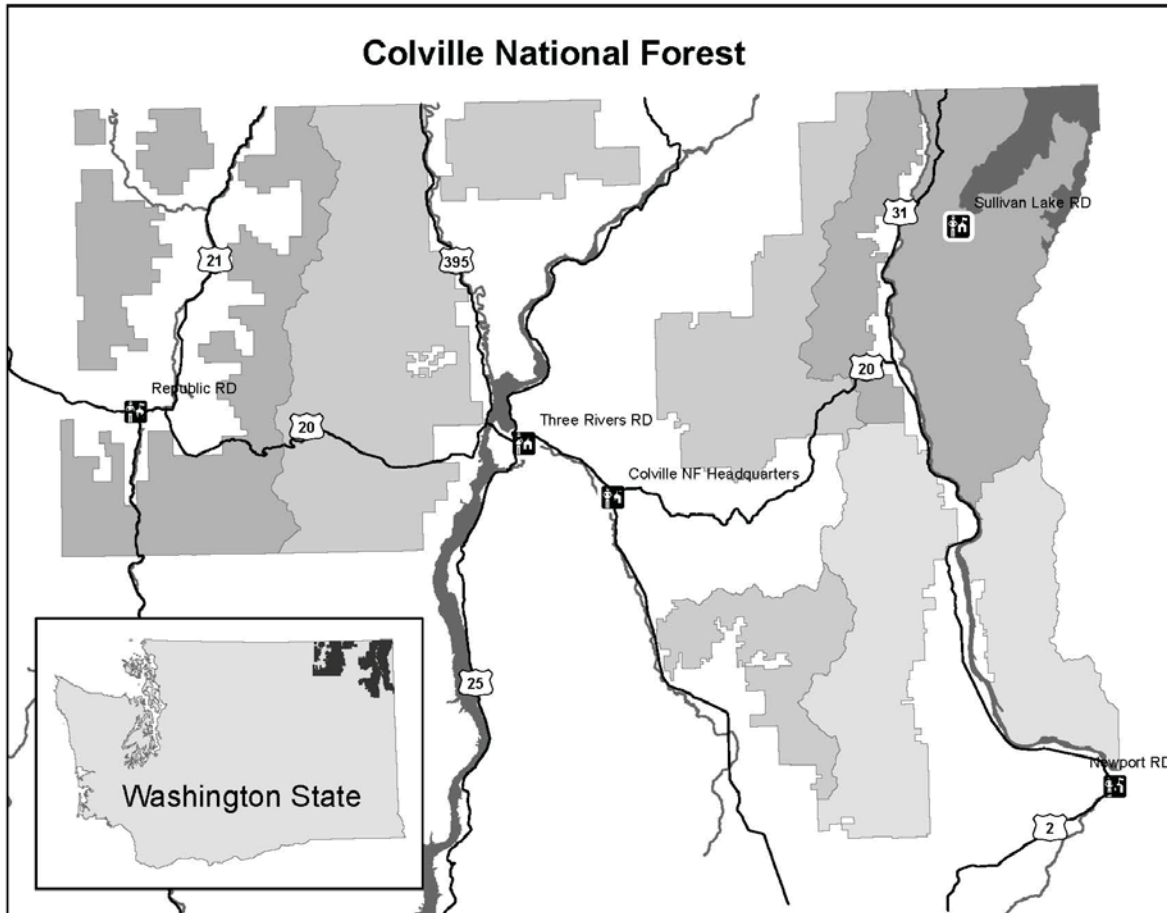
235 The very eastern portion of the Forest is included in the Selkirk Grizzly Bear Recovery Area. The
236 recovery area is one of two in Washington State and one of six in the Nation. It includes the
237 Selkirk Mountains Ecosystem of northern Idaho, southern British Columbia, and northeastern
238 Washington. The recovery area supports a small population of grizzly bears estimated at 40 to
239 50 bears.

240 The Forest also contains recovery area and proposed critical habitat for the last remaining herd of
241 woodland caribou in the continental U.S. The recovery area for the Selkirk Mountain woodland
242 caribou, the most endangered mammal in the continental U.S., includes a portion of the Colville
243 National Forest and public lands in northern Idaho and southern British Columbia. In 2013, only
244 18 animals were counted in the entire recovery area.

245 The Forest does not contain designated critical habitat for Canada lynx, but follows current
246 science direction for managing Canada lynx habitat. The Kettle Crest is identified as a core area
247 important for the recovery of Canada lynx in Washington.

248 Bull trout is federally listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Portions of
249 streams on the Forest have been designated as critical habitat for the recovery of this species.

250 The Forest provides a variety of recreation opportunities. The Salmo-Priest Wilderness
251 (31,400 acres) is an example of the Okanogan Highlands landform and is the only wilderness in
252 the northeastern section of the state. The Forest hosts 80 miles of National Recreation Trails. Two
253 of the longest trails are the Kettle Crest (44 miles) and the Shedroof Divide (21.8 miles). The
254 other two National Recreation Trails are the Lakeshore Trail, also known as Sullivan Lake
255 (4.3 miles), and Pass Creek-Grassy Top (7.8 miles). The International Selkirk Loop is one of 31
256 routes in the Nation designated as an All American Road. It winds through northeastern
257 Washington, northern Idaho, and southeastern British Columbia. The loop received the national
258 Rural Community Assistance Action Award from the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service for 2000 to
259 2001.



260
261 **Figure 1. Colville National Forest vicinity map**

262 **Need for Change**

263 The forest supervisor initiated forest plan revision based on legal requirements and significant
264 changes that have occurred in conditions and demands since the 1988 forest plan went into effect.
265 The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) (2015) documents the need to establish or
266 change forest plan management direction. Revision is also warranted because the forest plan is
267 beyond the 10- to 15-year duration provided by the NFMA.

268 Using the information from the AMS, as well as information provided through public engagement
269 and outreach with various public groups, organizations, agencies, officials, and individuals, the
270 Colville National Forest identified five recommended needs for change in the 1988 forest plan.

271 **Wildlife Habitat**

272 There is a need to maintain or restore ecological conditions that contribute to the recovery and
273 viability of terrestrial plant and wildlife species. The 1988 forest plan needs to be updated to
274 reflect new species listings, designated critical habitat, and current science relating to plant and
275 animal species and their habitats. Some wildlife species have been added to the Federal
276 Threatened and Endangered Species List and some have included a new designation of critical
277 habitat (woodland caribou). A considerable body of information is now available concerning the
278 viability of terrestrial wildlife and plant species of management focus. This includes viability
279 assessments for the Interior Columbia Basin and for northeastern Washington. Key factors that
280 influence viability of many of the species assessed include habitat alteration due to timber
281 harvest, wildfire, and other vegetation management activities; restoration of riparian and wetland
282 habitats; and reduction of habitat effectiveness and connectivity due to the potential impacts of
283 roads. Climate change may alter how water systems function and it is projected to exacerbate the
284 loss of old forest habitat due to increased fire rates. This creates a need to restore watershed
285 conditions to be more resilient to disturbances to provide for the recovery and viability of wildlife
286 and plant species.

287 **Vegetative Systems**

288 There is a need to manage forest vegetation conditions to be more resilient to disturbances. The
289 Douglas-fir dry and Northern Rocky Mountain mixed conifer forest types are susceptible to
290 continued severe insect and disease outbreaks. The existing forest plan does not adequately
291 address the factors that have created these unsustainable conditions, nor does it adequately
292 address the varied nature of the landscape. In addition, climate change is predicted to make these
293 conditions even more challenging to sustain. Thus, there is a need to revise the forest plan to
294 focus restoration actions in Douglas-fir dry and Northern Rocky Mountain mixed conifer
295 landscapes, and create conditions that are more resilient to anticipated disturbances. Lodgepole
296 pine forest types are also in need of updated management direction that addresses the challenges
297 described above. For example, historically, frequent fires maintained low tree abundance on dry
298 landscapes with fire cycles lengthening with Euro-settlement. Over time, stand density has
299 increased due to fire suppression. In the absence of fire and without human intervention,
300 competition for water and nutrients, insect and disease mortality, the number of shade-tolerant
301 species, range of even-age class structure, and amount of dead material have increased (Everett et
302 al. 2007). In the past 10 to 15 years, fire acres in eastern Washington have increased with
303 amplified severity reflective of higher fuels levels and tree mortality influences, along with longer
304 fire seasons. Experimental work has shown that these increasing trends can be reduced through
305 active management when applied at a landscape scale (Schwilk et al. 2009).

