

Chelan County
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Coulter Block Assessment

Prepared by

Chelan County Natural Resource Department
Washington Conservation Science Institute



Acknowledgements

The Wilderness Society

Trust for Public Land

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Chinook Forest Partners

Alpine Lakes High Camp

Nason Ridge Stewardship Committee

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Coulter Block Assessment

Introduction

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The Coulter Block lands owned by Chinook Forest Partners spread across ~4,650 acres in the Eastern Washington Cascades, where the Chiwakum range dips down from alpine heights to meet Nason Creek and the small rural communities nestled around these natural features. The land has a long legacy of timber harvest, but also holds immense value as a recreational, economic, and environmental resource to the surrounding communities.

Exhibit 1 Photo from High Elevation Above Coulter Block Lands



Source: Justin Donohue, 2023

Purpose

The purpose of this Assessment Report is to compile information about the Coulter Block lands to inform potential future owners and stakeholders of the values and resources these lands hold and how these values and resources may inform future management strategies and objectives. A variety of sources were utilized to compile this report, including multiple landscape analysis, forestry records, the Nason Ridge Community Forest Management Plan (2019), land manager

input, and local knowledge. It serves as a baseline document that can be used as the basis for future planning and management efforts.

The Coulter Block contains important habitat, water resources, timber capacity, recreation opportunity, and local economic value. In order to realize the full local benefits this tract of land can provide, management of the lands that prioritizes the continuation of these benefits should be encouraged. The Trust for Public Land recognizes these potential public benefits, and holds an option for purchase on the Coulter Block and other private industrial forest lands in Chelan County with the intent of maintaining public benefits and determining a suitable long-term owner. The information in this report is intended to help support this intention and help stakeholders and prospective landowners understand the values and resources of the lands to aid in long-term management decisions.

The information in this report reflects the overall importance of the ecological functioning of the Nason Creek watershed on a landscape scale, which is highlighted by the various types of analysis that have occurred across the watershed in recent years with the goal of protecting ecological processes and increasing resilience across the landscape. This report also reflects the genuine interest of the local community and other stakeholders in implementing best management practices across the landscape for multiple benefits. The report is meant to convey both the existing data and information describing these lands and the investment by the local community in protecting the multiple values that the lands provide, including access to nature-based recreation.

Exhibit 2 Looking West Across Roaring Creek Drainage



Source: Justin Donohue, 2023.

History

The Coulter Block area is located within the traditional lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and the Sauk Suiattle Indian Tribe (ATCRC 2021). The lands of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation extended in all directions along the Cascade Mountain Range to the Columbia River and beyond (Yakama Nation 2021).

The traditional territory of the Sauk Suittle Indian Tribe was located in the foothills of the North Cascades and included the drainage area of the Sauk, Suittle, and Cascade Rivers (Sauk Suittle Indian Tribe 2022). The Sauk Suittle also report having frequently traveled downriver to Puget Sound and across mountains to eastern Washington (Sauk Suittle Indian Tribe 2022).

During the ethnographic period in the Wenatchee basin, larger villages were located along river drainages during the colder seasons, while short-term sites in the upper watersheds were utilized during the warmer seasons following seasonal availability of resources. Seasonal camps were revisited yearly, producing an archaeological record of changing technologies (Chatters et al. 2011). Sources of sustenance included fish and root resources, complex fishing technologies including platforms and weirs, and horticulture and root digging practices (Miller 1998; Teit 1928). For many generations, thanks to the natural bounty of salmon and wildlife, Native Americans used this area seasonally for fishing, hunting, and food gathering.

Trappers and gold prospectors blazed new trails into the area in the mid-1800s, paving the way for settlement which soon followed. Much of the early post-settlement historic activity in the area is associated with turn of the century sheep grazing, when huge herds of sheep were moved through on their way to graze the high alpine meadows (Marler 2004). The Wenatchee National Forest was established in 1908, with headquarters in Leavenworth, Washington. In that same year, nearly 150,000 sheep grazed the Forest (USFS 2019).

Stevens Pass was surveyed and selected as the route for the Great Northern Railway in 1890, which brought major changes to the Wenatchee River and Nason Creek valleys (Roe 1995). Until around 1880 the land was exclusively owned by the US government, but alternating sections amounting to 3000+ acres were given to the Great Northern Railroad (GNRR) as incentive to build to the Pacific coast (Schmitten 2023). By 1900, trains were travelling from Seattle to Leavenworth, with passage through tunnels that were major engineering feats of the time. The railroad brought small depot towns and logging camps scattered through the Nason and Skykomish corridors. For the next 70 years, the local industry was centered around logging, with wood transported down the Wenatchee River into the town of Leavenworth.

In 1970, the Pack River Company with headquarters in Spokane, WA bought Peshastin Forest Products including 96,000 acres of what had been GNRR lands. This included the lands around Coulter Creek. Until this time, the only designated use of the land was an exclusive "Bow Hunt" area by the WA Department of Game. In 1972, the US Forest Service put up a timber sale in the lower area of Coulter Creek, in the area adjoining the emergency air strip and railroad tracks along U.S. Highway 2 and across from the existing Nason Rest Area. Pack River purchased the timber sale and used the designated road that was required to be built for the sale to springboard into their lands in Coulter Creek (Schmitten 2023). Building the existing road up the east side of the drainage and then moving west to the Roaring Creek area, their long-termed goal was to log company lands while moving west to a significant stand of Western White Pine which was infested with White Pine Blister Rust. By 1980 most of the private land had been

logged. The Pack River land and mills in Chelan County were sold to W.I. Forest Industries. These lands later sold to Longview Fiber and then to Weyerhaeuser, and were sold to Chinook Forest Partners in 2021.

In more recent years, numerous public and private entities have invested in restoration activities in Nason Creek in an effort to improve habitat for ESA listed salmonids. These include Bonneville Power Administration, the US Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board, Ecotrust, the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, and PUD among others. The Yakama Nation has been working to re-establish the Coho run on Nason Creek since 2008. Restoration has become a major focus in the Nason Creek watershed as its importance as spawning and rearing ground for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed spring Chinook salmon and steelhead has been recognized. Since 2005, approximately \$5.5 million was invested in Nason Creek in 17 separate restoration projects. Three of these were acquisition projects that protected 62 acres of floodplain, 89 acres of wetlands, and 2 miles of streambank.

The Coulter Block area was identified in several recent County-scale planning processes. The Chelan County Comprehensive Plan details a vision for future development in the Lake Wenatchee area that places importance on compatibility with wildlife, natural areas, rural atmosphere, and public recreational values for which the area is known. This includes protecting “critical areas,” which are defined as areas that are important for water quality protection and wildlife habitat. The Upper Wenatchee Community Lands Plan (2016) describes regional land use and conservation goals that include promoting sustainable forests that support biodiversity, working lands for a thriving economy, and public recreational access. Land acquisition is noted as a “priority action step,” and Nason Ridge/Lake Wenatchee was identified as one of the three focal areas in the sub-basin. Finally, the Wenatchee Watershed Plan (2006) and the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Plan (2007) both identify this reach of Nason Creek as a high priority for protection and restoration.

1

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Setting

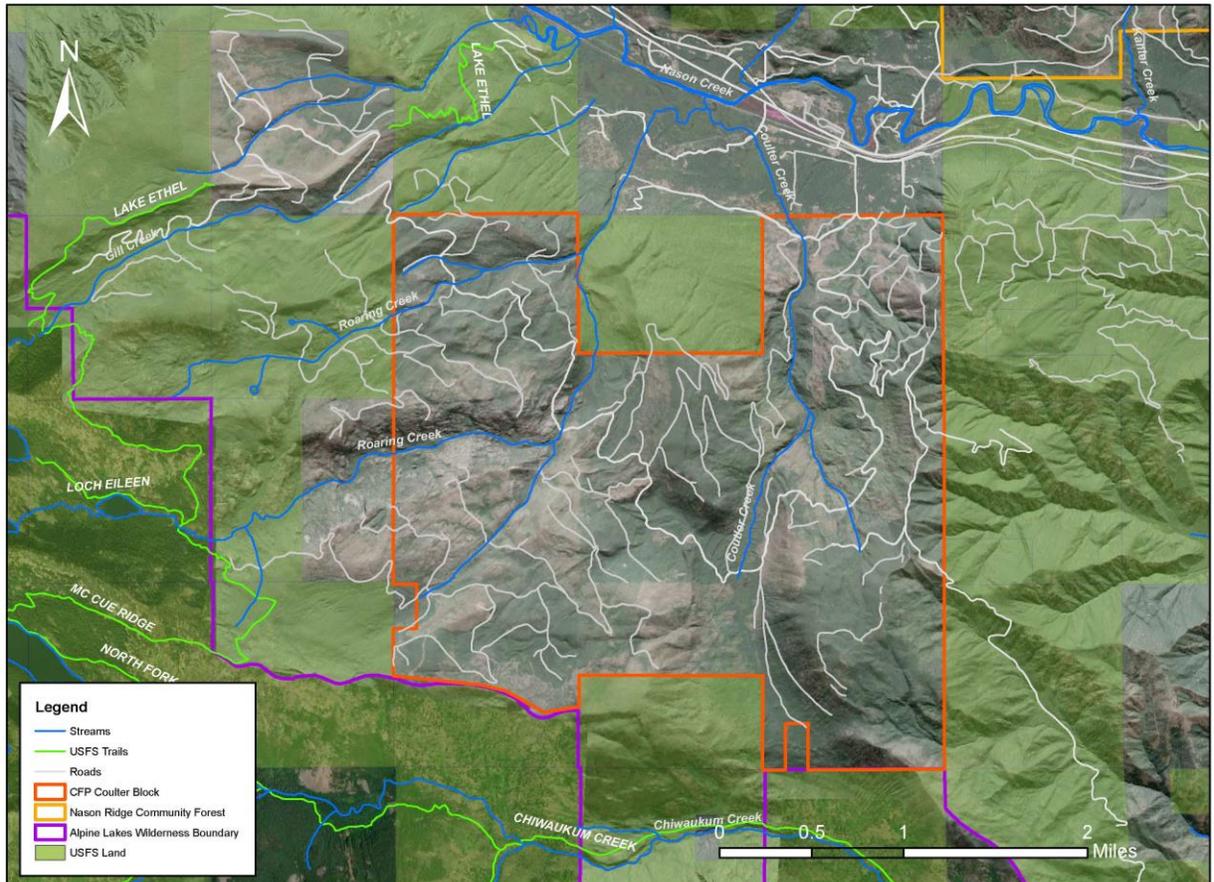
Location & Physical Description

The Coulter Block lands are set in a mountainous location on the east slope of the Washington Cascades, about 80 miles east of Seattle and 45 miles west of Wenatchee. The land is a large, single-ownership contiguous parcel of approximately 4,650 acres and is primarily used to grow and harvest timber while also providing habitat for wildlife and fisheries and opportunities for public recreation. The Coulter Block lies on State Highway 2 which connects the Puget Sound metropolitan area to the eastern Cascades. This property is located just two hours from the Puget Sound metropolitan area and is near two popular ski areas. The property lies near the small communities of Cole's Corner and Lake Wenatchee, and borders the residential neighborhood of Roaring Creek along the northern boundary.

