

# Wenatchee-Okanogan-Colville Forest Plans Being Updated

*By Don Parks*

## *Introduction*

Updating the Forest Plan for the combined Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests began in the fall of 2003 with public meetings across the state. The approach was to update this plan and the Colville National Forest Plan simultaneously. In 2004, a Wenatchee-



NATALIE WILLIAMS

*Aggressive deer feeling confident on her turf.*

Okanogan-Colville (WOC) Task Force of conservationists was assembled to work with the Forest Service and keep the environmental community involved in order to produce the best result possible.

The task force and ALPS provided initial inputs to the Forest Service in early 2004. Progress was slow that first year, with the agency primarily asking the public where people recreated on the forest. Motorized recreationists turned out in droves to claim they used vast portions of the forest and wanted no more wilderness.

In January 2005, the Bush Administration revised the regulations governing how forest plans are prepared and implemented. National Environmental Policy Act guidelines were eliminated. These changes essentially abolish

the need to prepare environmental impact statements with their attendant analyses, reduce the level of public involvement, and redefine the way the Forest Service interacts with a public during this process. It no longer has to prepare and analyze management alternatives. District Rangers will have significantly more flexibility in implementing projects on the ground. ALPS is very concerned about the ultimate impact these changes will have on the final product.

In 2005 the forests re-examined their roadless area (RA) inventories based on new criteria. On the Wenatchee, the inventory was reduced from 579,000 acres in 2000 to about 505,000 acres in 2005. ALPS and other groups then submitted detailed comments to the Forest Service highlighting numerous errors in the new inventory.

When the agency completed its review of these comments in April 2006, the Wenatchee inventory was restored to about 577,000 acres. While we don't agree that the latest inventory is complete or accurate in all cases, it does represent a substantial improvement over 2005.

In 2006 the Forest Service directed its

Okanogan and Wenatchee Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) to participate in the process, in keeping with the Washington Office's policy of collaboration in developing new forest plans. The ORV, timber and mining interests are well represented on the PAC but it has some people with environmental lean-

*Continued on page 9*

### **Also in this issue:**

EA for APEX Mine Falls Short.....	2
Central Washington Timber Supply Status & Developments ....	3
FS Moving Forward with Inventory of User-Constructed ORV Trails ..	4
Cle Elum Ranger District Accepts Funds from ORV Equipment Supplier .....	4
ALPS and Others Work to Mitigate Easton Ridge Development .....	5
FS Plans to Redo Snoqualmie Lake Trail .....	6
TrailsFest 2006 .....	7

# Environmental Assessment for APEX Mine Falls Short

*By Mike Town*

The proposed re-opening of a long-closed mine near Money Creek poses several potential environmental concerns. Some of these could be catastrophic and could occur from the milling process or the mine itself. Other problems associated with this proposal includes numerous issues involved in the recreational opportunities in this area. Therefore, our concerns about this proposal can be divided into the mining and milling process and their effects on water quality and wildlife as well as the impacts this proposal will have on the recreational value of the area. More specifically we are also concerned about appropriate info lacking from the EA and why the process of mining and milling are not separated into two separate analyses since only 10% of the mill capacity will be devoted to Apex ore. Therefore, not only are we in favor of the no action alternative — but we are surprised that a project with the potential for as much environmental impact as this mine and mill are not addressed in two separate and unique Environmental Impact Statements.

## *Concerns Over Milling*

The milling portion of the EA only addresses 10% of the capacity of the mill. It does not directly address the potential sources for the other 4000 tons of material which are mentioned as the annual production from the mill. This raises significant concerns due to the varying levels of trace metals, sulfides, lead, mercury and arsenic contained in other local ore sources. In the past smelter waste has been brought to this site which caused

major environmental concerns. Therefore, to avoid further problems the EA should have addressed some of the potential sites, local or otherwise, that will supply the extra milling material.

The EA also fails to disclose the chemical nature of the Apex ore especially in regards to the chemicals listed above. Poor milling and extraction methods in the past at this, and other milling sites, have led to expensive cleanup and environmental damage. Therefore it is in the public interest that values for these contaminants be disclosed as well as mitigation methods at the mill which would eliminate or lessen potential negative environmental impacts.