306 **Climate Change**

307 There is a need to address climate change implications and vulnerabilities. The existing forest
308 plan does not address the potential effect of climate change. Recent scientific findings on climate
309 change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2014) have dramatically improved
310 our understanding of how ecosystems have changed and are likely to change in the future.
311 Changing climate conditions have affected ecosystem composition, structure, process, and spatial
312 pattern, altering the character and distribution of habitats for surrogate plant and animal species.
313 In addition, climate change has altered, and will continue to alter disturbance regimes, including
314 forest insects and diseases, fire, and hydrologic regimes. Future conditions may be more
315 favorable to some undesired non-native plant, wildlife, and aquatic species (IPCC 2014). The full
316 impact of climate change on ecosystems is uncertain, but an integrated management direction that
317 provides flexibility to respond to a changing environment is needed to maintain or restore the
318 resilience of the national forests in the face of these changes.

319 **Social Systems**

320 There is a need to address changed social and economic conditions and preferences in light of
321 ecosystem capacity. Colville National Forest provides a variety of opportunities for recreating,
322 working, and practicing cultural and spiritual traditions. In turn, communities provide
323 infrastructure and skills to support forest management. Sustainable social and economic
324 opportunities depend on well-functioning and resilient ecological systems. During the past
325 20 years, demographic and economic changes have altered how people use and access the Forest.
326 Plan revision needs to address changed social, economic, and ecological conditions. There is a
327 need for the Forest to contribute to predictable and sustained flows of economic and social
328 benefits (e.g., ecosystem services⁴) within the capability of the ecosystem. Social changes include
329 an increasing demand, largely due to population growth, for a variety of recreation opportunities
330 on public lands. An example of changes in recreation use and visitor preferences is a trend toward
331 shorter-duration visits to the Forest compared to those in the past. A more ethnically diverse
332 population is visiting the Forest and visitors are now more likely to stay for a day or weekend,
333 rather than for longer periods. In addition, demand for recreation opportunities in ‘front country’
334 areas is greater than for backcountry areas. New activities and modes of travel continue to appear,
335 e.g., mountain bicycles with over-snow tires and snowmobiles that resemble motorcycles. Plan
336 revision needs to address such a shift, within the capability of the available infrastructure and the
337 ecosystem. Economic shifts in markets for timber products and declines in timber harvests have
338 caused many eastern Washington wood processors to close. Plan revision needs to address the
339 types and extent of forest management activities that can be accomplished within projected
340 budgets.

341 **Aquatic and Riparian Systems**

342 There is a need to accelerate improvement in watershed condition across the Forest. The current
343 forest plan and amendments do not adequately provide integrated management direction to
344 maintain and restore properly functioning watersheds that provide a range of benefits on and off
345 the Colville National Forest within a timeframe that is meaningful. This is supported by new

⁴ Ecosystem services are commonly defined as the benefits people obtain from ecosystems. Ecosystem services include basic services—provisioning services like the delivery of food, fresh water, wood and fiber, and medicine—and services that are less tangible and harder to measure but equally critical: regulating services like carbon sequestration, erosion control, and pollination; cultural services like recreation, ecotourism, and educational and spiritual values; and supporting services like nutrient cycling, soil formation, and primary productivity.
http://www.fs.fed.us/ecosystemservices/About_ES/faq.shtml#ecoservices

346 science, the listing of bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) under the Endangered Species Act
347 (1988), designation of critical habitat for bull trout (2010), information provided by the bull trout
348 recovery plan (2014), and the results of new assessment tools such as the national Watershed
349 Condition Framework. Properly functioning watersheds provide stable and productive ecological
350 systems and allow for conditions that support aquatic species viability and self-sustaining
351 populations, contribute to the recovery and de-listing of threatened and endangered species, and
352 restore stream systems that do not meet Washington State water quality standards (WADoE
353 2014).

354 There is also a need to integrate watershed and aquatic strategies across the Forest. The existing
355 Colville Forest Plan was completed in 1988, and was amended by the Inland Native Fish Strategy
356 (INFISH; USDA 1995) in 1995. Since 1988, the Aquatic Restoration Strategy (ARS; USDA
357 2005), the Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy (ARCS; USDA 2008) and the Watershed
358 Condition Framework (Potyondy and Geier 2010) have been developed to reflect management
359 direction recommended by current research and supported by regional and national policy. The
360 ARS is a Forest Service Pacific Northwest Regional operational strategy that reinforces the
361 foundation of existing forest plan strategies, including broad-scale passive restoration, and
362 strategically focused active restoration and guides implementation through establishment of
363 specific goals and objectives and a formal process for near-term active restoration. The 2010
364 National Watershed Condition Framework process evaluated current conditions at the
365 subwatershed scale and identified priority subwatersheds where focused restoration could
366 improve watershed condition on NFS lands. ARCS is a refinement of previous forest plan
367 strategies (including the Northwest Forest Plan, PACFISH, and INFISH) incorporating key
368 concepts from the ARS and watershed condition framework, and is intended to provide the core
369 set of desired conditions, suitability, objectives, standards and guidelines for aquatic and riparian
370 management. ARCS provides additional watershed direction intended to restore and maintain
371 watershed conditions and processes that sustain a full range of ecosystem services and support
372 beneficial uses of water, with a focus on protection and restoration of native anadromous and
373 non-anadromous fisheries. Consistency and integration of new research and regional and national
374 direction on restoration and protection of watershed and aquatic habitat and function will
375 contribute to the restoration and maintenance of riparian and aquatic habitats and beneficial uses
376 of water and increase resilience to disturbance.

377 Decision Framework

378 The entire environmental impact statement process, including the Draft EIS and Final EIS, is
379 meant to inform the responsible official (the regional forester) so that s/he can decide which
380 alternative (the proposed action, no action, or another alternative) to choose.

381 This is a programmatic DEIS. The decisions that result from this process are broad-scale planning
382 decisions that will guide the selection and design of future projects and activities on the Colville
383 National Forest. Programmatic decisions are made in the forest plan, and they are expressed as
384 goals (identified as desired conditions), objectives, standards, guidelines, management area
385 allocations, special areas, suitability, and monitoring. The forest plan provides a broad framework
386 that guides project-level decisions, but does not authorize, fund, or carry out any site-specific
387 activities. Instead, the forest plan establishes limitations on what actions may be authorized and
388 what conditions must be met during project-level decision making.

389 A forest plan establishes key decisions for the long-term management of a national forest. The
390 1982 planning regulations establish the following as decisions required in forest plans:

- 391 1. Forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives including projections of goods and services that
392 may be produced ([36 CFR 219.11\(b\), 1982 Rule](#))
- 393 2. Forestwide management requirements (standards) ([36 CFR 219.13 – 219.27, 1982 Rule](#))
- 394 3. Management area direction and prescriptions, including management practices ([36 CFR](#)
395 [219.11\(c\), 1982 Rule](#))
- 396 4. Suitability for timber and grazing ([36 CFR 219.14, 219.16, and 219.20, 1982 Rule](#))
- 397 5. Monitoring and evaluation requirements ([36 CFR 219.11\(d\), 1982 Rule](#) and [36 CFR 219.12,](#)
398 [2012 Rule](#))
- 399 6. Recommendation to Congress of areas eligible for wilderness designation as required ([36CFR](#)
400 [219.17 \(a\), 1982 Rule](#)) and rivers eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic
401 Rivers System as required (16 U.S.C. 1271-1287), ([36 CFR 297](#)) and (47 FR 39454)

402 The regulations guiding the forest plan revision process give latitude to the Forest Service to
403 determine the scope of topics included in the revision.

404 The Pacific Northwest Regional Forester will review the proposed plan, alternatives, and
405 environmental consequences, and then decide which plan alternative best addresses the desired
406 conditions, multiple-use opportunities, diverse needs of people, and sustainable management of
407 the Colville National Forest as well as meeting the requirements of the National Forest
408 Management Act and the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act.