The property is bordered by US Forest Service lands and private properties. The southern border (higher elevation) shares a boundary with the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, which is part of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The terrain continues to climb beyond the southern boundary into the high mountain terrain of the Chiwakum Range. A series of alpine lakes nestled into the stunning mountain landscape of this corner of the Alpine Lake Wilderness is one of the major recreational draws of the area. Private lands adjacent to the property include Alpine Lakes High Camp lands, which provide customers of the Alpine Lakes High Camp business with a rustic alpine retreat for recreation and relaxation, as well as family-owned and partner-owned properties for personal use.

The primary use of the property is currently timber production, and timber harvest has shaped much of the landscape in the recent past. A mosaic of harvest units is connected by a series of logging roads. Some of these roads bear US Forest Service easements, which provide for public use by foot, bicycle, or street-legal motorcycle. Two perennial (Np) streams divide the property; Coulter Creek on the eastern portion of the property and Roaring Creek on the western portion. Dozens of seasonal (Ns) feed into these Np streams. Coulter Creek and Roaring Creek feed into Nason Creek, a major tributary to the Wenatchee River and a stronghold for endangered spring Chinook salmon spawning.

Exhibit 3 Chinook Forest Partners Coulter Block Lands



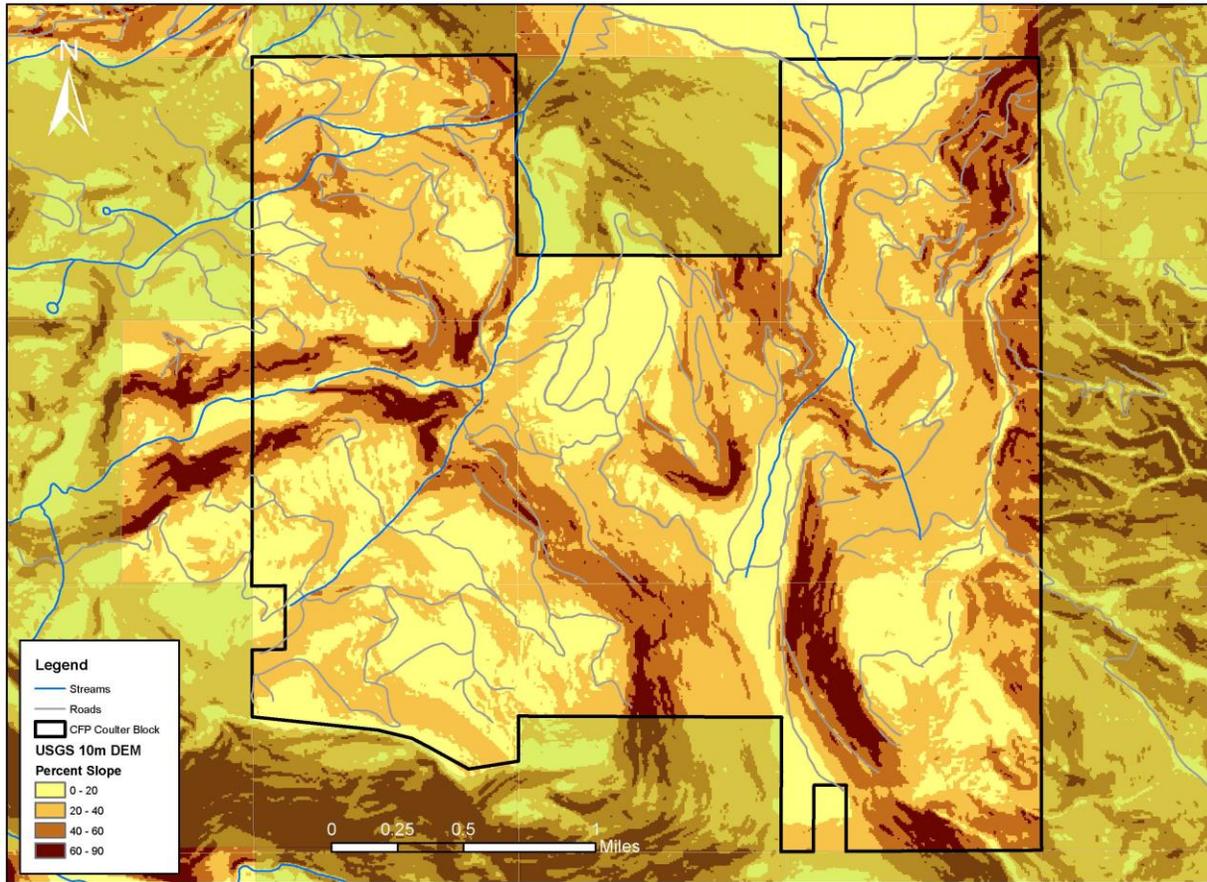
CFP Coulter Block Lands and Surroundings

USFS, Chelan County GIS 2023

Source: Chelan County, 2023

The topography is mildly to steeply sloped with a predominant north aspect. With the lower elevations around 2,000' and the higher reaches around 5,000' the property contains around 3,000' of vertical relief. The aspect is predominately north, with east and west facing slopes along ridgelines and other terrain features. The terrain is characterized by broad, low-angle benches separated by steep slopes (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4 Coulter Block Slope Map



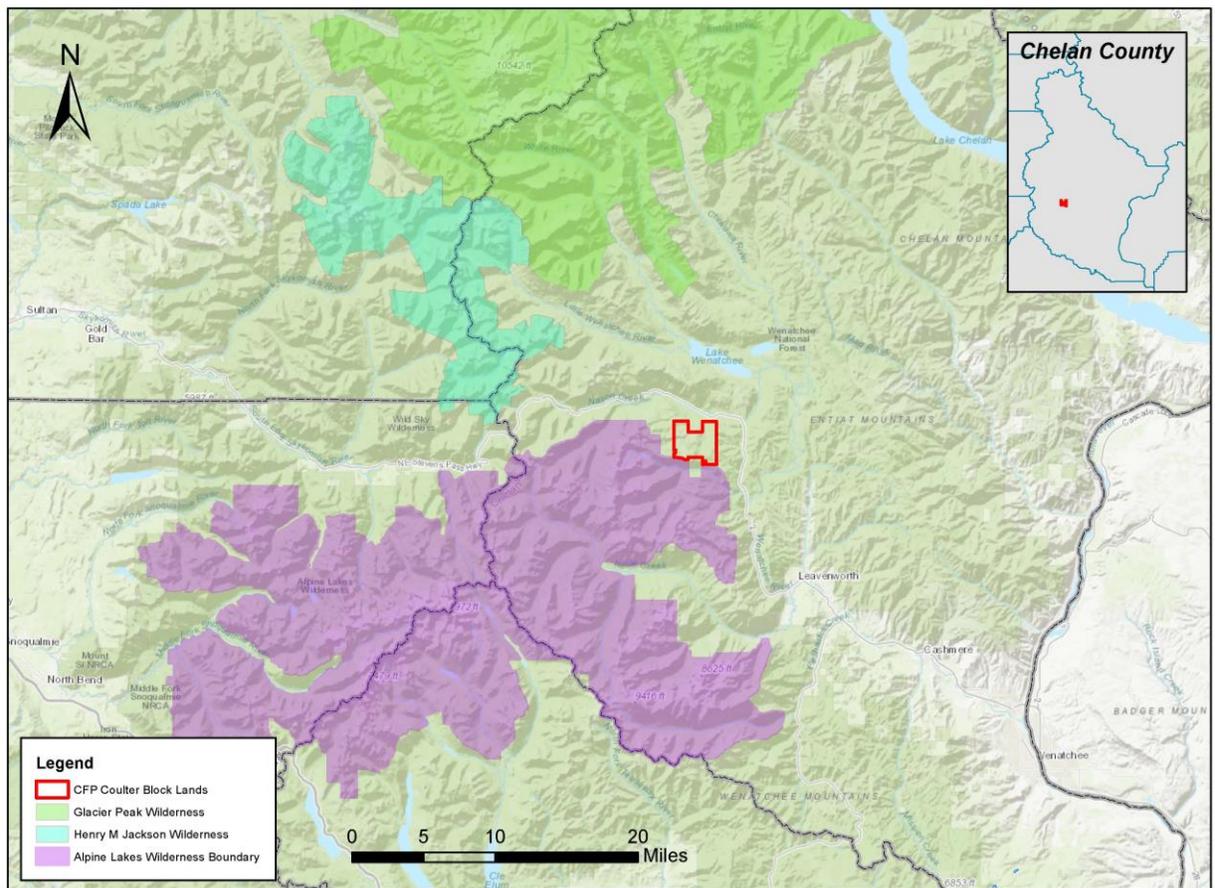
Source: USGS, Chelan County GIS 2023.

Legal Description and Boundaries

The entire property is located within Township 26 North, Range 16 East. The property covers all or portions of the following Sections: 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27. The property is made up of 9 individual parcels, with a total area of ~4,650 acres. The property is entirely within Chelan County, Washington.

Geography and Climate

Exhibit 5 Coulter Block Geographic Location



CFP Coulter Block Geographic Location

Source: Chelan County GIS 2023

Regional Landscape, Climate, Vegetation & Geology History

Located in the lee of the Cascade crest, the climate on the Coulter Block lands is strongly influenced by the orographic effects of the mountain range to the west. Strong winter storms drop heavy precipitation over the area, but the rain shadow effects are also illustrated by the mesic forest types and sharp precipitation gradient between the crest and Cole's Corner. The majority of the annual precipitation falls as snow in the winter months, with higher elevations on

the property commonly experiencing a 6-8' winter snowpack (personal communication Alpine Lakes High Camp). The northerly aspect helps retain snow and feed the two major streams on the property throughout the year. The copious winter snowfall combined with the typically warm, dry summers contribute to the recreational appeal of this area.

The land types associated with this general area are glacial troughs and scoured glacial troughs with a few cirque basins. Bedrock underlying the area is predominately Cretaceous banded gneiss, Chiwaukum schist, and granitic rocks of the Mt. Stuart batholith on the southwestern edge. Larger stream bottoms are filled with alluvium and reworked glacial outwash. Due to the proximity to Glacier Peak, some of the soils formed in volcanic ash and pumice, but the majority of soils in this area developed in granitic and glacial residuum (USFS 2009).