Another concern is the location of the mill in a riparian reserved located in a Type 1 Watershed. This raises the potential for almost instant environmental contamination to the Skykomish River. We believe that moving the mill to a site outside a reserve should have been discussed.

We also have concerns over the existing 1200 tons of material located at the mill site. The chemical nature of this ore, and how it will be excavated, is not discussed in this EA.

The owner's proposed milling process also seems very vague. The amount of water used in the process is not disclosed. Even if some water is recycled, there will be some (an unknown amount) that will need to be disposed. The EA does not address this.

The water quality near the mill site already fails to meet standards. It seems that these values should first meet standards before new

milling is done at this site.

Concerns about the location of the mill, the chemistry of unknown ore and the existing stockpile of ore should require that a separate EA or EIS be conducted for the mill.

## *Recreation*

For numerous years the Forest Service has directed family camping groups to Lake Elizabeth due to the easy access and low elevation. We feel that helicopters, blasting noise and transportation concerns along the narrow sections of Road 6420 occurring over a 10 year period is significant. We believe that these factors decrease the pleasure of family groups and that the benefit of this low elevation dispersed recreation site will be diminished. Recreation still occurs during the week and the mitigating factors such as posting the road and scheduling helicopter air time still constitutes a significant annoyance. Therefore, the No Action alternative a much better decision than opening this mine.

## *Mining Issues*

The EA acknowledges the negative potential from subsurface water drainage from the Apex adit. Assay data for the local rock, especially for sulfides, arsenic, and heavy metals, should be published. The EA also notes that contaminant levels in water samples taken near the mine site exceed state standards. Opening this adit will cause these values to increase. Therefore, a full EIS addressing mitigation of specific water pollutants needs to be prepared and open to public comment.

Another concern is that mining

*Continued on page 3*

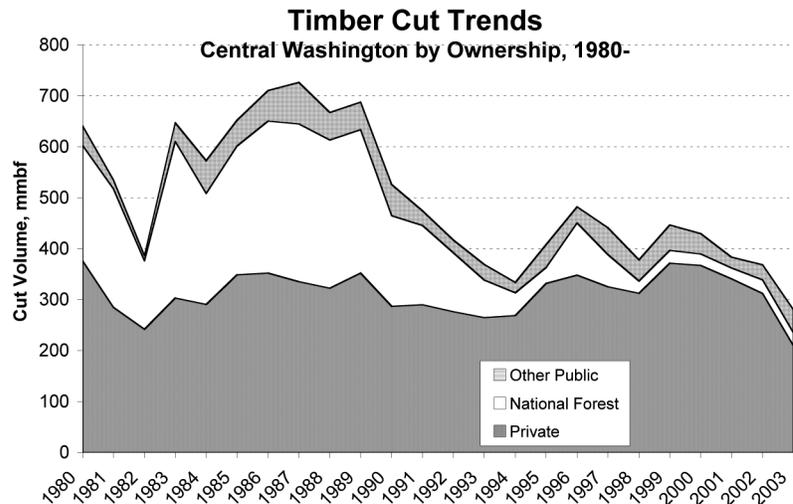
# Central Washington Timber Supply Status and Developments

By Don Parks

ALPS has had a long-term interest in timber supply trends within the Alpine Lakes Region of Central Washington. Here are the highlights for the current situation as we see them.

While the Alpine Lakes Region includes only Kittitas and Chelan Counties, it is worthwhile to review the whole Central Washington subregion. We have defined this subregion as Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, and Yakima counties only.

- 2003 was another down year for log markets. The total cut for the 5-county area was down one-quarter from 2002 levels, mostly because of reduced logging on private lands.
- The recent 5 year average cut-



Source: Washington State DNR Timber Harvest Reports, 1980-2003.

ting shows that NF's provided about 6% of the total log supply for this region. The NF's are not a major log supplier.

- Total NF cutting has averaged (1999-2003) about 24 mmbf, with NF lands in Chelan County sup-

plying the most logs (9.1 mmbf) and with Okanogan County coming in second at 7.3 mmbf.

- The dominant log source for the region is Yakima County, providing almost 60% of the log volume.
- Cutting in Central WA is currently running about one third less than it was in the 1980's. Major reductions have occurred on forest industry lands and the NF's, with reductions of 73% and 90% respectively.