409 **Relationship to Other Law, Regulation, Policy, and Strategic** 410 **Guidance**

411 Forest Service direction and guidance for managing National Forest System (NFS) lands comes
412 from several sources and is not altered by forest plan revision. National and regional direction
413 includes laws, executive orders, and regulations. Forest Service policy guides activities on
414 national forests. All forest activities must comply with national direction and reflect national
415 policy.

416 The hierarchy of management direction ranges from national and regional direction to site-
417 specific, project-level direction when the forest plan is implemented. Figure 2 shows the primary
418 levels of direction.



419
420

Figure 2. Hierarchy of management direction for all national forests

421 National and Regional Direction and Guidance

422 As a Federal land management agency, the Forest Service must follow all applicable laws and
423 regulations. If laws change or are amended, or if new laws are enacted, the Forest Service will
424 comply with the changes or additions. The same situation applies to executive orders and agency
425 policy, as expressed in Forest Service Manual (FSM) and Handbook (FSH) directives. This
426 direction does not need to be restated in the forest plan. Wherever the laws, regulations, or
427 policies have more stringent requirements than forest plan direction, the Forest must and will
428 comply with those requirements.

429 Examples of Federal laws with which forest plans must be consistent are the Endangered Species
430 Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, Wilderness Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act,
431 Multiple-use Sustained Yield Act, and the National Forest Management Act. Guidance for these
432 laws comes from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and the [Forest Service Directive
433 System](#) (the Forest Service Handbooks and Forest Service Manuals). That material is not repeated
434 in the proposed revised forest plan, but a summary of these may be found on the Forest Service
435 national web page at <http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/>.

436 National rules applicable to all national forests, such as the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR
437 Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295) and the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR Part 294)
438 continue to apply, are not repeated in the proposed revised forest plan, and may not be altered
439 through the forest plan revision process.

440 Guidance for forest plans is from the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan
441 (<http://www.fs.fed.us/plan/>). This national-level plan is a framework for the National Forest
442 System annual performance plan. It guides units such as individual national forests or ranger
443 districts in proposing project-level work, while considering the opportunities and challenges
444 detailed in their local unit plans. Like individual forest plans, the strategic plan focuses on
445 outcomes or results that are to be achieved over time. Forest plans consider the National Strategic
446 Plan in developing desired conditions and objectives. A goal of the USDA Strategic Plan

447 FY2014–2018 is to restore, sustain, and enhance the Nation’s forests, with a desired outcome for
448 forests and grasslands to be healthy, productive, diverse, and resilient to disturbance.

449 The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (1994–2000) was a broad-scale
450 effort to develop scientific knowledge of the ecological and biophysical trends, risks, and
451 opportunities within the interior portion of the Pacific Northwest. One outcome of that project is
452 The *Interior Columbia Basin Strategy* (2003; revised 2014) which includes an interagency
453 memorandum of understanding (2014) that outlines how the strategy will be used to guide the
454 amendment and revision of land and resource management plans for USDA Forest Service and
455 USDI Bureau of Land Management administered lands within the Columbia Basin.

456 The Colville National Forest contributes to the accomplishment of national strategic guidance in
457 accordance with its own unique combination of social, economic, and ecological conditions. The
458 proposed plan helps define the Forest’s role in advancing the agency’s national strategy and
459 reflects the national goals, which are based on the Government Performance and Results Act
460 (2010).

461 **Forest-specific Resource Plans**

462 A forest may have a forestwide resource plan, such as a fire management plan or access and travel
463 management plan, which serves to implement the forest plan. These plans are consistent with, and
464 subordinate to the forest plan.

465 **Project-level Decisions**

466 A forest plan does not authorize site-specific activities. Project activities such as timber harvest,
467 trail construction, or motor vehicle use designations occur through subsequent project-specific
468 decision-making, consistent with forest plan direction. Once finalized, the Forest will carry out
469 on-the-ground projects and activities designed to accomplish management objectives and move
470 the project area toward desired conditions described in the revised plan. Projects and activities
471 will be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws and
472 regulations. Project decisions must be consistent with the forest plan.

473 **Decisions Authorized per the 1988 Forest Plan**

474 Once finalized in a record of decision, the revised forest plan will replace the current forest plan
475 and the management direction within the current forest plan will no longer be applicable. It is not
476 expected that the final revised plan direction would result in immediate re-evaluation or changes
477 to on-going contracts, permits, or project decisions and activities when the Forest transitions to
478 the revised forest plan. After the effective date of the revised plan, all new project decisions,
479 contracts, permits, renewals, and other activities will be consistent with the plan direction.

480 **Relationship to Other Entities**

481 Forest Service planning regulations require the agency to review the planning and land use
482 policies of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian tribes. The review
483 includes:

- 484 1. Consideration of the objectives of other Federal, State and local governments, and Indians
485 tribes, as expressed in their plans and policies;
- 486 2. An assessment of the interrelated impacts of these plans and policies;
- 487 3. A determination of how each Forest Service plan should deal with the impacts identified; and,

488 4. Where conflicts with Forest Service planning are identified, consideration of alternatives for
489 their resolution.

490 Agencies and governing entities contacted between 2003 and 2015 include U.S. Fish and Wildlife
491 Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Kalispel Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the
492 Colville Reservation, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Ferry County Board of Commissioners, Pend
493 Oreille County Board of Commissioners, and Stevens County Board of Commissioners.

494 County Governments

495 Local government officials from the counties within and adjacent to the Colville National Forest
496 have been invited to participate in forest plan development since the beginning of the planning
497 effort (2003). Forest representatives have met with individual county board of commissioners as
498 well as met with combined boards and with county departments. Between 2005 and 2015, the
499 Forest Service met specifically with county commissioners more than 65 times. In addition,
500 county commissioners participated in plan revision collaboration and workgroup meetings, and
501 Forest Service representatives met with various county committees and departments such as
502 Stevens County Public Lands Advisory Committee.

503 Each county's comprehensive plan has been assessed and considered during the revised plan
504 development (Ferry County (2013), Pend Oreille County (2013), Stevens County (2008), and
505 Okanogan County (2014)). The county land use plans describe local government goals and
506 objectives for land management and provide opportunities for coordination between the Forest
507 Service and the county. The following information is a summary of the full review that is located
508 in the project record.

509 The over-arching theme of the Ferry County comprehensive plan's vision statement is that "Ferry
510 County would like to preserve its character and identity." Ferry County offers a rural character of
511 natural beauty and abundance. This includes values such as independence, privacy, and personal
512 freedom that attract many people seeking both permanent residence and seasonal refuge. The
513 primary goals that tie to national forest management include:

- 514 1. Maintain a rural land use style,
- 515 2. Preserve agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.
- 516 3. Preserve natural resources throughout the County and offer special protection to areas
517 designated as critical areas, or environmentally sensitive areas.
- 518 4. Provide safe and convenient areas for use of motorized and non-motorized vehicles and
519 equipment;
- 520 5. Increase job opportunities and broaden the economic base in Ferry County through
521 encouragement of industry that is compatible with other land uses; and
- 522 6. Support multiple use on public lands.
- 523 7. Encourage and accommodate as many diverse recreational activities and areas as possible
524 that are compatible with other land uses.

525 The Pend Oreille County comprehensive plan's vision is based on a Statement of Values: Why
526 We Live Here, where natural resources are conserved and land is used efficiently, ensuring that
527 new development is compatible with the surrounding uses, sensitive to the surrounding natural
528 areas, and retains the rural character of the community. Specific goals that connect with national
529 forest management include:

- 530 1. Maintaining the rural character of Pend Oreille County,
- 531 2. Protecting the traditional rural ways of making a living;
- 532 3. Encouraging employment opportunities;
- 533 4. Maintaining an efficient, safe, and environmentally responsible road system;
- 534 5. Supporting new development that is consistent with a realistic assessment of the availability
- 535 of water; and protecting groundwater recharge areas and preventing the contamination of
- 536 vulnerable groundwater resources;
- 537 6. Protecting environmentally sensitive areas;
- 538 7. Providing necessary public facilities and services, in places and at levels proportionate to
- 539 planned development intensity and environmental protection. (USFS Landing Strip [Sullivan
- 540 Lake], Sullivan Lake Ranger Station and Newport Ranger Station have been designated by
- 541 Pend Oreille County as Essential Public Facilities); and
- 542 8. Coordinating and collaborating with the U.S. Forest Service and other public resource
- 543 agencies and managers to inventory recreational opportunities and promote the shared use
- 544 and full enjoyment of publicly owned land in the County.