Grand fir, ponderosa pine, and Douglas-fir dominate low elevation stands. Mid-elevation forests are mainly Pacific silver fir, western hemlock, and western redcedar. Upper slope species include subalpine fir, whitebark pine, lodgepole pine, and Engelmann spruce. Avalanche paths containing willow, mountain ash, Douglas maple, and Sitka alder are common. Periodic avalanches also stimulate forbs and grasses important to mountain goats found in the area (USFS 2009). A 1996 USFS watershed analysis documented that the overall condition of the vegetation in the Nason Creek subwatershed is "stable and vigorous" (USFS 1996).

The area contains mesic, moist, and some cold forest types that include both mixed and high-severity fire regimes. Large fires were prevalent in the railroad construction years (ca.1880s) in the Nason Creek drainage. Annual fire occurrence is light to moderate with most started by lightning. The vegetation type is mostly moist forest types with Douglas-fir, western white pine, grand fir, and western hemlock transitioning to Pacific silver fir with Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and whitebark pine on ridgetops. Upper slope and ridge tops are predominately Fire Regime V (+200 years, stand replacement type). Whitebark pine stands and meadows adjacent to subalpine fir need fire to persist (USFS 2009).

The property contains two main perennial streams, Coulter Creek and Roaring Creek which drain the high terrain of McCue Ridge and the "Scottish Lakes", including Lake Julius, Lake Donald, and Loch Eileen. These streams feed into Nason Creek, a Type S stream that supports habitat for eight fish species: spring Chinook, summer steelhead, and bull trout (all ESA listed), as well as sockeye salmon, cutthroat trout, and mountain whitefish. Historically, Coho salmon inhabited Nason Creek, but were extirpated from the Upper Columbia Basin in the 1900's. The Yakama Nation has been reestablishing the Coho run since 2008, and Nason Creek provides excellent spawning and rearing habitat for these fish. Management of the streams and uplands of the Coulter Block property affects water quality and habitat for all these species.

2

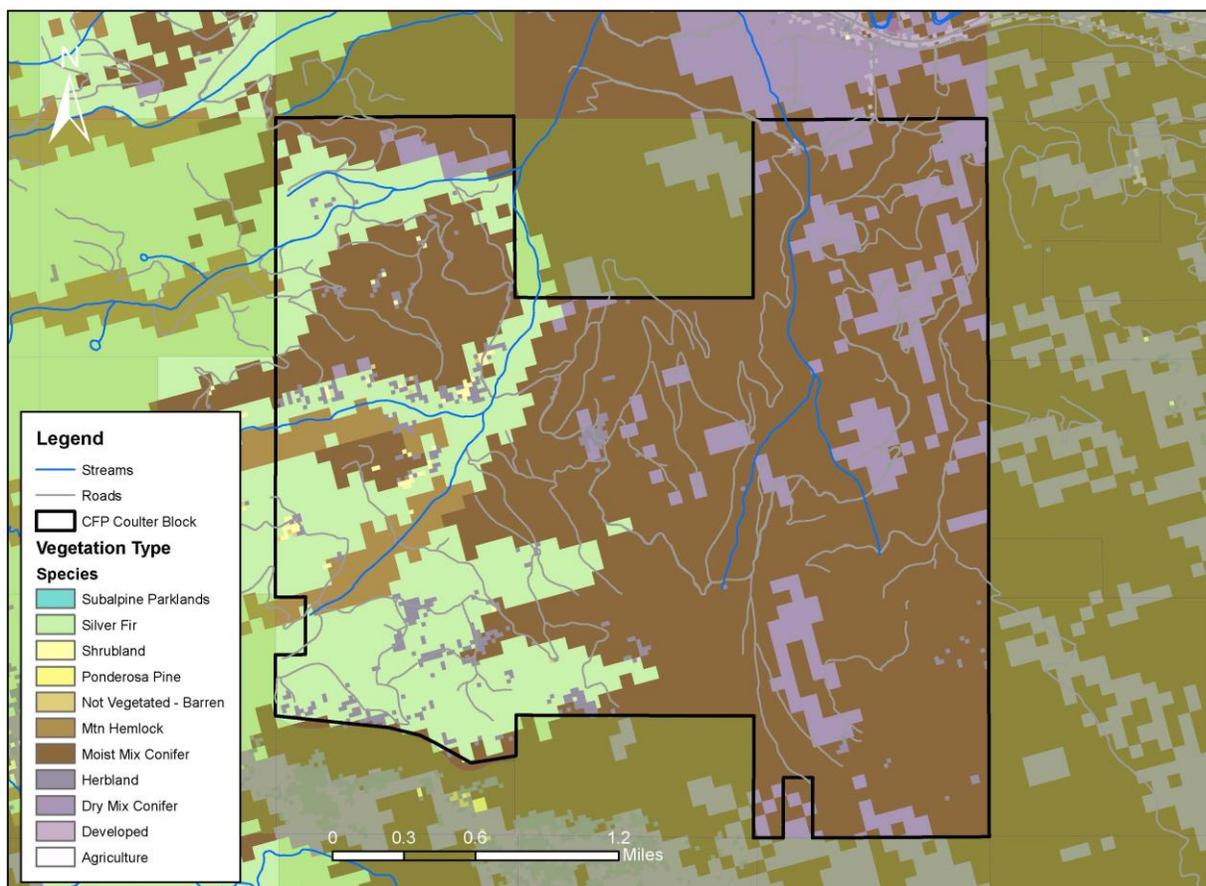
Forest and Road Management

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Current Condition

The Coulter lands, located in the heart of the Cascade Transition Zone, have been managed for timber production for more than a century. It is one of the most diverse and productive forested areas in Chelan County, with primarily north aspects ranging in elevation from 2,000–5,000 feet. The lands have been heavily managed for timber protection for decades, leaving a patchwork landscape of harvest units, maturing stands, steep rocky terrain, and riparian management zones.

Exhibit 6 Coulter Block Modeled Vegetation Habitat Type

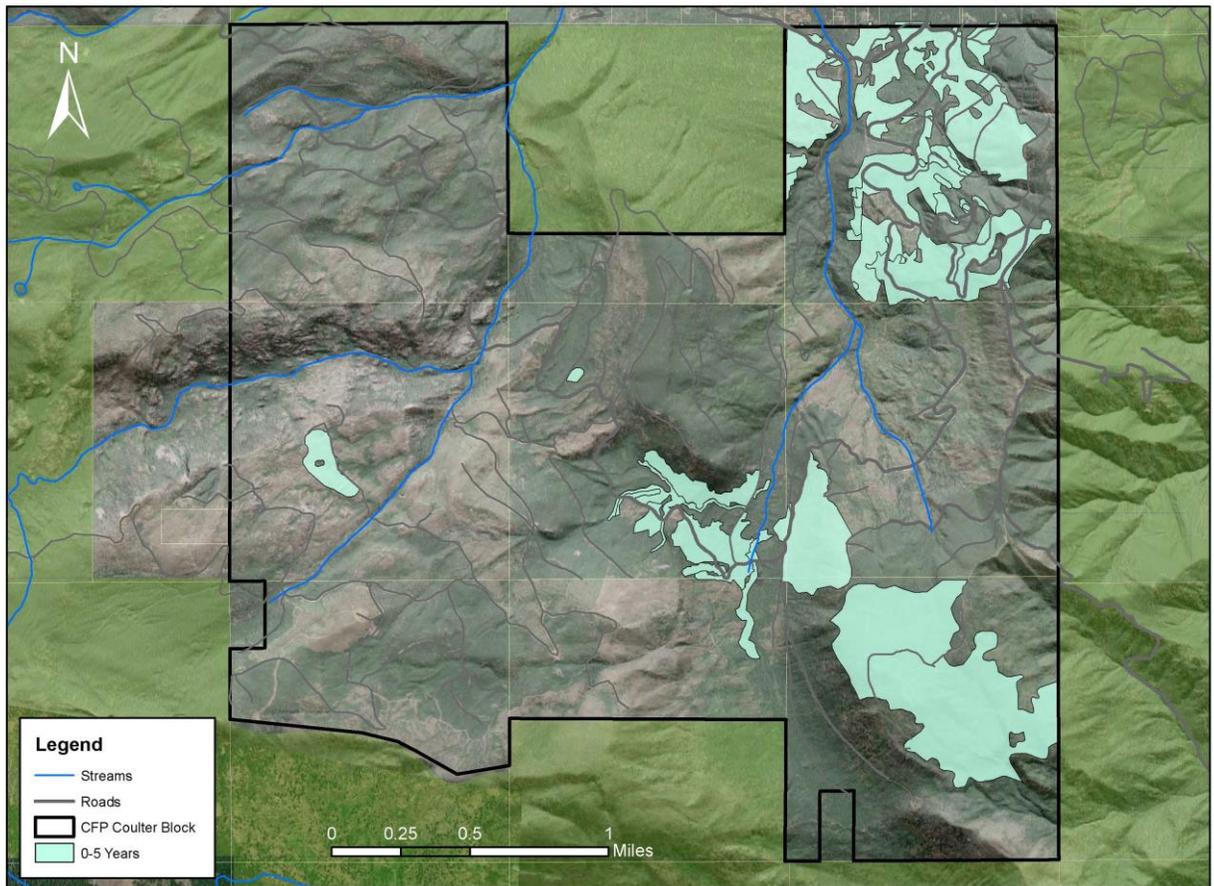


Source: DNR, Chelan County GIS 2023.

The Coulter Block is a remarkably diverse property containing multiple tree species including Douglas-fir, grand fir, silver fir, ponderosa pine, western white pine, lodgepole pine, western redcedar, western hemlock, western larch, red alder, bigleaf maple, rocky mountain maple,

and cottonwood. Micro-terrain features and available moisture from snowpack create vegetative habitat conditions that are conducive to supporting large trees and a variety of species (Exhibit 6). A detailed forest assessment was not completed as part of this assessment report, but stand data and Forest Practices Permits from Weyerhaeuser and Chinook Forest Partners provides an overview of current conditions on the property in terms of stand age and harvest activity (Exhibits 7 and 8).

