

Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Where is the Colville National Forest?

A. The Colville National Forest encompasses 1.1 million acres in the northeast corner of Washington. Bordered by the State of Idaho to the east, British Columbia to the north, and the Colville and Kalispell Indian Reservations and Spokane County to the south, the Colville provides resources, jobs, recreation opportunities, and wildlife habitat for hundreds of thousands of Inland Northwest residents.

Q. What is the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition?

A. The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition was formed in 2002 to demonstrate the full potential of restoration forestry to enhance forest health, public safety, and community economic vitality. The Coalition is a local, citizen-led cooperative effort that is working to bring together mill workers, conservationists, business owners, recreationists, loggers, foresters, ranchers, Tribes and elected officials in order to work with the Colville National Forest and other land management agencies to find solutions to forest health, economic, and other land management challenges in northeast Washington. Originally formed to identify common ground between timber and conservation interests, the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition has worked together on over twenty forestry projects to reduce fire risk, improve forest health, and enhance wildlife habitat on the Colville National Forest—all without the controversy, appeals, or lawsuits of the past.

Q. How does the Coalition help provide stability to local mills?

A. The Coalition has been working collaboratively for the past six years to reach agreement in the already roaded landscape from which a sustainable flow of wood products can be produced without damaging natural resources and wildlife. The Coalition will continue to work with the Colville National Forest to help ensure adequate funding is available to prepare fuels reduction projects and reduce the risk of wildfire in what the Coalition calls the Responsible Management Area near homes, communities, and along forest roadways. Because we work to find collaborative, balanced solutions for moving timber projects forward, they have gained broader public support without the lawsuits and appeals of the past. The result is more wood getting to local mills and more jobs in the woods. By reducing the fire risk near homes and communities while maintaining a healthy, natural-looking forest, these projects can provide multiple benefits to the community in a truly sustainable way.

Q. What are some of the Coalition's major accomplishments?

A. Coalition members have spent countless hours looking closely at forest service timber management proposals on paper and out in the field in an effort to suggest improvements that find a workable balance between conservation, forest health, and economic concerns. To date, we have collaborated on over 20 projects, including large projects such as the 4,000 acre Quartzite project near Chewelah, which is near completion; the 1,277 acre Bangs WUI project near Kettle Falls that produced 4 million board feet of timber; the Burnt Valley project, a Chewelah Fire Plan priority that produced 1.2 million board feet of timber; and other large Stewardship Projects like Malo-East Lakes in Ferry County and the Misery Lakes in Pend Oreille County that are expected to generate over 10 million board feet each. The Coalition also helped develop a holistic long-term management proposal for the Colville National Forest it calls the “blueprint.”

Q. What is the Coalition doing to help restore forests that were mismanaged for so many years?

A. Because of past management and fire exclusion in parts of the Colville National Forest, some otherwise healthy forests need restoration management. Many of these stands need to be commercially thinned and in many cases underburned to remove fuels and restore natural conditions that favor old trees and speed the recovery of old forests. Such treatments benefit wildlife and provide logs to local mills. The Coalition also proposes increasing the use of prescribed fire to reestablish and maintain natural fire regimes where appropriate.

Q. What is the Coalition's Draft "blueprint" for the Colville National Forest?

A. In addition to forestry, trails and other project work, the Coalition has drafted a management proposal—referred to as a draft "blueprint"—for the Colville National Forest's forest plan revision. This proposal was presented and modified during the Forest Service's collaborative "Summit" workshop, held from March 2006 to January 2007. The Summit was attended by one commissioner each from Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille County and 80 individuals from across the region representing diverse groups and interests. Summit participants endorsed the active management (Responsible Management Area) and restoration portions of the Coalition's management proposal and agreed to support protecting "wilderness characteristics" of inventoried roadless areas (IRAs).

Adopting recommendations from Summit participants, the Coalition submitted their revised draft blueprint management plan to the Forest Planning Revision Team, which included recommendations for managing Responsible Management Area and restoration lands, as well as for Recommended Wilderness status for 16 of the 18 IRAs. The Coalition's proposal remains a *working document* using an adaptive approach whereby lessons learned are applied to future projects. We welcome your participation and input.

Q. How does the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition affect my private property?

A. The Coalition only collaborates on public land management projects and issues and does not engage in private lands issues. Our work within public lands does reduce the chance of wildfire spreading from those lands to private lands. Our restoration and fuel reduction projects increase forage for wildlife and livestock and our focus on the already roaded landscape reduces costs to taxpayers and protects water quality and quantity, benefiting agricultural and municipal water supplies coming off of the national forest. Our initiative to protect roadless backcountry, reduce fire risk, restore healthy forests and create forestry jobs also benefits the regional economy.

Q. Is the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition working with any other interests?

A. Yes. The Coalition meets bi-monthly and coordinates regularly with the Colville National Forest. We also update and solicit input from local government officials including Tribes, county commissioners, and federal and state elected officials. We also work with students, universities, community groups, livestock producers, recreation interests, and other northeast Washington community leaders. The Coalition also regularly updates other regional, state and national conservation and timber industry organizations.

Q. How can I share my questions, concerns, or suggestions with the Coalition?

A. The Coalition holds its annual meeting and barbeque in June each year, as well as other occasional presentations, forums, and field tours of projects for the public. These events provide a great opportunity to meet members of the Coalition and to share your thoughts. We are also available to speak to your community group, business, or other organization, and our monthly board meetings are open to the public. If you'd like to become a member of the Coalition or check for upcoming meetings and events, visit our web site at www.newforestrycoalition.org. You can also e-mail us your questions and comments or send your name, e-mail, and address to newforestrycoalition@yahoo.com and we'll add you to our mailing list.

More info at: <http://www.newforestrycoalition.org>