545 The comprehensive county plan's (2008) vision for Stevens County emphasizes healthy
546 landscapes where natural resources are conserved and land is used efficiently. Natural resources
547 are well managed, healthy, productive and provide a steady, sustainable stream of products for
548 economic viability while maintaining and enhancing opportunities for recreation. Specific goals
549 related to national forest management:

- 550 1. Include economic development as one of the considerations in the process of land use
- 551 planning, transportation planning, infrastructure planning, and the determination of urban
- 552 growth areas.
- 553 2. Sustainable management decisions for public lands shall consider the diversity of customary
- 554 practices, traditions, culture and ways of life found throughout the County
- 555 3. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries in the County, protect critical areas
- 556 including surface and groundwater resources, and provide for the stewardship and productive
- 557 use of forest, mineral, and agricultural lands.
- 558 4. Protect and enhance the character and quality of rural areas in ways that promote traditional
- 559 rural lifestyles and industries,
- 560 5. Provide an efficient, functional, and environmentally responsible transportation network
- 561 throughout Stevens County by utilizing and maintaining existing infrastructure, integrating
- 562 transportation planning with other elements of the comprehensive plan, and coordinating with
- 563 other Federal, State, tribal and local agencies.
- 564 6. Support the retention, enhancement, and development of recreation areas and activities, and
- 565 parks and open space within Stevens County.

566 The west side of the Colville National Forest borders Okanogan County. The comprehensive
567 county plan's (2014) vision for Okanogan County emphasizes independence, privacy, and
568 personal freedom for its citizens, works to strengthen the local economy, while also putting forth
569 efforts to maintain a clean and healthy environment. The plan advocates for resource-based
570 industries and activities such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, and recreation while

571 providing forest-related jobs for the local economy. The following uses are priority uses in
572 support of the County's forestry economy:

- 573 1. Harvest and processing of forest products.
- 574 2. Equipment yards, repair and maintenance operations.
- 575 3. Manufacturing that requires proximity to forest products.
- 576 4. Home occupations and home-based industries.
- 577 5. Residential uses including vacation rental, single family, extended family, and farm worker
578 housing, with covenants to assure compatibility with resource activities.

579 Although the interdisciplinary team did not find any direct conflicts or inconsistencies between
580 the proposed plan's management direction and the counties' natural resource management
581 objectives (where found), the county representatives perceive potential issues regarding economic
582 effects related to recommended wilderness, expected timber outputs, and motorized access.

583 All elements of the above plans were considered while developing alternatives for the Colville
584 National Forest plan revision. The social and economic impacts to the counties are discussed in
585 more detail in chapter 3.

586 **State**

587 Several Washington State agencies either are affected by, or affect, Forest management. These
588 include Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural
589 Resources, and Washington State Department of Ecology. The Forest coordinated information
590 with these State agencies during all phases of the plan revision process. Those offices provided
591 formal comments during the scoping and other public involvement stages. Statewide assessments
592 were considered in the development of the revised forest plan (June 2010).

593 **Tribes**

594 American Indian tribes are sovereign nations. They are government entities with which the Forest
595 Service has established and continues to maintain government-to-government relationships. In
596 government-to-government consultation, the Forest Service acknowledges the sovereignty of
597 federally recognized American Indian tribes and the special government-to-government
598 relationship between the tribes and the United States through Executive Order (E.O.) 13175
599 (November 6, 2000).

600 Tribes have reserved rights and privileges for their tribal members on any off-site reservation
601 lands ceded through treaties or executive orders to the U.S. Government. The Forest Service
602 manages some of those off-reservation lands ceded through treaties or executive orders.
603 Therefore, the agency has certain legal responsibilities to American Indian tribes. The Forest
604 Service is required to manage the lands under their stewardship with full consideration of the
605 Federal trust responsibility and tribal rights and interests, particularly reserved rights where they
606 exist. In meeting these responsibilities, the agency consults with the tribes whenever proposed
607 policies or management actions may affect their interests.

608 Members of the planning interdisciplinary team consulted tribal representatives during
609 development of the revised forest plan. The forest supervisor met with the Kalispel Tribe of
610 Indians, Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; as a
611 result, specific tribal comments were incorporated in this DEIS and revised forest plan.

612 **Federal**

613 Management of Federal lands adjacent to the Colville National Forest was considered in the
614 formulation of alternatives and their cumulative effects. This included the USDI Fish and Wildlife
615 Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
616 U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Air Force, and the Regional Interagency Executive
617 Committee.

618 Consideration of national scenic trails, utility corridors, recommended wilderness, and other
619 management concerns across boundaries were discussed with the Okanogan and Idaho Panhandle
620 National Forests. The forests met to ensure management problems were not created because of
621 Colville National Forest proposed forest plan direction.

622 **Public Involvement**

623 The Colville National Forest started forest plan revision in 2003, followed by public participation,
624 which began in 2004 with community workshops about the need to change the existing forest
625 plan. Workshops were held in communities throughout northeastern Washington, and additional
626 workshops on specific topics, including wilderness and recreation were held from 2005 to 2008.
627 Meetings with representatives from local counties began in 2004, and are being held on a
628 continuing basis throughout the forest plan revision process. Government-to-government
629 consultation with tribal nations and staff-to-staff consultation with their resource specialists began
630 early in the process and continues. State agencies are cooperating agencies; Federal agencies the
631 Forest Service works closely with are the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Fish
632 and Wildlife Service. A 2007 memorandum of agreement with the Washington State Association
633 of Counties provides a framework for our work with the three local counties. Three federally
634 recognized tribes have engaged at varied levels: the Colville Confederated Tribes (the Forest's
635 largest neighbors), and the smaller Spokane and Kalispel Tribes. Additional meetings with
636 interest groups, user groups, State and Federal officials, tribal staff, and industry groups were
637 held.

638 In June 2011, the Forest Service published a combined notice announcing the proposed actions
639 for the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests were available for public review and
640 comment. Public meetings and outreach efforts continued through 2013, based on the information
641 related to both forests.

642 The 90-day comment period per the 2011 notice drew 27,274 comment letters, of which 889
643 contained unique and substantially different comments. We received letters, emails, form letters,
644 and public comment forms from tribes, individuals, organizations, agencies, businesses, and
645 groups from 15 states in the United States and British Columbia, Canada; however, this does not
646 include state affiliation for all of the form letters. We analyzed 3,250 comments from the 889
647 comment letters to identify the significant issues driving the alternatives.

648 As stated previously, the regional forester determined that the most effective process to reflect
649 public input and resource needs was to separate the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National
650 Forests' plan revision effort. Moving forward from today, this DEIS reflects issues and
651 alternatives specific to the Colville National Forest only. The Okanogan-Wenatchee National
652 Forest is developing a proposed forest plan and completing a separate analysis specific to its
653 resource needs and public input specific to that forest. All input, including public comments
654 received to date, will continue to be part of each forest plan revision, as appropriate.

655 **Significant Issues**

656 Public, tribal, State, and local agency comments play an important role in the forest plan revision
657 process. We reviewed all comments submitted on the proposed action to determine how they
658 would be considered in the analysis. The Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 1501.7
659 (a) (2) state that the agency will, “Determine the scope (§1508.25) and the significant issues to be
660 analyzed in depth in the environmental impact statement.” We identified comments on old forest
661 management, motorized recreation trails, road access, recommended wilderness, wildlife habitat,
662 and riparian and aquatic resource management as significant issues used to formulate alternatives.
663 Other comments were used to refine the proposed action while still meeting the purpose of and
664 need for plan revision; and others are considered in the environmental analyses. A report on the
665 public comments is provided on the forest plan revision website:
666 <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/colville/landmanagement/planning>

667 Following are the significant issues that led to the development of the alternatives described in
668 chapter 2.

669 **Old Forest (Late-successional) Management, and Timber Production**

670 Some members of the public are concerned that the proposed action does not protect old forests
671 and wildlife habitat as well as the current forest plan. Other members of the public are concerned
672 that the proposed action does not allow enough timber production, which hurts the economy.
673 Some are also concerned that the proposed action limits the Forest Service’s ability to defend
674 forests from insects, disease, and fire.