Exhibit 7 Coulter Block Recent Harvest (<5 Years)

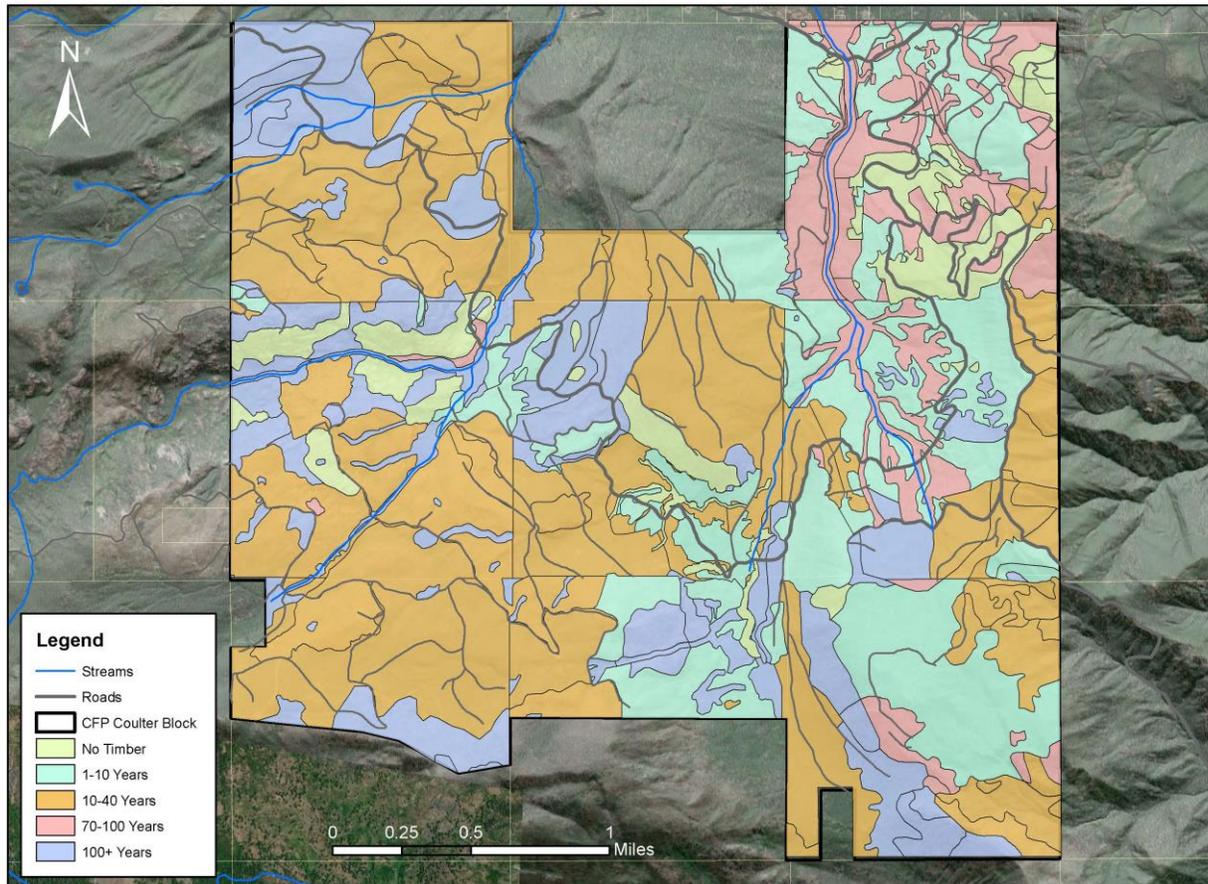


Coulter Block Recent Harvest (Stand Age < 5 years)

Chinook Forest Partners, Chelan County GIS 2023

Source: Chinook Forest Partners, Chelan County GIS 2023.

Exhibit 8 Coulter Block Stand Age



Coulter Block Stand Age (Years)

Chinook Forest Partners, Chelan County GIS 2023

Source: Chinook Forest Partners, Chelan County GIS 2023.

Harvest History

The Coulter Block Lands have been part of an industrial timber lands complex for over 100 years, dating back to 1862 when the United States government, through the passage of Land Grant Legislation, gifted public land to railroad companies to entice them to complete the rail system to the West Coast. In Chelan County, every other section (640 acres) of land was granted to the Great Northern Railroad in the Icicle and Wenatchee River drainages. This was to specifically

encourage the railroad to build across one of the mountain passes connecting to the West Coast (Seattle area).

In the early 1900's, the Lamb/Davis Lumber Company (LDLC), located in Leavenworth, WA, purchased 50,000 acres of land from the Great Northern Railroad. This land was located in the Leavenworth/Lake Wenatchee areas and was to support their mill in Leavenworth. In 1915, the LDLC went bankrupt and the Great Northern Lumber Company (GNLC), acquired all the land and remaining timber.

In 1970 the lands were sold to the Pack River Company. At the time, Pack River owned all the sawmills in Chelan County. Pack River was the first company to build roads into the property and start actively logging it with conventional tractor and short-line logging methods (Schmittens pers. comm. 2023).

In 1979, Pack River reorganized under Chapter 11 and sold its lands and mills to the W.I. Timber Company (Washington/Idaho Timber Company). W.I. began an aggressive harvest approach of the land and entered into the export log business to optimize their profit. The land was again sold in 1981 to Long View Fibre, then transferred to the Weyerhaeuser Company in 2013 and, given the development of new logging equipment capable of logging steep land and the use of larger clear-cuts, intensively logged much of the land. Chinook Forest Partners, the current landowner, purchased the land from Weyerhaeuser in 2021 and continued to harvest units up until 2022. At the time of this report, there are no open Forest Practices Permits for harvest on the property. Exhibit 9 lists known Forest Practices Applications for harvest within the Coulter Block lands since 2006. As of 2023, Chinook Forest Partners continues to replant cut blocks and manage shrub growth to promote tree survival.

Exhibit 9 Record of Forest Practices Applications Since 2006

Record of Forest Practices Applications

Owner	FPA Date	Acres of Harvest	Type of Harvest
Longview	8/16/2006	51	Clearcut
Longview	9/11/2006	41	Even-aged
Longview	10/19/2006	46	Even-aged
Longview	10/10/2008	228	Uneven/even-aged
Longview	11/23/2009	29	Even-aged

Longview	8/30/2011	64	Even-aged
Longview	10/4/2011	35	Even-aged
Longview	6/5/2012	165.5	Uneven/even-aged
Longview	6/5/2012	80	Even-aged
Longview	7/19/2012	270	Uneven/Even-aged
Longview	9/21/2012	76.4	Even-aged
Weyerhaeuser	10/8/2014	83	Even-aged
Weyerhaeuser	3/24/2015	196	Even-aged
Weyerhaeuser	7/18/2017	48	Overstory removal
Chelan Resources LLC	8/18/21	223	Even-aged
Chelan Resources LLC	5/27/2022	112	Even-aged
Chelan Resources LLC	6/13/2022	60	Even-aged
Chelan Resources LLC	9/6/2022	17.7	Even-aged
Chelan Resources LLC	9/19/2022	25	Even-aged

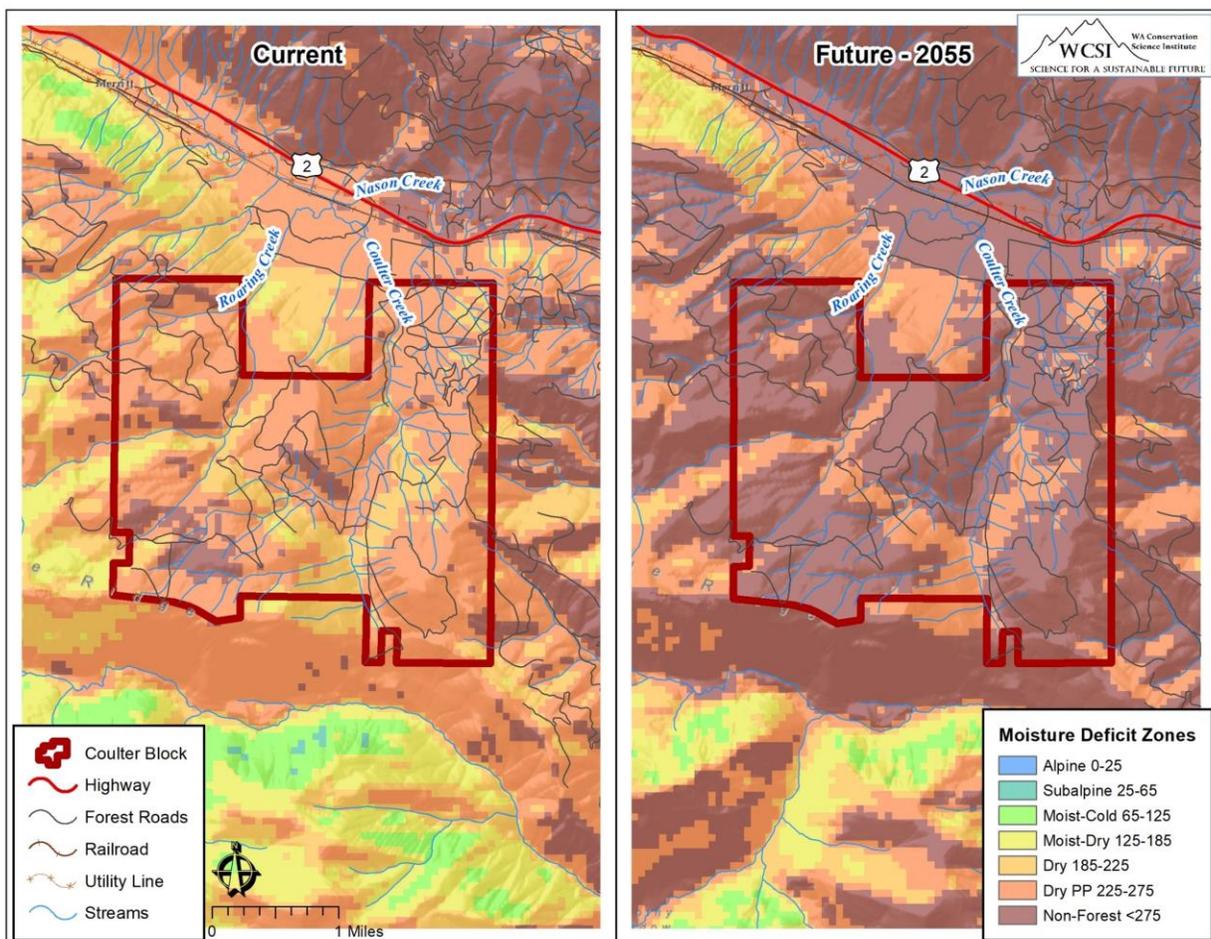
Source: Wes Worden, Chinook Forest Partners 2023.

Nason Landscape Evaluation

Under DNR's 20-year Forest Health Strategic Plan, a series of priority landscapes across eastern Washington were identified for analysis and treatment investments. The Nason watershed was identified as a 2020 Priority Planning Area, and a Landscape Evaluation was completed to help understand current forest condition, fire risk, future vulnerability to climate change, and strategic wildfire response areas. The Nason Landscape Evaluation footprint includes the Coulter Block lands, and gives context not only to treatment priorities on the lands, but also across the landscape as a whole.