Within the Alpine Lakes Counties (Kittitas and Chelan Counties):

- Chelan and Kittitas Counties account for about one quarter of the total Central Washington log supply
- National Forest lands provide 10% of the two-county cut

These current timber industry trends in Central WA appear consistent with statewide trends. It should be noted while the cut has declined within the subregion that total employment has expanded. Between 1988, when national forest cutting peaked and 2004, total employment increased by 53,209 jobs in the five-county region.

## Environmental Assessment for APEX Mine Falls Short

Continued from page 2

will occur in a time of no or low water levels in Money Creek. This will occur during salmonoid migration and spawning in the Skykomish River. A small acid or metal discharge at this time could be very detrimental to water quality and due to local geology is quite possible. The mitigation proposed in the EA does not adequately address this concern. An alternative such as catchments basin for accidental or catastrophic discharge needs to be addressed.

### Cleanup

The old stage site from the mine, powerhouse and tram station are still an eyesore and have been left to rot for years. These sites should

be cleaned up before any other mining or milling are undertaken.

### Conclusion

ALPS believes the negative aspect of the Apex mine/mill proposal outweighs the public good for this project. We feel that numerous concerns are not addressed in this EA. Therefore, we strongly support the No Action alternative.

However, if the preferred alternative is selected, we feel the mine and mill proposals need to be separated and discussed in two separate EIS documents in order to address issues the public has raised about this proposal. ■

# USFS Moving Forward with Inventory of User-Constructed ORV Trails

By Charlie Raymond

At the end of May the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests announced a set of three public meetings in mid-June to kick off implementation of the new "Travel Management Rule". (See <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/oka/recreation/ohv-2006/ohv-rule-new-rec.shtml>.) The meetings are aimed to solicit input from the community about the location of trails that have been constructed or otherwise created by off-road vehicle users. The Forest Service is undertaking an inventory of such trails in order to identify any that could be included in the motorized-trail system to be established under the new rule. Published maps of the complete road and trail system, clearly showing which roads and trails are open to specified vehicle types, will be one outcome of the process. Completion of the process is slated for the end of 2009.

The good news is that riding ORVs cross-country or on trails that are not open to the particular vehicle type will be unequivocally illegal.

---

*The less-encouraging news is that the announcements of the initial public meetings appear to emphasize the interests of the ORV community.*

---

Explicit input from the motorized community is requested, but there is no specific invitation to those exploring the national forests on feet, horseback, or on bicycles. The initial public meetings are all on the east side of the mountains. There was very little lead time

between the announcement and the meetings. Indeed, the meetings will be past by the time this news article is in your hands.

If you have concerns about the scope of ORV activity in the Wenatchee National Forest, especially around the special areas bounding the Alpine Lakes, phone the Wenatchee National Forest main office and talk to the Outdoor Recreation Planner, Jim Archambeault, at (509) 997-9738. Let him know about your general concerns and any specific experiences. Request that the next stages of the public process be inclusive and announced in a timely fashion. If you live on the west side, ask for west side meetings. If you are not already receiving communications about the Travel Management Rule have your name added to the list of interested forest users. The Forest Service needs to engage the broad public input that is essential for a credible implementation of the Travel Rule. ■

---

## Cle Elum Ranger District Accepts Funds from ORV Equipment Supplier

On April 24, 2006, Polaris Industries, manufacturer of motorized trail machines (for both summer and winter), announced the first round of grants totaling \$269,267 to 34 organizations in 20 states under a program called 'T.R.A.I.L.S.' The acronym stands for Trail development, Responsible riding, Access, Initiatives, Lobbying, and Safety. Most of the grant recipients are ORV clubs. However, the Cle Elum Ranger District of the Wenatchee National Forest was also one of the

recipients. The district received a grant of \$9,000 for acquisition of a trailer to house maps, brochures and displays. It is intended that the trailer can be pulled to public events and trailheads for the purpose of educating the public about responsible recreation in the National Forest. Use of the trailer is not restricted to addressing motorized recreation problems, nor are there requirements to display logos or disseminate advertising. Nevertheless, the underlying objective

of the Polaris T.R.A.I.L.S. program is clearly to promote expansion of motorized recreation, which raises concerns in a District that already has very heavy motorized use emphasis along with troubling impacts on resources and other recreational uses, both summer and winter. The Polaris announcement and a list of funded organizations can be found at <http://www.polarisindustries.com/en-us/Vehicles/InTheNews/PolarisGrantsMoreThan260000toATVClubs.htm>