675 In their comments, some members of the public asked for increased timber production. They are
676 concerned that the proposed action does not allow enough timber production, which hurts the
677 economy. One representative comment stated:

678 “...the Colville would expect to continue to produce between 25 to 35 MMBF per year.
679 The 1988 plan estimated the forest can and does produce 123.4 MMBF per year annually
680 for the first decade... Eastside screens adopted in 1994 restricted timber sales in the San
681 Poil Watershed for 15 years causing Colville Tribes milling operations to close. Because
682 of the lack of active management of timber harvest, our forest has insect infestations,
683 disease and stand replacing wildfires....”

684 Others expressed a different view that they “...are opposed to weakening protection for trees
685 greater than 21 inches diameter at breast height (dbh). Furthermore, since the process for an
686 exception to cutting greater than 21-inches dbh trees is provided in the screens, we see no need to
687 change guidance that has a default position of retention of these trees.”

688 Other members of the public are concerned that the proposed action does not safeguard old
689 forests and wildlife.

690 “The final forest plan must at a minimum meet the standards and guidelines of the
691 existing strategies, and should aim to improve them. Provide specific benchmarks that
692 ensure viability of focal species. The FPR-PA⁵ recognizes the need of the forest plan to
693 ensure viability of wildlife guided by new and emerging science. Please insure good
694 monitoring and research to validate efficacy and resilience to changing climate.”

695 “For our forests to remain diverse and thriving, the forest plans must provide specific
696 guidelines - both forestwide and within specific land allocations - to maintain and

⁵ FPR-PA = Forest Plan Revision – Proposed Action

697 connect habitat that supports viable wildlife populations for all native species. Many
698 species rely on mature or old-growth forests to survive, so these types of forests must be
699 protected and actively managed.”

700 “Is this the structural stage distribution of the original primary forest when it was affected
701 by the historic fire regime before logging and fire suppression? If not, what is the current
702 structural stage distribution at a watershed level? What factors make this particular
703 structural stage distribution the “desired” one? Why is a greater percentage in the old
704 forest stages not desired?”

705 Some are also concerned that the proposed action limits the Forest Service’s ability to defend
706 forests from insects, disease, and fire.

707 “During the course of the analysis it is important that the total areas that have restrictions
708 for commodity production be quantified and analyzed relative to the potential effect of
709 insect and disease moving between the management areas and the ability to suppress
710 wildfires as they might affect private land, communities, and those areas that are
711 designated for commercial timber production. This is an important concept that should be
712 considered in determining how the desired conditions and objectives can be met relative
713 to forest health and fire suppression.”

714 “AFRC is generally opposed to a diameter limit because it restricts silvicultural options...
715 overstocking will lead to increasing forest health problems and should be considered.”

716 *Evaluation Criteria*

717 The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between
718 the alternatives:

- 719 • The effects on local economy (through commercial timber outputs) of alternative
720 approaches in providing late structure forests.
- 721 • The risk of wildfire, especially adjacent to communities.
- 722 • Contribution to the recovery and viability of late structure/ old forest-dependent species.

723 Key indicators:

- 724 • Predicted output, uses and activity levels
 - 725 ♦ Timber (cubic feet)
 - 726 ♦ Estimated percentage of forest structural stages (after 20, 50, and 100 years)
 - 727 ♦ Estimated acres by wildfire risk level (fire regime condition class)
- 728 • Economic and social sustainability
 - 729 ♦ Estimated economic differences between alternatives
- 730 • Location and acres of allocations, specifically related to roaded access within wildland-
731 urban interface (WUI)
- 732 • Comparison to the proposed action of the contribution to viability of late structure/old
733 forest dependent species

734 **Motorized Recreation Trails**

735 Public comments reflected opposing desires regarding motorized recreation opportunities,
736 particularly the distribution and quantity of motorized trails. Some members of the public

737 expressed concerns that the distribution and quantity of motorized trails negatively affects
738 tourism and the local economy, while other stakeholders⁶ said that they want fewer miles of
739 motorized trails and that they don't like the resource damage, noise, and conflict associated with
740 them.

741 This comment expresses concern about expanding motorized recreation opportunities:

742 "It is inappropriate to reward user groups that break the law (i.e., trespass into
743 Wilderness), cause the greatest resource damage to trails and vegetation, and probably
744 cause the greatest impact to wildlife with new expanded opportunities to do more of the
745 same."

746 Another comment expressed an opposing view:

747 "There are currently more wilderness trails available in Washington State alone than any
748 one person could hike in a lifetime. By making trails non-motorized we only eliminate
749 access to more tax paying citizens... Motorized trail users, for the most part, are
750 organized and concerned citizens that are out to enjoy the wonders of our natural world
751 just like the non-motorized users."

752 The public also raised concerns about the distribution and number of motorized and non-
753 motorized trails. Some stakeholders said that the distribution and number affect tourism and the
754 local economy in the plan area.

755 "We strongly support the stated goal of having 5% of the trail system adjacent to
756 communities... Creating additional trails for mountain bicycling and other non-motorized
757 recreation, readily accessible from the edges of the rural communities, will provide
758 significant recreation, health, and economic benefits for their residents."

759 "Both Motorized and Non-Motorized recreation are important parts of how many users,
760 like me, experience the Forest, from hunters and anglers to backcountry horsemen and
761 ORV users... Making this change would make it impossible for people with limited
762 mobility to visit these areas. It would also hamper backcountry emergency rescues,
763 making them more difficult and expensive."

764 *Evaluation Criteria*

765 The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between
766 the alternatives:

- 767 • The distribution of motorized and non-motorized recreation areas to assess contribution to
768 motorized / non-motorized recreation opportunities.
- 769 • The contribution of motorized recreation on the national forest to the local county economy.
- 770 • Contribution to the recovery and viability of wildlife and aquatic species that are sensitive
771 to human disturbances that result from motorized recreational activities.

772 Key indicators:

- 773 • Predicted output, uses and activity levels for motorized/non-motorized use
- 774 ♦ Wildlife - location and acres of allocations for motorized use

⁶ Stakeholders = members of the public that have an interest in use and management of the Colville National Forest.

- 775 ♦ Recreation - location, miles, and acres of allocation for motorized and non-motorized
- 776 use
- 777 • Economic and social sustainability
- 778 ♦ Employment, income, and tax contributions related to recreation
- 779 ♦ Evaluation of access to motorized and non-motorized trails

780 Access

781 Some stakeholders expressed concern that the proposed action does not provide enough roads for
782 recreation, grazing, fire suppression, timber harvest, and firewood collection. They commented
783 that lack of access would have a negative impact on economic well-being. Other stakeholders
784 expressed concern that the Forest Service does not have the capacity to maintain the current road
785 network and that unmaintained roads damage wildlife, water, and fish.

786 The following comments express views that the proposed action does not provide enough roads
787 for cost-effective resource production, fire suppression, and recreation:

788 “The road density constraints of 2-3 miles per square mile are inadequate to service
789 commodity production, fire suppression or motorized recreation, and will make
790 prescribed burning and pre- commercial thinning more expensive.”

791 “Many of these designations are done over existing grazing allotments that will result in
792 loss of cattle and vegetation management as cattlemen are no longer able to maintain
793 economic viability. Cattle activity has been stated as able to continue with management
794 changes, but these changes are not economically viable, and the local economies must not
795 be devastated by this proposed action.”

796 The following comments express concerns that the proposed action does not provide enough
797 roads for recreation and firewood collection, among other things:

798 “It is vital to our citizens to keep the forest open for public access, for firewood cutting,
799 food gathering activities, recreation and hunting, just to name a few.”

800 “[C]losing roads makes it harder if not impossible for volunteers to access the area to
801 help maintain the trails and other resources.”