The Nason Landscape Evaluation provides a watershed-wide understanding of current forest condition and departure from historic ranges of variability in terms of stand structure and moisture deficit. The Evaluation also assigns risk in terms of wildfire to the landscape including the Coulter lands. According to the Landscape Evaluation, the lands are primarily a moist-to-dry forest type, with projected moderate to high moisture deficit levels with the anticipated effects of climate change in the future (Exhibit 10). This potential increase in moisture deficit could result in an overall shift in forest structure from moist-dry to dry ponderosa-dominated. The management implications of this potential shift would be to apply forest health treatments to help shift forest structure to stand types that are resilient to increased moisture stress.

Exhibit 10 Nason Current and Projected Moisture Deficit

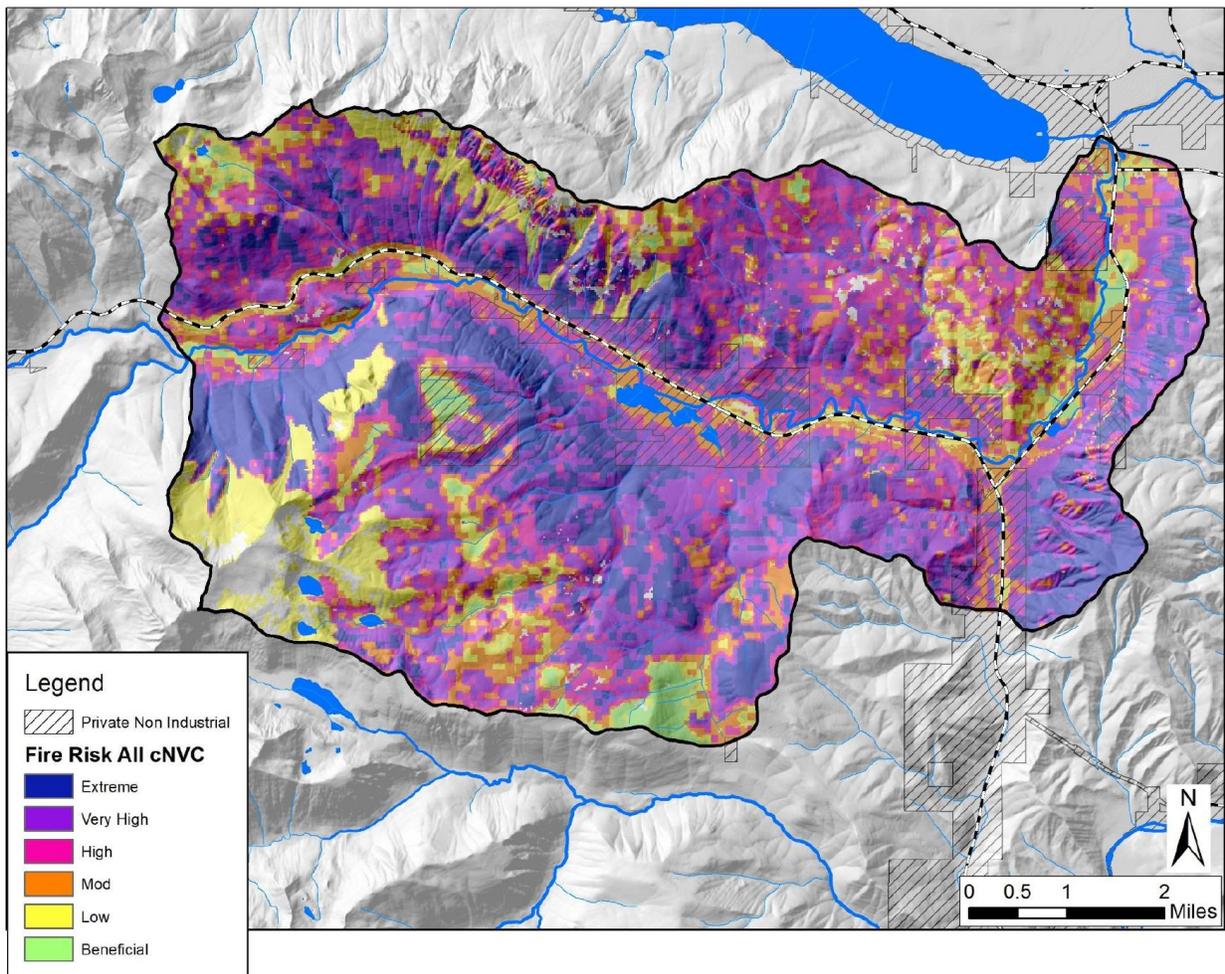


Source: DNR, Washington Conservation Science Institute 2023.

Fire and Drought Vulnerability

Much of the Nason watershed lights up as high to very high risk of wildfire affecting forests, homes, and infrastructure in the landscape evaluation modeling outputs. The Coulter Lands are no exception (Exhibit 11, Coulter Lands are located in the south-central portion of the watershed). The combined fire risk being realized through analysis and modeling in Nason Creek is helping to raise the importance of implementing forest health work in the watershed, not only to protect infrastructure and values at risk, but also to protect the forests and ecosystem services they provide to the greater landscape.

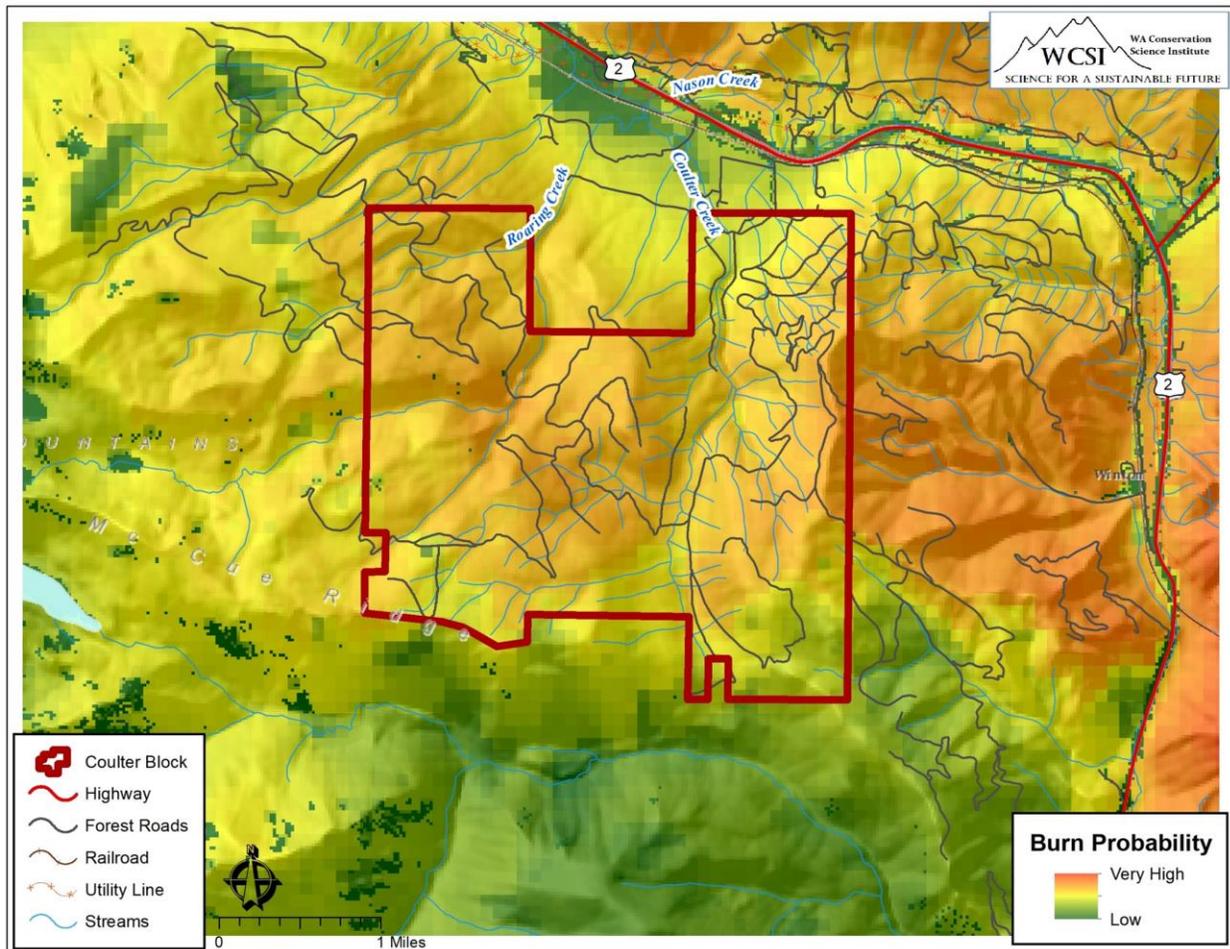
Exhibit 11 Nason Watershed Fire Risk Map



Source: DNR Nason Landscape Evaluation, 2020.

Historically, the forests in this area would have developed under a mixed severity fire (MSF) regime in the very long interval between stand replacement events. Large and very large Douglas-fir would have been present in the overstory prior to the commercial harvesting conducted over the past 100 years. While fire suppression and harvest practices have changed the historical regime, forest health goals could be achieved by creating a more diverse, resilient forest with patchy mosaic stands and large healthy trees of resilient species.

Exhibit 12 Coulter Block Burn Probability



Source: DNR, Washington Conservation Science Institute, 2023.

In order to achieve landscape-scale restoration goals and reduce burn probability, DNR's Nason Landscape Evaluation states that treating 23-39% of the landscape (including ~1,500 acres on private industrial timber lands) can help create a resilient landscape in the Nason Creek

watershed.

Priority Treatments

Building on the work completed by DNR with the 2020 Nason Landscape Evaluation, Washington Conservation Science Institute completed a more in-depth analysis of the Nason watershed, with the purpose of identifying priority treatment packages in the Nason drainage and creating landscape prescriptions to holistically address forest and watershed health (Gaines et. al. 2023). Designed to help move these priority treatment packages along a NEPA pathway toward implementation, the Nason Creek Landscape Evaluation and Prescription report includes detail on location and type of forest health treatment, along with revised NSO (norther spotted owl) polygons based on field verification. It also includes recommendations on addressing sediment delivery to streams and utilizing prescriptions designed for climate resiliency. There are several priority treatment areas within the vicinity of the Coulter Block identified in the report, including the Nason Ridge Community Forest and Butcher Creek area to the north of the Coulter Block. The Coulter Block lands are also included within a priority treatment package.