# ALPS and Others Work to Mitigate Easton Ridge Development



JOHN VILLA

*This view near Easton is likely to change — but developer has pulled back on some key points.*

By Jim Chapman

The lead article in the 2006 Issue No. 1 of the *Alpine* was about a proposed development along Easton Ridge. While the Kittitas County commissioners voted to uphold the project's Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS), ALPS' challenge and accompanying testimony did get people's attention.

Since then, ALPS has participated in meetings and field trips with developer Nathan Weis of the Easton Ridge Land Company (ERLC), company attorney Anne Watanabe, and state & county representatives to state our concerns while getting a better understanding of the development plans and work on mitigation. Those representatives have been from the state Departments of Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife and Ecology plus Kittitas County Community Development Services.

opment Services.

To get a true feel for the on-the-ground situation, one actually does need to be on the ground. Easton Ridge's 2,100-foot profile takes up three-quarters of this 564-acre parcel but only about 135 acres is on flat ground. A major power transmission line is laid out in a northwest-southeast direction, hugging the base of the ridge. While the ridge itself is quite steep, there is a bench 400 feet up, running the entire length of the property. The Silver Creek gorge lies less than a half-mile to the north.

The previous owner, Plum Creek Timber Company, had clear-cut the flat area and much of the bench in the early 1990's and left two large rock quarries dug into the base of the hillside. While ERLC's Forest Practices Application (FPA) admitted that portions of the parcel would eventually be developed, the

focus was on further timber harvesting and landscaping the quarries for safety reasons. The company would seek county approval of its development plans later.

Quarry landscaping will involve filling in parts of them and cutting back on the slopes above so that there would no longer be such shear drop-offs with the danger of people falling 100 feet or more to their bases.

At the suggestion of the Fish & Wildlife representative, any logging is to use variable density thinning, saving wildlife trees and all possible trees over 18 inches diameter. On the bench, at least four dense stands, each a quarter acre in size, will be left for wildlife habitat. Kittitas County has incorporated these suggestions in its MDNS.

ERLC's initial development is planned for a 110-acre triangle on the flat land south and west of the power line. If limited to that area, the general development may be acceptable. The big issue would be recreational impact on the surrounding area, part of which will be determined by the number of people living there. While ERLC says there will be no more than 225 lots, others claim to have seen plans for up to 300. ERLC's initial plans also called for an access trail to the Silver Creek gorge. Both ALPS and the Forest Service said that was a bad idea and it has been dropped.

However, ERLC does retain the option to develop the bench area later on. ALPS would definitely oppose this. Fortunately, access to the bench would be very difficult. Building a paved two-lane road to the bench from within the parcel

*Continued on page 6*

## Easton Ridge Development

*Continued from page 6*

would be extremely expensive. ERLC is looking into acquiring an easement across state land to the southeast where the road would be less steep. But its stated preference, and ours, would be for some conservation group to buy development rights to the bench, thereby precluding such development. ERLC says it is actively seeking out such a group.

Because of the mitigation plans ERLC has accepted and ERLC's commitment to keeping ALPS informed of the actions it plans to take, ALPS has agreed to drop its appeal of the county's approval of the MDNS. However, we retain the right to oppose any aspects of the development we find unacceptable.

Furthermore, at least one local group, the Easton Acres Home Owners Association, has stated its intent to pursue its own appeal on the basis that the MDNS mitigation language is not strong enough. It has also invited ALPS members to submit their own comments. Members wishing to do so can simply write to the:

Kittitas County Board  
of Commissioners  
Kittitas County Courthouse,  
Room 108  
411 N. Ruby Street, Suite 2  
Ellensburg, WA 98926

For a copy of the MDNS, contact:

Joanna Valencia, Staff Planner  
Kittitas County Community  
Development Services  
411 N. Ruby Street, Suite 2  
Ellensburg, WA 98926  
509-962-7506