802 “The ability for local, regional, and national citizens to gain value from and develop a
803 sense of connection to these national forests depends on their ability to get to the land and
804 experience it first-hand. As such, we recommend that all alternatives of the Forest Plan
805 incorporate increased access aimed at enhancing the quality of experiences available to a
806 broad spectrum of recreational users.”

807 Other stakeholders said they are concerned that the Forest Service does not have the capacity to
808 maintain its current roads, and that unmaintained roads negatively affect wildlife viability, water
809 quality, and fish populations.

810 “The Forest has a vastly oversized and unmanageable road system. This road system
811 presents a substantial risk to soil, water, and aquatic resources...In the context of ever-
812 declining road maintenance budgets, the only appropriate management response is to
813 reduce the number of roads.”

814 *Evaluation Criteria*

815 The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between
816 the alternatives:

- 817 • Evaluate the effects of road density limits on roaded access for recreation use, wildfire
818 suppression, and vegetation management activities, specifically commercial timber harvest.
- 819 • Evaluate whether the management direction concerning road density, road location and
820 objectives for treatment of high-risk roads is effective in restoration or preservation of
821 watershed and hydrologic function and in contributing to the viability of aquatic, terrestrial
822 plant, and wildlife species whose population and habitat are known to be sensitive to the
823 impacts of roads.

824 Key indicators:

- 825 • Predicted output, uses, and activity levels
 - 826 ♦ Location and amount of allocations suitable for roads
 - 827 ♦ Changes in road density desired conditions by allocation
 - 828 ♦ Relative contribution to the recovery and viability of surrogate species
 - 829 ♦ Objectives for reduction in miles of high-risk roads
- 830 • Economic and social sustainability
 - 831 ♦ Social impact related to recreation opportunities
 - 832 ♦ Economic contribution related to timber production

833 **Recommended Wilderness Areas**

834 While forest plans may make a preliminary recommendation for additional wilderness, only
835 Congress can designate wilderness. Some stakeholders are concerned that the proposed action
836 recommends too much additional wilderness. They commented that more wilderness areas hurt
837 the economy by limiting timber harvest, grazing, mountain biking, and motorized recreation.
838 Members of the public also raised concerns about the increased cost of managing additional
839 wilderness.

840 Other stakeholders said that the proposed action does not include enough additional wilderness
841 areas; they want more. They said that they want to make sure that wilderness provides habitat
842 connections for wildlife. Additionally, some members of the public are concerned about
843 protecting the uniqueness of these areas, and they said that additional wilderness improves the
844 local economy.

845 These comments express the concern that too much wilderness hurts the local economy by
846 limiting recreation, timber harvest, and grazing:

847 “[M]y perception so far is that wilderness eliminates mountain bikes, mechanical trail
848 maint., forest management, fire response ability, any form of motorized shared use, and
849 doesn’t seem to play well with the cattle grazers or other land users”

850 ”Tourism by mountain bikers can help revitalize rural communities...we bring dollars to
851 each community we visit; our recent stay in the Kettle Crest area saw us spending money
852 on camping (North Lake RV Park & Campground), fuel, food (grocery stores and
853 restaurants), liquor, maps and other bicycle-related items.”

854 Other members of the public said that wilderness provides economic benefits to local
855 communities:

856 “all of these lands provide significant wilderness character and a wild, scenic backdrop
857 for the area’s many scenic driving routes and communities that promote the region’s
858 rustic, remote, backcountry as part of their growing recreational and tourism economy”
859 and “non-motorized trails are very important for the attractiveness to the affluent (money-
860 spending) hiking crowds of Spokane.”

861 Concerns were also raised about possible increases in overall wilderness management costs for
862 the Forest:

863 “Trail work costs [substantially more] per mile than non-wilderness trail work. The USFS
864 is funding trail work at a very reduced level, depending on volunteers. Wilderness trail
865 maintenance is most always done with taxpayer monies, not volunteers. Wilderness trail
866 work is the most time and labor intensive (thus most expensive) trail maintenance.
867 (money that the USFS does not have.)” “The Forest Service can not adequately manage
868 the wilderness currently in the inventory. Money for trail and bridge
869 construction/maintenance is in short supply and from all indications will be in shorter
870 supply in the near and mid term future.”

871 There were concerns that the recommendations did not include areas that may have outstanding
872 wilderness character, and did not include areas that may contribute to habitat connectivity.

873 “We are concerned that several parts of the Kettle Crest were left outside the
874 recommended wilderness boundary including Snow Peak, Jungle Hill and the Mt. Leona
875 area. We recommend all of the Kettle Crest, north and south of Sherman Pass in the
876 Profanity and Bald Snow areas, be included inside the recommended wilderness
877 boundary...Hall Mountain and Grassy Top should be recommended for wilderness as
878 they provide rugged terrain and are designated habitat for grizzly bears and woodland
879 caribou. Quartzite with its old growth cedar grove would be the closest wilderness area to
880 Spokane.”

881 “...when reviewing the documents describing the proposed additions I was quite
882 surprised by how little of the lands that currently have wilderness characteristics are
883 being recommended for the designation.”

884 Other stakeholders are concerned that some proposed wilderness areas do not meet the
885 appropriate criteria for that designation:

886 “The recommended areas do not satisfy wilderness criteria. Wilderness areas should be
887 areas that are untouched by human activity.”

888 “Within the boundaries of AbercrombieHooknose PWA in Steven’s County, stumps,
889 dozer thinning, clear-cut logging activity and roads are clearly visible within the
890 proposed wilderness area. This leads us to believe that the Forest Service has not ground-
891 truthed for wilderness characteristics within the boundaries of the Potential Wilderness
892 Areas (PWA).”

893 “This review must look at boundary locations and ease of locating on the ground,
894 eliminating cherry stems (like Profanity as an example), and exclude recognizable areas
895 of logging and roading before you develop any alternatives for the final draft EIS.”

896 Commenters expressed concern that proposed direction may not maintain wilderness character
897 prior to wilderness designation by Congress, which can be a lengthy process.

898 “The plan should also make clear the forest service's intent ... by including language in
899 the plan that will protect the wilderness characteristics of all of the CNF Potential
900 Wilderness Areas (PWAs), and not just the roadless areas covered under the Roadless
901 Area Conservation Rule.”

902 “The PA fails to protect the wilderness character of recommend wilderness areas by
903 allowing snowmobile use to continue in those recommended wilderness areas.”

904 The public also raised concerns about recreation in wilderness:

905 “... ‘the following selected activities could continue to be authorized in Preliminary
906 Administratively Recommend Wilderness Areas: Summer off-highway vehicle use ...;
907 Winter motorized use ...; and Vegetation management activities would not be authorized
908 in Preliminary Administratively Recommend Wilderness Areas.’ The above statement
909 makes the motorized community VERY nervous. First off, the draft Plan even highlights
910 ‘could continue to be authorized.’ It doesn’t GUARANTEE continued use. Why not?
911 Second, we have witnessed these areas managed as de-facto Wilderness on Montana
912 Forests and see no reason why that wouldn’t happen here.”

913 *Evaluation Criteria*

914 The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between
915 the alternatives:

- 916 • Whether recommended wilderness areas contribute to the need for wilderness.
- 917 • The availability tradeoffs, especially summer and winter motorized uses.
- 918 • The market and non-market costs and benefits associated with wilderness.

919 Key indicators:

- 920 • Predicted output, uses, and activity levels
 - 921 ♦ Location and amount of recommended wilderness
 - 922 ♦ Miles of trail available for mechanized or motorized use
 - 923 ♦ Acres suitable for timber harvest and grazing

924 *Wildlife*

925 The public is concerned that the proposed action does not adequately protect wildlife. They said
926 that they want more protection for federally listed species such as grizzly bear, lynx, caribou, and
927 other wildlife species of concern such as wolverine and northern goshawk. To protect these
928 species, stakeholders said they want connected habitats, habitats that are not disturbed by roads
929 and trails, as well as more large trees and snags.

930 Other stakeholders are concerned that increasing wildlife protection decreases opportunities for
931 recreation, timber production, and livelihoods.

932 These comments express concern that the proposed action does not protect wildlife adequately:

933 “[recommended wilderness] areas are also part of designated habitat for grizzly bears and
934 caribou and provide connectivity for those and other species; wilderness protection would
935 provide added habitat security.”