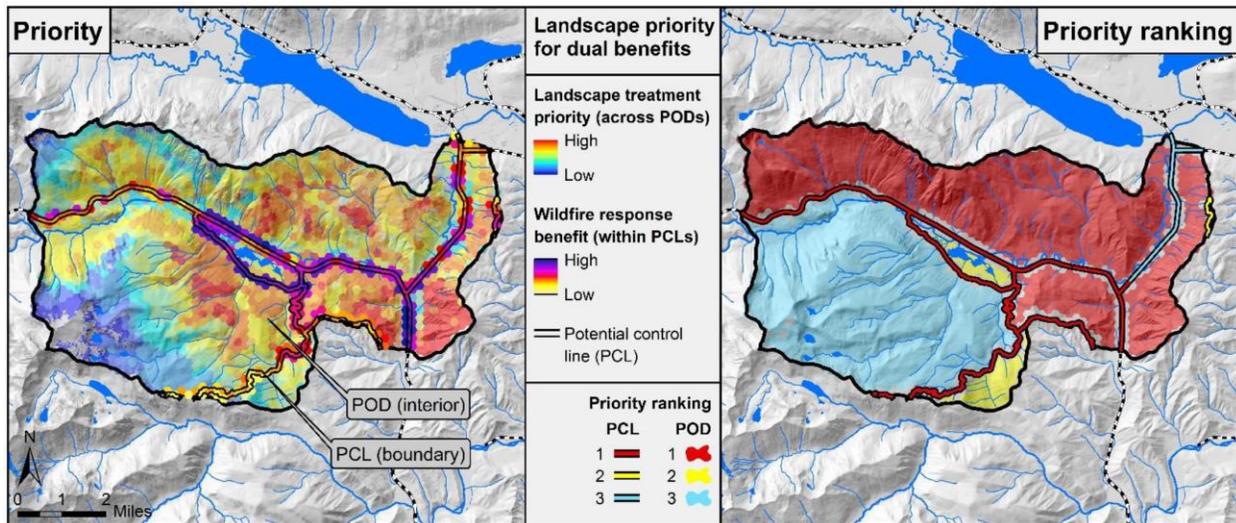
The overall intent of the landscape prescriptions outlined in the 2022 report are as follows:

1. Address conditions that have departed from historical and future reference conditions, and to reduce the risk of wildfire and other disturbances to protect lives, communities, and ecological values.
2. Promote better outcomes for a broad spectrum of ecological, social, and community resources and values in a manner that recognizes and responds to the important role of natural fire and helps mitigate risk in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) while providing for sustainable user access.
3. Protect and restore watershed conditions that maintain uplands, late-successional habitat and large and old trees, riparian and instream habitat, and water quality and quantity for the benefit of communities and native fish and wildlife.
4. Design and implement treatments to support the recovery of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.

The Coulter Block lands are covered in Priority Treatment Area 4 in the report. The primary action identified within this planning area is to reduce the impacts of roads on aquatic resources. These landscape-scale treatment principles can be used to help guide prioritization of treatment units across the landscape in the Nason watershed and on the Coulter Block lands.

The DNR Landscape Evaluation process also utilizes a Dual-Benefit Analysis, wherein forest health treatments are prioritized for both forest resiliency and ability to respond to wildfire and strategic placement of treatments to help stop the spread of wildfire to homes and values at risk. The Dual-Benefit Analysis utilizes Potential Operational Delineations (PODs) and Potential Lines of Control (PCLs) to locate priority units that are also strategic for wildfire response. The Coulter Creek road is identified as a high-priority PCL, meaning implementing forest health treatments using the road as a fuel-break anchor could be a strategic action for helping stop the spread of wildfire (Exhibit 13).

Exhibit 13 DNR Dual-Benefit Analysis Priorities



Source: DNR Nason Landscape Evaluation, 2020.

These tools developed by DNR and partners can be utilized to help identify and prioritize effective landscape restoration actions on the Coulter Block lands. Momentum is building in the Nason watershed for this work, and funding opportunities exist to help increase the pace and scale of restoration work across the landscape. Building partnerships within agencies and across ownerships will be an important action for future landowners to increase resiliency into the future.

Road Management

The Coulter Block contains an extensive road system that was originally built for logging practiced and is now also utilized for recreation access. The road system was assessed as part of the 2017 Nason Creek Watershed Road Assessment, an effort that utilized GRAIP-lite methodology to assess road condition, surface erosion, and potential for impacts to aquatic systems (Gaines et. al. 2017).

There are over 47.9 miles of mapped roads on the Coulter Block lands, which equates to a road density of 6.6 miles/square mile. Maps of the road network were generated from maps provided by Weyerhaeuser and from the 2017 inventory of the entire road network in Nason Creek. Surface erosion areas on the Coulter Block road system were mapped as part of the roads analysis effort (Exhibit).

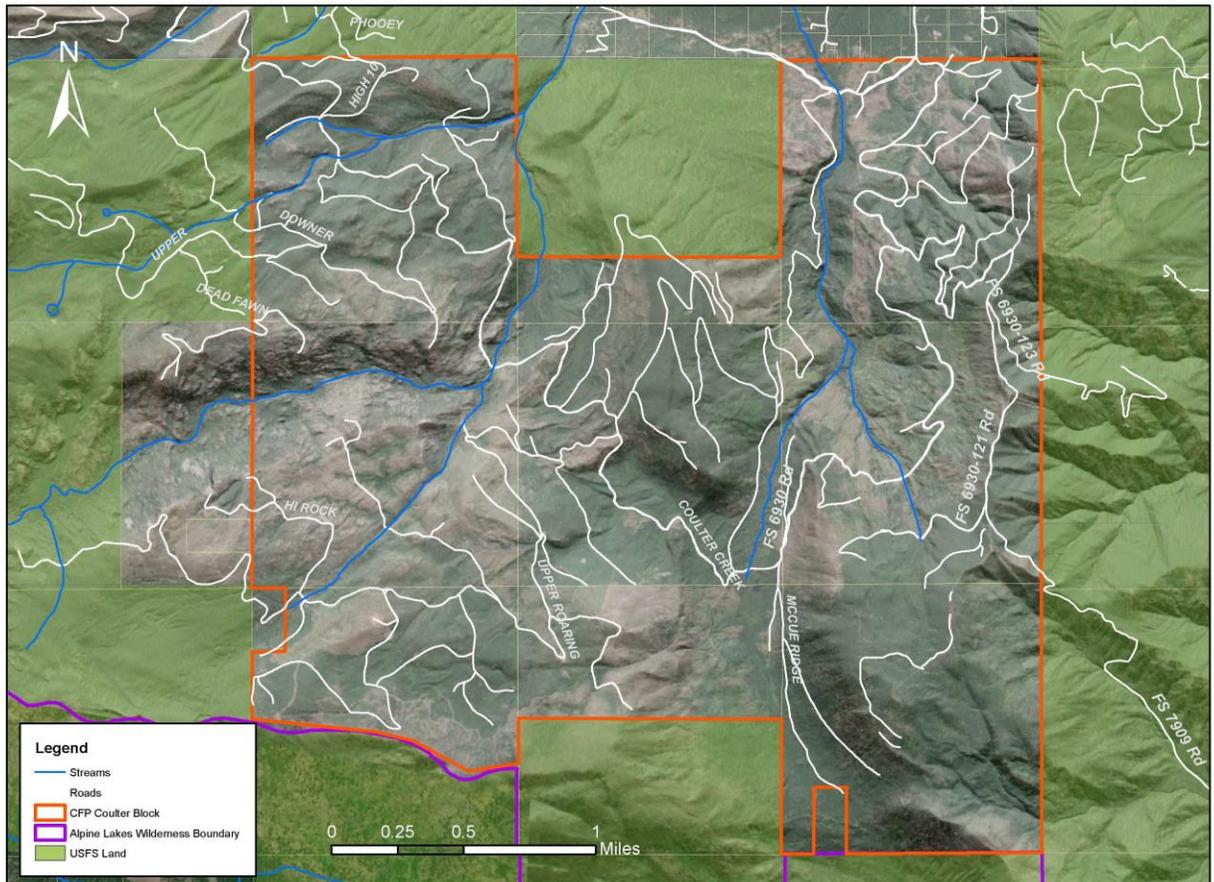
Weyerhaeuser has conducted road maintenance on site and the private road network is compliant with the Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) requirements associated with the forestry permit from Department of Natural Resources. RMAP requirements do not apply to roads with cost share easements because the intent is that US Forest Service shares the cost of maintenance on those roads and federal funds for road maintenance are not sufficient to conduct adequate maintenance on the entire federal road network.

The road system is currently maintained by Chinook Forest Partners and adjacent landowners with road easements. Chinook Forest Partners and previous industrial timber owners have maintained Coulter Creek Road (FS 6930) and other spur roads as haul routes for timber extraction. Coulter Creek Road is currently in excellent condition. From the intersection of Coulter Creek Road and Upper Roaring (FS 6935), which climbs up to Alpine Lakes High Camp), FS 6930 continues west toward the property boundary and private lands in Section 9. The Coulter Development LLC, which owns Section 9, are significantly investing in road improvements on this section to maintain good access to their lands. The owners of Alpine Lakes High Camp have also invested in maintenance to Coulter Creek Road and to Upper Roaring Road (FS 6935). Upper Roaring is significantly rougher than Coulter Creek Road and requires a high clearance 4-wheel drive vehicle to access the upper property boundary and Alpine Lakes High Camp grounds. The Roaring Creek Road at the base of the property passes through the Coulter Block Lands before accessing private properties in the Roaring Creek neighborhood. This is a shared-maintenance road and is plowed by a resident's association in the winter months. Other roads on the property vary in condition depending on the proximity to last harvest date and use as haul roads.

There is no public vehicle access on the Coulter Block Road system. There is a locked gate at the base of Coulter Creek road after the Roaring Creek Road turnoff. None of the roads into the property are plowed during the winter, necessitating tracked vehicles or snowmobiles for access

to private lands through the property. As previously mentioned, public access to the road system is limited to hiking, biking, and street-legal motorcycles on USFS easement roads.