Finally, as the previous article stated, Easton Ridge is just one of many developments proposed for Kittitas County. One major issue is loss of access to trails that the public has used for decades. What to do? Efforts are under way by Kittitas County residents to address development in more effective and coordinated ways than the county has done in the past. ALPS intends to participate in those efforts, although it has not yet determined just what form that participation will take. Stay tuned. ■

---

## House Approves Skimpy Land Acquisition Budget

*Reprinted from June 2006 issue of Cascade Checkerboard News*

In May, the U.S. House of Representatives passed its version of the FY07 Interior Appropriations Bill, which had the lowest allocation for conservation land purchases in



decades. The bill included only 10 national park projects, including \$1.5 million for acquisition of key parcels along the Carbon River in the recently authorized addition to Mt. Rainier National Park. Rep. Norm Dicks, senior member of the appropriations committee, and Rep. Dave Reichert, who represents the 8th district where the park addition is located, worked to get this into a very tight budget bill. In a similar situation for the Forest Service, \$1 million was allocated to the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area.

Now the action turns to the Senate, where Senator Patty Murray, a long-time supporter of funding for

the Checkerboard country, sits on the appropriations committee. The Sierra Club is supporting funding to acquire some other key parcels in the checkerboard country this year. One 620-acre parcel at Stampede Pass includes a mile of the Pacific Crest Trail. Another section along Big Creek is partly within the Manastash Roadless Area and contains habitat for spotted owls and salmon. Each will cost about a million dollars. The Sierra Club is working with Cascade Land Conservancy and Trust for Public Land on these projects.

# TrailsFest 2006

*A summer of outdoor adventure. in one fun-filled day!*



*Reprinted from Washington Trails Association*

Don't let another Northwest summer pass you by without the outdoor adventures you've dreamed of having! Come to TrailsFest — a jam-packed sampling of the best of Washington's great outdoors.

If you play really hard, you just might get to try it all in one day — hiking, biking, birdwatching, fly fishing, wagon rides, kayaks, backcountry cooking, native storytelling, sasquatch tracking — even how to forecast the weather in the backcountry! Learn about the latest in outdoor fabrics and gear design. Ask local rangers where to camp and hike. Learn how to be an activist to protect our wild and special places. Eat s'mores. Pet llamas. Hike a mountain.

TrailsFest activities are designed to be fun and informative for everyone — from kids and families, to novice adventurers, to experienced hikers.

We hope to see you on the trail — July 22th at Rattlesnake Lake!

Saturday, July 22th, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Rattlesnake Lake, North Bend

Information: (206) 625-1367 / lace@wta.org

**ALPS will have an outreach table** at the 2006 TrailsFest event sponsored by Washington Trails Association at Rattlesnake Lake near North Bend on 22 July. This tabling will provide an opportunity to talk with the recreating public about the Alpine Lakes Area, ALPS role in the area's management and protection, the ongoing issues, and the opportunities to protect this important landscape that is our backyard.

We are looking for volunteers to work at our outreach table. Shifts will be two hours long, starting from 9:00 am thru 4:00 pm. If you are interested please contact Don Parks at 425-883-0646.



*Mt. Index towering over Lake Serene.*

# Forest Service Plans to Redo Snoqualmie Lake Trail

By Jim Chapman

The Snoqualmie Ranger District released a letter, dated May 26, about its intent to begin an environmental analysis for reconstructing and maintaining the 10-mile long Snoqualmie Lake Trail # 1002. No response deadline is given. You can call the ranger station at 425-888-1421 for a copy of the letter.

The trail begins about a mile upstream from where the Taylor River flows into the Middle Fork Snoqualmie. Driving the Middle Fork Road, you will cross the Taylor River and very quickly come to an intersection where the Middle Fork road almost doubles back on the right. Don't take it, but continue straight ahead another half mile to a gate with a concrete footbridge just beyond. The trail used to be a road, abandoned in the early 1980's,

and parallels the river for its first six miles. The final four miles are almost all within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area and pass by Snoqualmie, Bear and Deer Lakes. At project's end the trail becomes the Lake Dorothy Trail, which drops down to Lake Dorothy and comes out on the East Fork Miller River Road near Skykomish. It's a great opportunity for those wanting a long day hike and willing to do a key exchange.