936 “The potential to contribute to the sustainability of focal species that require low levels of
937 human activity is another key ecological benefit of wilderness... These are grizzly bear,

938 Canada lynx, wolverine, American marten, and woodland caribou (on Colville National
939 Forest).”

940 “For wildlife species such as the grizzly bear, motorized trails and high-use trails are
941 other important considerations in evaluating habitat suitability and may influence how
942 you view the desired road density of a particular area. We urge you to articulate in the
943 Forest Plan a clear vision for road management.”

944 “The plan must do more than define, describe, and highlight the importance of these
945 ecological dynamics and components; the plan must explain how the CNF proposes to
946 maintain and promote these dynamics and components across the landscape as well as the
947 extent to which the CNF will permit natural disturbance to do this work...We agree with
948 these statements regarding HRV of late-successional forest, the need to restore the large-
949 tree component of our forests, and the lack of snags >21” dbh.”

950 “When large and very large ‘hazard’ trees must be felled they should be left in place.
951 Even prone, they can fill an important ecological function. Somehow, redirect
952 woodcutters away from large/very large high value snags and toward the many, smaller
953 diameter Douglas-firs that should be removed from the forest.”

954 *Evaluation Criteria*

955 The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between
956 the alternatives:

- 957 • Contribution to habitat connectivity for surrogate wildlife species.
- 958 • Contribution to the recovery and viability of snag-dependent wildlife species.
- 959 • Contribution to the recovery and viability of surrogate and listed wildlife species.

960 Key indicators:

- 961 • A comparison of the relative contribution to provide habitat connectivity for surrogate
962 wildlife species.
- 963 • A comparison of the relative contribution to the viability of snag-dependent wildlife
964 species.
- 965 • A comparison of the relative contribution to the recovery and viability of surrogate wildlife
966 species.
- 967 • A comparison of the relative contribution to the recovery and viability of listed wildlife
968 species.

969 **Riparian and Aquatic Resource Management**

970 Some members of the public expressed concern that the proposed action does not adequately
971 protect riparian areas such as those adjacent to streams, lakes, wetlands, and rivers. They said that
972 they want the Forest Service to limit the negative effects of roads, grazing, and off-highway
973 vehicles in these areas. Other members of the public are concerned that the protection of these
974 aquatic resources limits timber production, grazing, and recreation.

975 Public comments raised concerns that the proposed action does not provide watershed and aquatic
976 resource protections that are as effective as current forest plan direction. Concerns centered on
977 managing possible detrimental impacts of uses such as roads, livestock grazing, and motorized
978 trails in riparian areas.

979 “The Forest has a vastly oversized and unmanageable road system. This road system
980 presents a substantial risk to soil, water, and aquatic resources.”

981 “The Proposed Action should include and address the need for restoration of stream
982 connectivity with floodplains, including restoration of off-channel habitats, particularly
983 where roads are located within floodplains.”

984 “Many of these [grazing] allotments are co-located in sensitive areas with ESA
985 [Endangered Species Act] listed fish and are degrading both aquatic and riparian habitat.
986 The effects from livestock grazing are well documented both by the Forest Service and in
987 scientific literature. It is clear that stricter standards and guidelines need to be
988 implemented to minimize the effects of grazing on listed fish and their habitat.
989 Specifically, grazing in key watersheds should, at a minimum, lead to the improvement or
990 restoration of riparian conditions.”

991 “Summer off-highway vehicle use and winter motorized use can be very detrimental to
992 stream channels and stream habitat (especially ATVs, motorcycles, etc.). It is very
993 difficult to enforce appropriate use when these vehicles are allowed in riparian areas.
994 Safeguards are needed for effective protection of riparian habitats.”

995 Other stakeholders commented that there is a need to balance uses.

996 “I’m concerned this tact will be used as a way to eliminate road miles/access for no valid
997 reason. We support changes to roads and trails to meet these goals but don’t believe
998 elimination is ever the only viable solution.”

999 “Livestock grazing should be considered as a tool for vegetation management and
1000 rangeland health.”

1001 “Enclosing pictures of a ‘restoration project’ in Ferry County, before and after. This
1002 project was supposedly to open up 2.5 miles of upland habitat to develop
1003 ‘connectivity’... As you can see from the before and after pictures this area was made a
1004 wasteland. Water is not flowing freely. There is no habitat connectivity. It did not
1005 improve water quality or aquatic/riparian habitat. It destroyed aquatic/riparian habitat.
1006 ICBEMP science put to use. Before ICBEMP and Eastside Screens, we had clean water,
1007 riparian habitat and fish in these streams. Now we do not.”

1008 Another concern raised was potential impact of increased aquatic protection on ability to
1009 effectively manage grazing allotments.

1010 “Watersheds are an important part of our Forest Service Grazing Allotments. The desired
1011 condition should provide for improved forage for livestock. All planning activities that
1012 have any effect on management or the number of AUM’s of the grazing allotments need
1013 to be coordinated with local cattlemen associations, local governments and grazing
1014 permit holders.”

1015 *Evaluation Criteria*

1016 The following indicators were used to evaluate this issue and to develop the variations between
1017 the alternatives:

- 1018 • The viability of threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants within riparian corridors
- 1019 • The effectiveness of riparian management area widths and other plan components related to
1020 aquatic conservation in riparian and upland areas to contribute to and enhance the recovery
1021 of threatened, endangered and sensitive fish species, and maintain or restore watershed
1022 function, water quality, and natural flow regime.

- 1023 • Contribution to the recovery and viability of riparian-dependent wildlife species.

1024 Key indicators:

- 1025 • Acres designated for riparian habitat management
- 1026 • Plan components for protection and restoration of water resources and riparian systems
- 1027 • Acres within key and INFISH priority watersheds
- 1028 • Relative contribution to recovery and viability of riparian-dependent surrogate wildlife and
1029 fish species.
- 1030 • Predicted trends for sensitive plant species

1031 **Other Issues**

1032 The Colville National Forest received comments that were considered and may have related plan
1033 components, but did not drive development of alternatives. The National Environmental Policy
1034 Act regulations, in Sec. 1501.7 (3) direct agencies to "...identify and eliminate from detailed
1035 study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior review (§1506.3),
1036 narrowing the discussion of these issues in the statement to a brief presentation of why they will
1037 not have a significant effect on the human environment or providing a reference to their coverage
1038 elsewhere." Specifically, these comments are:

- 1039 • Outside the scope of the proposed action
- 1040 • Already decided by law, regulation, or other higher level decision
- 1041 • Irrelevant to the decision to be made
- 1042 • Conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence: or
- 1043 • Those that contributed to other sections, such as the purpose of and need for action, or the
1044 scope of the analysis

1045 Some of the comments are of widespread public interest. Below is a summary of those areas of
1046 interest with an explanation of how they are considered in the forest plan revision process. It
1047 should be understood these comments were not arbitrarily dismissed as they continue to provide
1048 useful information.

1049 **Other Topics Related to the Decision to be Made**

1050 The following list is not all-inclusive, but it does highlight key topics of interest to the public that
1051 will not be addressed in the DEIS.

1052 **Boundaries Designated By Congress**

1053 It is outside the authority of the Forest to move any boundary established by Congress.
1054 Congressionally designated areas on the Colville National Forest include the Salmo-Priest
1055 Wilderness and the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail. Changes to these congressionally
1056 designated areas are not included in the forest plan revision effort.

1057 **Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers**

1058 Commenters expressed the desire to see more rivers eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic
1059 Rivers System. The determination of eligibility for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers
1060 Act is made through a process outlined in the Forest Service Handbook, 1909.12 Chapter 80.

1061 Rivers found to be eligible remain eligible until a suitability assessment is completed, or another
1062 eligibility process is conducted.

1063 The responsible official has the discretion to determine whether and to what extent an issue is
1064 appropriate for consideration in plan revision. As there has not been a change in circumstances
1065 since the inventory completed for the 1988 forest plan, evaluation of eligibility for additional
1066 rivers was not a revision topic and is not addressed in the DEIS. The proposed revised plan
1067 carries forward the rivers identified as eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System
1068 for the 1988 forest plan and includes plan components to maintain the free-flowing characteristic
1069 and outstandingly remarkable values of eligible rivers. Rivers eligible for inclusion in the Wild
1070 and Scenic River System do not vary by alternative.