Exhibit 14 Coulter Block Road System



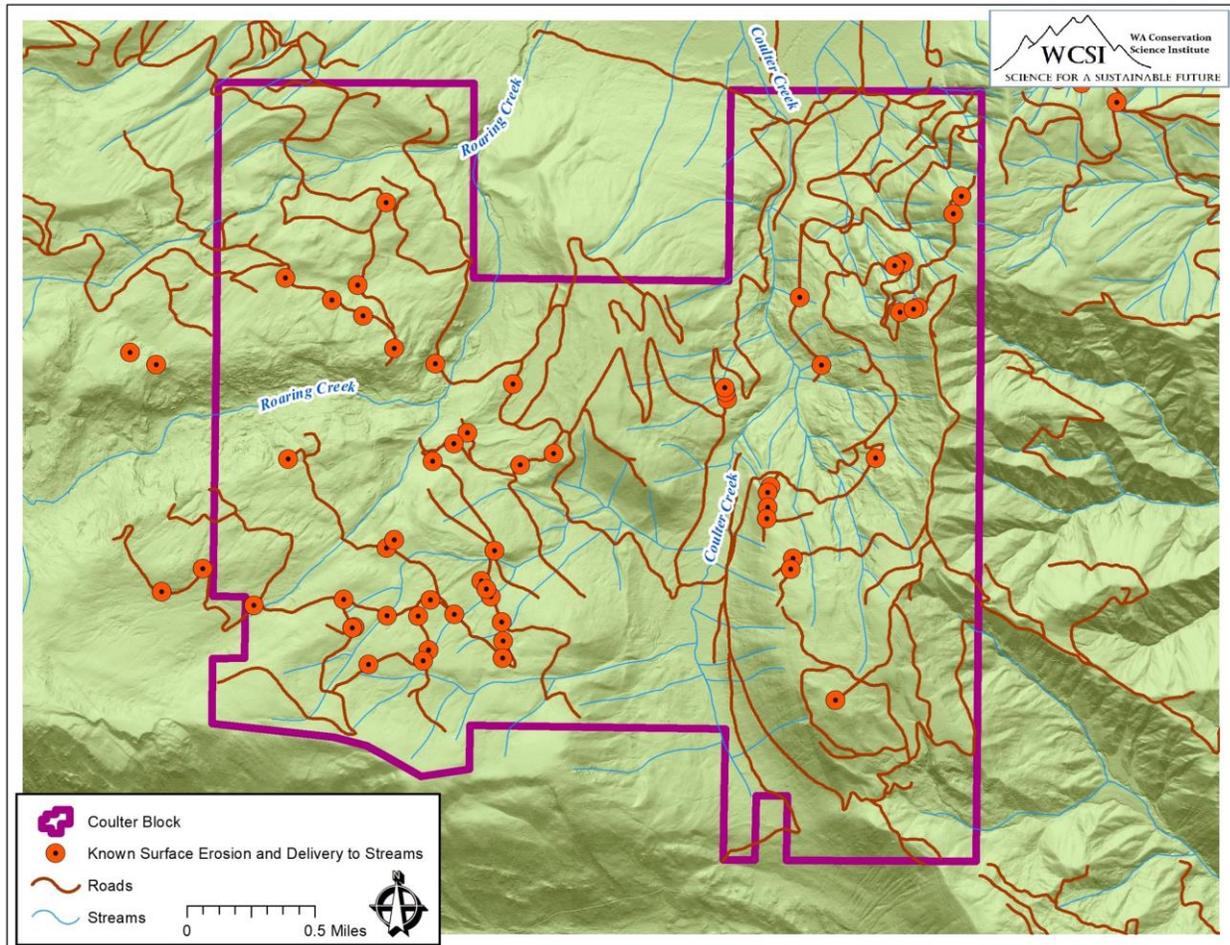
CFP Coulter Block Roads

USFS, Chelan County GIS 2023

Source: BOR, 2011 (Figure 9).

The road network on this parcel is important because it provides access for forest management activities, private lands and business access, recreation opportunity, and other natural resource management activities. However, high road densities, particularly in vulnerable areas, can degrade overall ecosystem functioning. In the 2022 Nason Landscape Evaluation and Prescription Report (Gaines et. al. 2022), the Coulter Block Lands are identified within a priority treatment area with an emphasis on treating sediment delivery potential from road networks. The work completed during the 2017 Nason Roads Assessment helps identify and prioritize these types of treatments.

Exhibit 15 Mapped Areas of Surface Erosion on Road System



Source: Washington Conservation Science Institute 2023.

Road densities on this property are currently greater than 2 miles/square mile (current road density is estimated at 6.6 miles/square mile) and thus potentially impact aquatic habitat (NOAA, 1996). Roads influence a wide range of stream and watershed processes. For example, the compacted surface of roads can lower infiltration capacity, alter and concentrate overland flow, and increase erosion and delivery of sediment to the stream system, which can degrade fish habitat quality (Dunham & Rieman, 1999; Furniss, Roelofs, & Yee, 1991; Jones, Swanson, Wemple, & Snyder, 2000; Trumbulka & Frissell, 2000; Meredith, Roper, & Archer, 2014; Luce & Black, Sediment production from forest roads in western Oregon, 1999). Roads can also intercept subsurface flow and convert it to rapid surface runoff, extending channel networks and increasing watershed flow

efficiency (Trumbulka & Frissell, 2000; Wondzell, 2001). From an ecological standpoint, reducing the road density would be a priority management action on this property. But understanding the uses and values of the current road system is also important. Restoration actions can still be applied to roads that need to remain open and accessible. Identifying priority needs based on surface erosion and aquatic impact potential can provide a basis for implementing stormproofing and erosion-prevention maintenance actions on an open road system, and can help prioritize decommissioning of roads that are determined to be not necessary for management or access.

Road maintenance is an important maintenance and operations consideration for any future landowner. Not only in terms of addressing ecosystem functioning as discussed above, but also conducting regular maintenance just to keep the roads passable and reduce fire risk and spread of invasive species. In general, the purposes of regular road maintenance include the following: reduce the risk of road failure, reduce risk to aquatic habitat, and to reduce the risk of starting a fire during motorized use of the road network. General annual road maintenance includes:

- Mowing the road prism edges.
- Treating invasive species present in road margins.
- Brush cutting adjacent vegetation.
- Ditch and culvert maintenance, as needed.
- Survey for new evidence of water on the road, blocked culverts, and maintenance needs.

Future landowners/managers will also need to collaborate with the USFS on watershed-wide Travel Analysis Process (TAP).

Potential Management Actions

- Complete an up-to-date Forest Management Plan for the property
- Design and implement a forest inventory to gather data sufficient for management needs for 10 years.
- Implement priority actions identified in DNR Landscape Evaluation and WCSI Nason Landscape Evaluation and Prescription Report, including priority road treatments and shaded fuel break along Coulter Creek road.
- Identify and replant understocked areas with site appropriate species considering projected moisture deficits.

- Conduct brush management in stands identified for timber production where competition with brush is inhibiting growth.
- Implement commercial thinning in appropriate stands.
- Implement pre-commercial thinning in appropriate stands.
- Continue fuels management and creation of defensible space in strategic locations in the landscape.
- Continue to assess identified surface erosion points on road system, implement stormproofing or decommissioning actions on road segments with high probability of sediment delivery to streams.
- Monitor and treat invasive species.

3

Aquatic Resources

Aquatic Resources 30

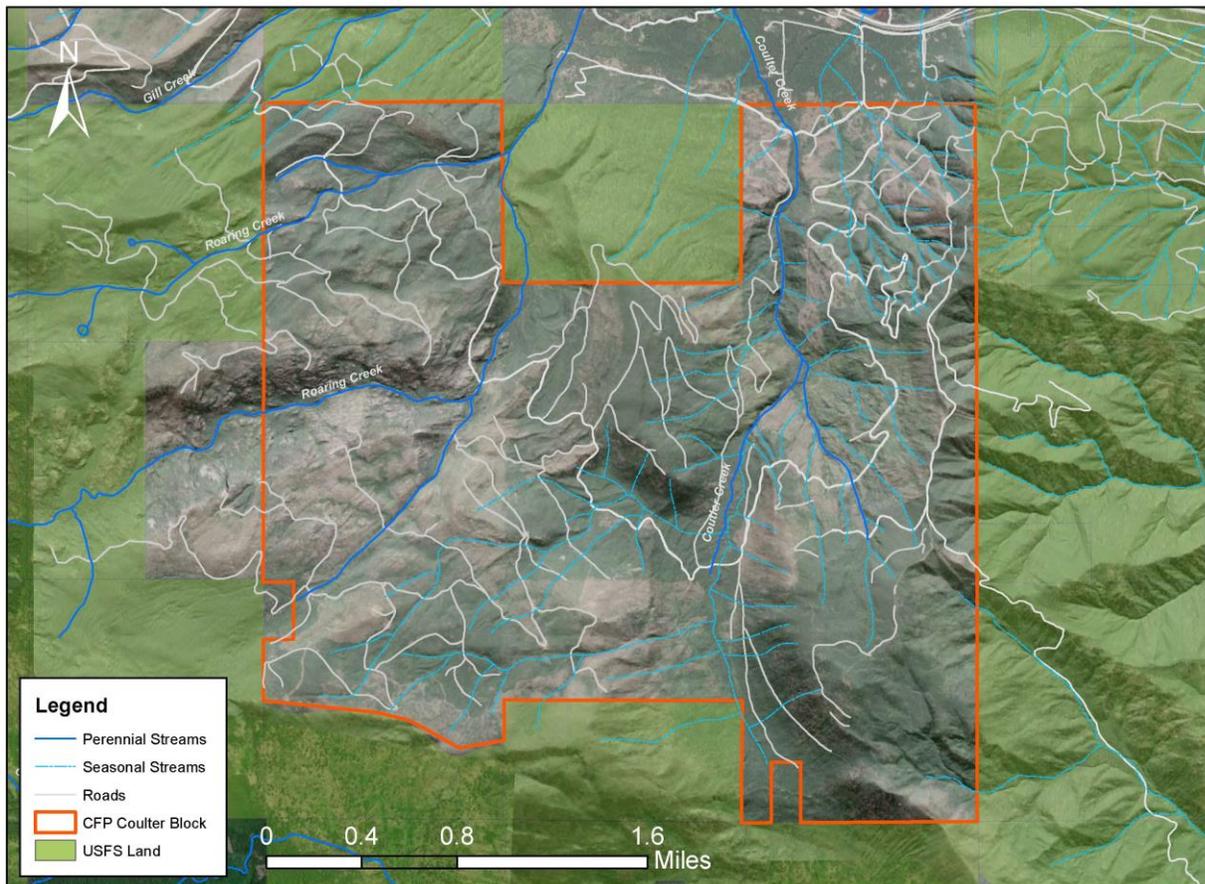
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Aquatic Resources