The district proposes maintenance activities for the abandoned road and reconstruction for the wilderness segment. There were never any funds for decommissioning the road and converting it to a true trail. Culverts weren't replaced with puncheon bridges and the road's footprint wasn't narrowed to trail width. Existing culverts have plugged up and side

ditches have overflowed, resulting in water pouring down the road and creating deep trenches in the roadbed. The plan is to unclog the culverts, clean out side ditches and fill in the trenches. There would be regular maintenance after that.

The letter says the wilderness portion of the trail has eroded to the point of being very difficult, if not impossible, to use. Many structures need to be repaired or replaced and some sections rerouted. The district proposes to reroute some 25 segments, totaling about a half mile. Helicopters would ferry in supplies and materials for the reconstruction.

ALPS does not dispute the need to fix up the trail but has concerns about the details.

- How does this project rank among all district trails? Why?
- Why is the road not being decommissioned as part of this project?
- How will the trail's footprint be changed?
- Will there be anything besides trail work done?
- Can the work done inside the Wilderness be done without mechanical equipment?
- What is the cost saving for using mechanical equipment inside the Wilderness?
- Why not limit the project to that area that is outside the Wilderness?
- How would motorized tool use meet the Forest Service Manual's Minimum Requirements Decision Guide?

ALPS will respond as an organization. Please send in your own individual letters. ■



ART DAY

*A big spruce spreads a mossy screen of old branches.*

# Wenatchee-Okanogan-Colville Forest Plans Being Updated

Continued from page 1

ings on the PAC as well. No one is sure what the PAC will recommend or how the Forest Service will use this input.

The forest planning process is to be completed by December 2007.

## Current Situation

This RA inventory will provide the basis for any agency recommendations on Wilderness additions within the WOC forests during this update cycle. The ORV community is dead set against any new Wilderness, nor do the timber and mining industries favor any new 'set asides.' Local Forest Service leanings are unclear, but the Washington Office bosses clearly favor more development and much less preservation than what is in the current forest plans. The RA inventory will also be the basis for the allocation of roadless areas to unroaded management outside of Wilderness. This inventory needs to be as accurate as possible.

At the present time the PAC has split itself into two subcommittees to deal with recreation and vegetation management issues.

The recreation sub-group has reached consensus on some desired forest-wide conditions, and on abstract management themes to cover areas not already protected by legislation and/or other regulations. These themes DO NOT apply to any specific place on the map and the committee will most likely not reach clear definitions or locations. The recreation themes include:

- Back-country Non-Motorized Travel
- Back-country Motorized Travel
- Roadless Country
- Community Forest (brand new idea of having small non-motorized day use areas inside roadless

ALPINE



NATALIE WILLIAMS

*Fireweed and a burnt snag following the natural order of recovery.*

areas near cities)

- Winter Recreation Overlays of motorized and non-motorized uses.

The vegetation management sub-group is developing management themes, priorities, and suitable activities for land NOT already covered by legislation (e.g. wilderness) or the NW Forest Plan (e.g. late successional reserves and riparian reserves). This group is focusing on matrix and general forestlands in areas having these six themes:

- Roadless lands in the Wildland-Urban interface (WUI).
- Roadless Dry Forests. These forests are based on plant groups not in the WUI.
- Roadless Mesic, Cool Moist, and Cool Dry Forests. These forests are based on plant groups not in the WUI.
- Unroadless Wet forests. The Inventoried Roadless Areas (over 5,000 acres) that do not have the

dry forest plant groups.

- Unroadless Roadless Areas (over 5,000 acres) that have the dry forest plant groups.
- Unroadless WUI. This theme is to cover those cases where a WUI area overlaps an Inventoried Roadless Area.

Since ORV, timber and mining interests are strongly represented on the PAC, there is much to be concerned about if some of these recommendations become more detailed.

In May 2006, WOC TF representatives reviewed a conservationist map-based "starting option" proposal for the Wenatchee NF with the Okanogan and Wenatchee Forest Supervisor and his staff.

This detailed option emphasized roadless management. This presentation was part of the collaboration process the Forest Service has been seeking. Again it is unclear as to how this input will be used.