1071 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR Part 294)

1072 The proposed action includes management direction for inventoried roadless areas identified in
1073 the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. On October 21, 2011, the 10th Circuit Court of
1074 Appeals reversed the Wyoming District Court and upheld the USDA's 2001 Roadless Rule in
1075 *Wyoming v. United States Department of Agriculture*. The decision by the 10th Circuit resolves
1076 10 years of litigation. The ruling confirms that the agency has the authority to manage and protect
1077 roadless lands within the National Forest System and that the department complied with all
1078 applicable laws in adopting the 2001 Roadless Rule. Under the 2001 Roadless Rule, new road
1079 construction and reconstruction are generally prohibited in inventoried roadless areas, and timber
1080 harvest is only permitted under a few limited exceptions. It is outside the authority of the
1081 proposed revised forest plan to make any changes to boundaries of inventoried roadless areas.

1082 Allotment Management

1083 Many people expressed concerns regarding domestic cattle grazing. Some people want to end
1084 grazing on national forests altogether. Eliminating grazing is inconsistent with Forest Service
1085 policy. Opening and closing allotments or changing allotment boundaries are site-specific
1086 decisions not made in this forest plan revision process. The proposed revised forest plan and
1087 alternatives identify suitability for grazing and the DEIS discloses the effects of grazing on other
1088 resources. Alternatives are not designed to change boundaries, end grazing, or make site-specific
1089 changes to allotments. The proposed revised forest plan describes management direction, such as
1090 desired conditions for the variety of vegetation types within grazing allotments, that may result in
1091 future changes to allotment management plans.

1092 Travel Management

1093 Due to high interest in the national forest travel management process, it is important to explain
1094 that decisions about specific routes and areas for motor vehicle use are not proposed in this plan
1095 revision. Instead, the proposed forest plan identifies where particular activities may or may not be
1096 suitable to occur. The identification of an area as suitable or not suitable for a use is not a
1097 commitment or final decision; rather it provides guidance for project- and activity-level decision-
1098 making. For example, the identification of lands suitable for motorized recreation is not an
1099 authorization for motor vehicle use on a specific trail or within a specific area. The *final* decision
1100 to designate a trail for motor vehicle use would be made following a project-level NEPA analysis,
1101 consistent with the final revised forest plan suitability direction.

1102 The Colville National Forest completed non-winter motor vehicle use designations as required by
1103 Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212) in 2008. Additional site-specific NEPA
1104 analysis would be required for any future motor vehicle use map (MVUM) designation changes.

1105 The proposed action and alternatives identify areas suitable for over-snow vehicle motor vehicle
1106 use, but forestwide site-specific designations per Subpart C of the Travel Management Rule will
1107 be made during subsequent site-specific NEPA analysis. In the interim, over-snow motor vehicle
1108 use will continue to be governed by existing forest orders and route designations.

1109 Many people asked that the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212) be set aside, or that previous
1110 decisions to designate roads, trails, or areas for motor vehicle use be modified in the revised
1111 forest plan. It is not in the authority of the responsible official to set aside law, regulation, or
1112 policy. Nor does the draft proposed plan make site-specific decisions that designate or prohibit
1113 motor vehicle use as stated in the previous paragraphs.

1114 Climate Change

1115 Climate change concerns appeared in several comments. Some people do not consider climate
1116 change a proven phenomenon, while others feel it should be the central impetus for change.
1117 Forest Service policy is to consider the effects of climate change in forest plan revisions. Climate
1118 change is likely to affect all vegetation types and biophysical resources, result in consequences
1119 for many resources, affect the resilience of road and trail networks and other forest infrastructure,
1120 and is part of the dynamic baseline condition. All alternatives focus on designing desired
1121 conditions to provide healthy, resilient forests and more resilient infrastructure (e.g., trails,
1122 campgrounds, roads) in the face of climate change and other disturbance factors. Climate change
1123 is identified in the purpose of and need for action section of this DEIS as a reason for updating
1124 the current forest plan.

1125 Access for People with Disabilities

1126 People commented that denial of motor vehicle access to people with disabilities violates the
1127 Americans with Disabilities Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act defers to Section 504 of the
1128 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which says that no person with a disability can be denied participation
1129 in a Federal program available to all other people solely because of his or her disability. In
1130 conformance with section 504, wheelchairs or mobility devices are welcome on all NFS lands
1131 that are open to foot travel, and they are specifically exempted from definition as a motor vehicle
1132 in section 212.1 of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212.1). There is no legal requirement to
1133 allow people with disabilities to use off-highway vehicles (OHVs) or other motor vehicles on
1134 roads, trails, and areas closed to motor vehicle use. Reasonable restrictions on motor vehicle use,
1135 applied consistently to everyone, are not discriminatory. This concern has been decided by law.

1136 Budget

1137 Many people commented that the revised forest plan should not be constrained by a budget.
1138 However, it is not realistic or reasonable to ignore expected funding levels during forest plan
1139 revision. Increases in budgets beyond expected levels could result in a faster rate of achievement
1140 of the desired conditions than those projected by alternative. Recent budget trends are essentially
1141 level or slightly declining and those trends are expected to continue in the near future. This is not
1142 a significant issue to be analyzed in the DEIS because the forest plan does not influence or
1143 control the budget for the Forest.

1144 Many people commented that budget considerations should be included in the development of
1145 forest plan objectives, commenting that budgets affect delivery of goods and services people
1146 value about a national forest, such as trails and campgrounds, well-maintained roads to drive, and
1147 the availability of people to monitor activities and enforce rules to prevent resource damage. The
1148 proposed objectives do consider budget trends.

1149 **Fees**

1150 Some commenters raised the topic of fees for a variety of forest products and uses. Fees are an
1151 administrative decision and are outside the scope of the forest plan revision process.

1152 **Solar and Wind-generated Power**

1153 National- and regional-level assessments of potential for solar and wind power indicate the
1154 Colville National Forest does not offer a high potential for either energy source; therefore, there is
1155 no need to develop specific guidance in the proposed forest plan.

1156 **Recreation Residences**

1157 Recreation residence permits are issued or renewed as a site-specific decision. Such decisions are
1158 not included in the plan revision process or decision.

1159 **Record of Decision, Nationwide Application of Fire Retardant on National Forest
1160 System Land, December 13, 2011**

1161 This record of decision established new national direction for the use of fire retardant applied
1162 from aircraft to manage fires, and will be carried forward unchanged. The new direction includes
1163 procedures for monitoring and reinitiating consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if
1164 aerially applied fire retardant affects certain species or habitat. The direction also provides greater
1165 protection for cultural resources

1166 **Application of Laws and Regulations**

1167 Many commenters asked that existing laws and regulations be specifically mentioned and
1168 interpreted as to applicability in the proposed forest plan, such as enlarging on the list of multiple
1169 uses a national forest should have in relation to the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act. It is not the
1170 role or purpose of a forest plan to interpret laws and regulations. Forest Service direction for
1171 managing NFS lands comes from several levels. National and regional direction includes laws,
1172 executive orders, and regulations. Forest Service policy guides activities on the Forest. All Forest
1173 activities must comply with national direction and reflect national policy. Applicable laws and
1174 regulations apply to the Colville National Forest and cannot be overridden by a forest plan,
1175 making this issue outside the scope of the forest plan revision process.

1176 **Administrative or Site-specific Actions**

1177 Many commenters requested the inclusion of administrative actions, such as adding lookouts to
1178 the recreation rental program. Administrative actions are made outside the authorities of the
1179 proposed forest plan. Commenters also asked that the revised forest plan make site-specific
1180 actions such as installing an outhouse at a specified trailhead. The proposed forest plan provides
1181 broad guidance and information for project and activity decision-making on the Colville National
1182 Forest for approximately the next 15 years. Forest plans are strategic in nature. They do not
1183 include project and activity decisions. Those decisions are made later or outside the forest plan
1184 when proposals for a specific action in a specific area are made and analyzed, and there is the
1185 opportunity for public involvement.

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