



File Code: 1950
Date: January 17, 2020

Dear Planning Participant,

The U.S. Forest Service has developed a proposed ecological restoration project approximately four miles north of Newport within the Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger Districts on the Colville National Forest. The Sx^wuytn – Kaniksu Connections “Trail” Project consists of portions of five large watersheds and covers approximately 90,700 acres. The project area is bordered by the Pend Oreille River on the west, the Idaho Panhandle National Forest on the east, and the southern boundary roughly follows the southern boundary of the Newport Ranger District. The north border follows the Middle Creek-Pend Oreille River watershed’s north boundary.

The project has multiple purposes: to increase forest health; address risk of insect and disease outbreaks; limit uncharacteristic wildland fires; meet state and federal water quality guidelines; provide quality fish and wildlife habitat; contribute to the local economy; and connect lands and people. The proposed action was developed through coordination between the Colville National Forest, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, under the Good Neighbor Authority and the Tribal Forest Protection Act. These three entities worked with each other and with interested members of the public to gather interests, concerns and ideas for management of National Forest System lands within the Trail project area. Meetings and discussions were held in various venues but primarily through six public workshops and a public field trip. The public input was combined with resource information to develop this draft Proposed Action, which is consistent with the 2019 Colville National Forest Land Management Plan.

Although information from many landowners was considered, the draft Proposed Action only includes activities on lands managed by the Colville National Forest. Maps and information about the project are available on the Colville National Forest’s project webpage at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54315>, as well as on the Kalispel Tribe of Indians webpage at <https://knrd.org/portfolio/sx%ca%b7uytn-trail-tribal-forest-protection-act/>. Hard copies of these documents are available upon request.

We are informing you about this proposal so you can provide input to us. Your comments will be considered and used to identify issues associated with the proposal, which could lead to alternatives or mitigation measures, so please keep them as specific as possible. They will also become part of the public record. The planning process includes considering input we receive as well as conducting any necessary surveys for wildlife, sensitive plants, heritage, or other resources. We expect to have an environmental assessment available for review and a formal public comment period during the fall/winter of 2020. There will be an opportunity to comment again at that time.

Specific written comments as defined by §218.2 should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for



the responsible official to consider. Only those who submit timely project-specific written comments during a public comment period are eligible to file an objection.

In an effort to reduce paper use, the Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger District encourages electronic correspondence. The preferred method for comment submittal is directly to the project website at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=54315>. However, comments may also be submitted via email to comments-pacificnorthwest-colville-newport@usda.gov. Comments submitted via email should include “**Sx^wuytn – Kaniksu Connections**” or “**Sx^wuytn – Trail**” in both the subject line and as part of the actual email message. Attachments may be in the following formats: plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rft), Word (.doc, docx), or portable document format (.pdf).

Written comments can be submitted via fax (509-447-7301), hand-delivered during normal business hours (7:30 – 11:30 am and 12:30 - 4:00 pm Monday-Friday, excluding holidays), or mailed to:

Gayne Sears, District Ranger
ATTN: Theresa Mathis, Environmental Coordinator
Newport Ranger District Office
315 N. Warren Avenue
Newport, WA 99156

Comments will be most helpful if received by **February 24, 2020**.

For more project information contact team lead Gloria Flora (406-459-3486 or gflora@s-o-solutions.org) or to Theresa Mathis, Environmental Coordinator (509-447-7361 or theresa.j.mathis@usda.gov).

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,



Gayne Sears
District Ranger, Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger Districts