A WOC TF economic committee will be meeting with Forest Service in early July to discuss the philosophy and approach the agency will be taking with its economic analysis part of the forest planning effort. In the past, these analyses have suggested national forest-based products would be much more important to local economies than has actually been the case. In addition, these analyses have predicted timber-based products would be the primary source for economic changes in the forest plan proposed actions. Note should be made that, since the last forest plans were developed in the late 1980's, total employment in the five-county central Washington region has grown by

Continued on page 10

# Wenatchee-Okanogan-Colville Forest Plans Being Updated

*Continued from page 9*

nearly one third, generally swamping employment connected with national forest-based products. The WOC TF also believes that the amenity uses of the forest are very important to local economies.

What has emerged in recent months is the question of what portions of the forest plans will remain unchanged and what portions are again being placed on the table for allocation to development. In general, areas covered by specific legislation such as Wilderness, some prior forest plan direction (including wild and scenic river recommendations plus direction associated with PACFISH and INFISH) and Northwest Forest Plan direction will remain unchanged. But many areas previously allocated to roadless, non-motorized management in 1990 will be reopened for possible timber management and ORV use. In the Alpine Lakes Area, the Snoqualmie Pass Adaptive Management Area will generally remain unchanged. This picture will become clearer as the year moves forward.

## *Near Term Actions This year*

The PAC and other collaboration processes are expected to play out by the middle of this year. Then we might expect the Forest Service to summarize the results of these various inputs, add its own direction and share a package of materials with the public. What it will share and how the information will be characterized is currently unclear.

We expect a 'starting option' to be unveiled as early as this fall. A 'starting option' will probably be similar to a 'preferred alternative' in NEPA<sup>1</sup>. However, no one knows how fully this option will be analyzed or how much informa-

tion about the management scheme will be available to help the public to evaluate its effects. The 'starting option' should include maps with some descriptions for the various management directions.

## *Major Issues*

Each forest is different and ALPS focus will be on the greater Alpine Lakes Region of the Wenatchee National Forest, from the Wenatchee River in the north to the southern edge of the Cle Elum Ranger District in the south.

The following are some of the major issues that this forest plan must address:

### **Roadless Area (RA) Conservation**

Roadless Area management is a huge issue. The current Forest Service inventory of roadless lands still contains numerous errors and inaccuracies, although some were corrected this year. Many acres were never captured in the agency's official inventories due to flawed criteria, neglect, bad information, poor judgment in applying the criteria, or to just keep more options open for logging and development. In addition, some private lands that are roadless are expected to be acquired in the near term and should be included in this inventory now. Therefore, the Forest Service needs to continue its inventory process, focusing on both inventoried and non-inventoried areas.

The inventory process needs to address not only what lands will be recommended for Wilderness, but also which lands will be administered as unroaded.

### **Wilderness**

The Forest Service will study inventoried roadless lands for their suitability as wilderness and make

recommendations to Congress for new wilderness areas. With over a million acres of roadless land across the three national forests, this will be the largest study on the wilderness question since the late 1970s. The Forest Service needs to have thorough, detailed reviews of all roadless areas, similar to what was recently completed for the 15,000-acre wilderness study area on the south side of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness on the Wenatchee National Forest. This last study set a high standard, even though a final recommendation has not yet been made.

### **Road System/Access**

The existing road system was developed to support a huge timber harvest program. This program is now much reduced from the cutting levels of the 1980's. The road system is very damaging to soils, wildlife and fisheries. The forest plan revisions should include decisions to close and/or decommission unneeded roads. The plans can help local Forest Service managers decide which roads to close. Many roads have been closed in recent years, but many others still open are not needed, are falling apart, and should be closed to benefit both wildlife and recreation. Some closed roads can be made available for both motorized and non-motorized recreation, but these uses must be kept separate.

### **Trail System**

The trail system has shrunk over time on the Wenatchee due to timber harvest and road construction. Large portions of the remaining trail system have been allocated to motorized use. We expect trail usage will be reallocated to better reflect the actual balance between

the larger numbers of non-motorized users and the motorized users.

### **Motorized Recreation (summer and winter)**

Off-road vehicles are creating tremendous impacts to wildlife, watershed health, and other types of recreation in ways not imagined when the original forest plans were prepared in the 1980s. Snowmobiles are now far more powerful and able to punch deep into the wild backcountry, disturbing wildlife and creating unforeseen impacts. Dirt bike access to hiking trails has expanded greatly with the use of state gas tax money to 'harden' trails for wheeled vehicles. In addition, an explosion of ATVs (four-wheel-drive all-terrain vehicles) is causing major damage to fragile backcountry vegetation, soils, and trails. No detailed studies of environmental damage have been prepared to support this vast expansion of ORV use. Too many areas are being opened up with user-built trails, then grandfathered into formal existence. The Forest Service needs to re-examine ORV use, close significant areas to them, restrict them on certain trails, and relocate them to only those portions of the national forests that can tolerate them without the resource damage so readily seen.

### **Fire**

The long-term objective for fire management should be to view fire as an integral part of the landscape. As a natural process, it should be allowed to occur where feasible.

The benefits of prescribed burning should be expanded and management plans updated so that we can reduce the kind of extensive, costly, and ecologically damaging fire suppression efforts that became commonplace in the 20th century. In the 1980s plans, prescribed burning was scarcely considered as a

management tool, but it has already proven its value in returning fire to the landscape while reducing the need for intensive fire fighting.

### **Old Growth**

We expect that all old growth on the Wenatchee will be protected in both wet and dry portions of the forest.

### **Timber Harvest**

While the timber cutting levels on the Wenatchee has dropped since the 1980's because of the NW Forest Plan amendment of 1994, we expect that the update will not push for increased cutting outside of those areas associated with NW forest plan direction (including late successional and riparian reserves). We expect to see no direction to schedule cutting in roadless areas.

### **Wild and Scenic Rivers**

We support the retention of existing Wild and Scenic River recommendations on the forest. The planning process should evaluate additional rivers that were left out in 1990.

### **Private Land Acquisition**

The forest industry is selling off its holdings at an increasing rate, a situation that did not exist in the 1980's. Acquiring lands from industrial forest owners represents a much better option than having these properties fall into the hands of land developers and real estate promoters. The forest plan must address long-term priorities for the

acquisition of private land across the Wenatchee. ALPS suggests that the Forest Service publish maps of its acquisition priorities as part of the plan update process. ■

## *How you can get involved*

Get your name on the mailing list for this update process and provide comments at any time by contacting Team Leader Margaret Hartzell at Forest Plan Revision Team, 1240 Second Ave. S., Okanogan, WA 98440, 509-826-3275 or [r6\\_ewzplanrevision@fs.fed.us](mailto:r6_ewzplanrevision@fs.fed.us).

See <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/colville/cow> for existing forest plan information.

Contact Don Parks, 425-883-0646 or [dlparks@verizon.net](mailto:dlparks@verizon.net), for Alpine Lakes information and Joanna Bould at The Wilderness Society, 206-624-6430, extension 226, about plans for other areas.

Watch for alerts and developments. Respond to the Okanogan address.

Tell your local Forest Service personnel how you want your national forest managed.

---

<sup>1</sup>NEPA stands for National Environmental Policy Act. This act requires that a government agency fully evaluate a range of alternative management options to address a given issue or situation. NEPA also requires full public involvement during the process. The 'preferred alternative' was the option that was favored by the agency.



**alps**

alpine lakes protection society  
PO Box 27646  
Seattle WA 98165

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Seattle, WA  
Permit #1053

**ALPS Officers & Trustees:**

President: Don Parks

Vice President: John Villa

Membership: Natalie Williams

Treasurer: Frank Swart

**2003-2006**

Bill Beyers

Jim Chapman

Kevin Geraghty

Charlie Raymond

**2004-2007**

Mike Pierson

Mike Town

Natalie Williams

**2005-2008**

Art Day

Thom Peters



ART DAY

*Russian Butte still visible through spring buds.*



The newsletter of the  
Alpine Lakes Protection  
Society (ALPS). ALPS is  
dedicated to protection of  
the Alpine Lakes area in  
Washington's Cascades.

**Editor: Art Day**

**Layout: Pat Hutson**

**For membership  
information, contact**

**Natalie Williams**

**5627 47th Ave. SW**

**Seattle, WA 98136**

**[dlparks@verizon.net](mailto:dlparks@verizon.net)**