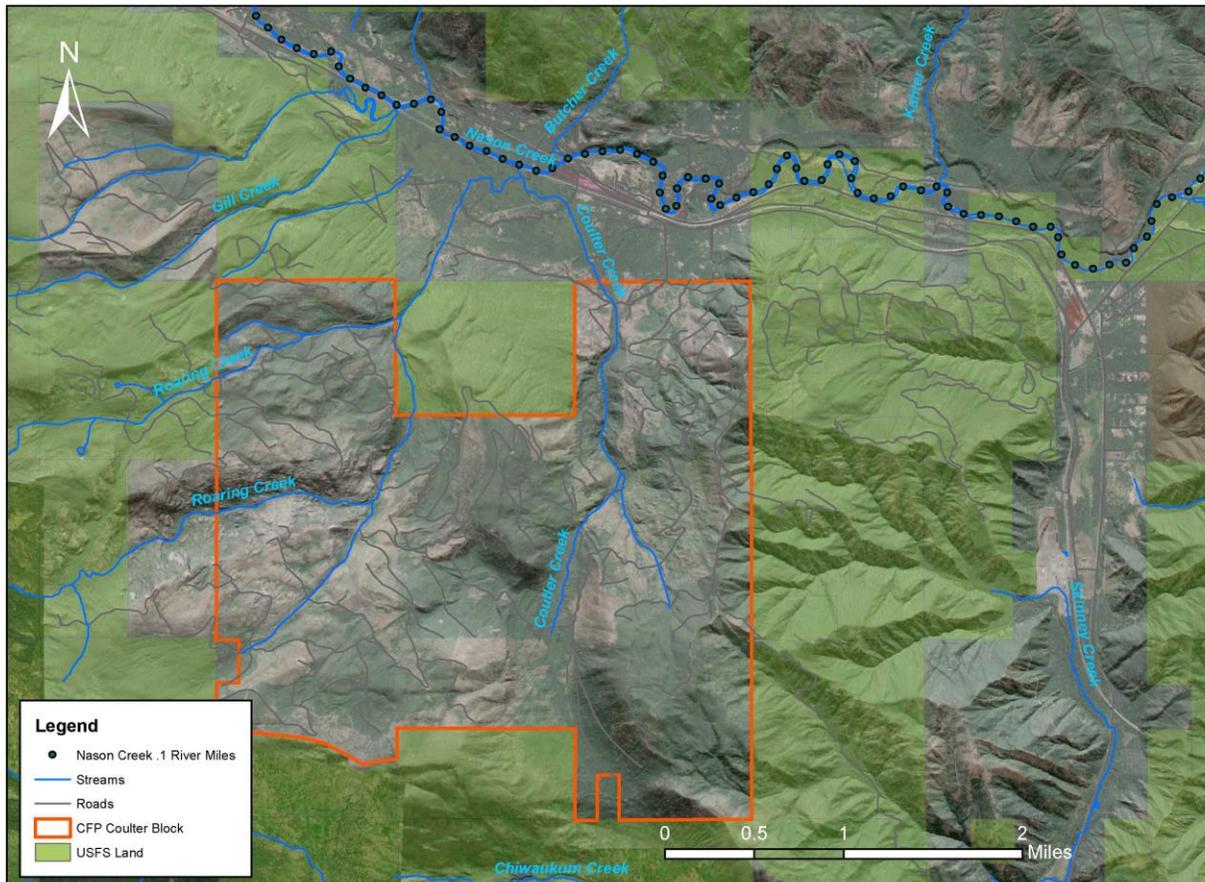
The Coulter Block lands contain two perennial streams, Coulter Creek and Roaring Creek, that feed into Nason Creek outside of the property boundary. There are additional seasonal streams and wetland complexes within the aquatic system of Coulter Block. The aquatic system on the property not only provides important habitat, it also helps support critical habitat for federally listed fish species in Nason Creek. As Nason Creek is a high priority for protection and restoration within the Wenatchee watershed, this section includes information on Nason Creek habitat values as well as information on the aquatic resources contained within the property boundaries.

Exhibit 16 **Coulter Block Streams**



Nason Creek drains a 69,010 acre area and is a tributary to the Wenatchee River at Wenatchee river mile (RM) 53.6, contributing 18% of the Wenatchee Watershed's annual flow. Native salmonid species in the Nason Creek Sub-watershed are spring Chinook, steelhead, migratory and resident bull trout, and westlope cutthroat trout. Flows in Nason Creek range from an annual low flow of ~40 cubic feet per second (cfs) to annual high flow events of ~ 800-1,000 cfs.

Exhibit 17 Proximity to Nason Creek



Coulter Block Streams and Proximity to Nason Creek

USFS, Chelan County GIS 2023

Source: Chelan County, 2019; BERK, 2019.

Upstream of Coles corner, the Great Northern Railroad was routed up Nason Creek and across Stevens Pass in the 1890s. State Route 2 also traverses the sub-watershed. Both the highway and railroad follow the creek, have fragmented the habitat, and constrained channel movement above RM 5.

Periods of high water temperature are a concern for salmonid survival in Nason Creek; the

Washington Department of Ecology lists Nason Creek waters as impaired (WDOE 2005). A Temperature Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) assessment was conducted on the Wenatchee River and tributaries in 2002–2003. Temperature probes placed throughout Nason Creek documented temperatures that exceed water quality criteria during the summer months in the middle and lower Nason Creek reaches (USFS 2008).

Exhibit 18 Photo of Lower Nason Creek



Source: TaraFrima Designs, 2019.

The causes of high temperatures are likely synergistic due to stream channel morphology, increased fine sediment inputs, and disconnection from floodplain areas. Nason Creek loses cold water inputs from valley wall springs, tributaries, hypoeic zones, and groundwater as a result of disconnected floodplain areas. Floodplain disconnection also channelizes flows,

increases bed incision, increases stream channel mobility, and thus increases fine sediment deposition from bank erosion (USFS 2008).

The Nason Creek watershed contains highly erosive soils, exacerbated by steep slopes in the area. Fine sediment naturally originates from hillslopes, but lack of road maintenance, undersized culverts, and poor road location have also impacted stream conditions. Increased surface erosion and altered infiltration contribute to mass failures which increase the fine sediment deposition to stream systems and may ultimately contribute to changes in the timing and duration of stream flows (paragraph text adapted from USFS 2008).

Meeting water quality standards and protecting salmonid habitat are the primary riparian management objectives in the Nason Creek sub-watershed. Temperature, limited habitat diversity, channel instability, sedimentation, and obstructions could pose risks for salmonid populations in the sub-watershed.

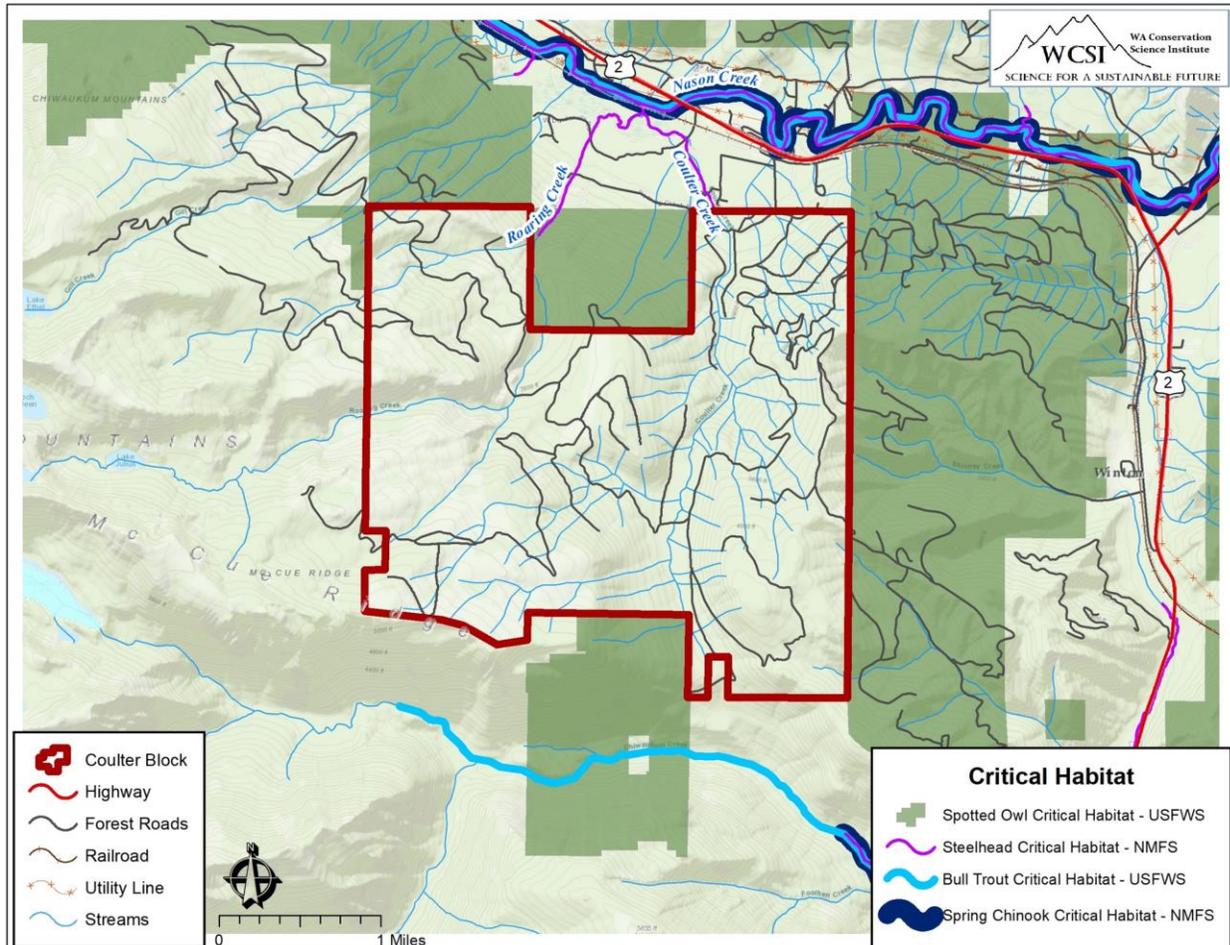
Coulter Creek and Roaring Creek

Coulter Creek is a perennial stream originating in the high ground near the southern boundary of the property. Coulter Creek drops at a steep gradient through the property before reaching a lower gradient reach before joining with Nason Creek. The exception to the steep gradient is a low-gradient area known as the “beaver ponds”, which contains a forested wetland complex and supports beaver habitat (Exhibit 20).

Roaring Creek is a perennial stream that originates in the high lakes to the west of the Coulter Block property. The main fork of Roaring Creek draining the alpine lakes drops at a steep gradient through granite outcroppings, creating beautiful cascades that underscore the apt naming of this stream. Roaring Creek makes its way through the private properties of the Roaring Creek neighborhood at the base of the Coulter Block lands before joining with Coulter Creek and then feeding immediately into Nason Creek.

Coulter Creek and Roaring Creek both support habitat for ESA listed steelhead near their confluences with Nason Creek. However, this potential habitat only extends a short distance onto the Coulter Block property before stream gradients steepen beyond suitable habitat parameters.

Exhibit 19 ESA Listed Fish Species Critical Habitat



Source: Washington Conservation Science Institute 2023.

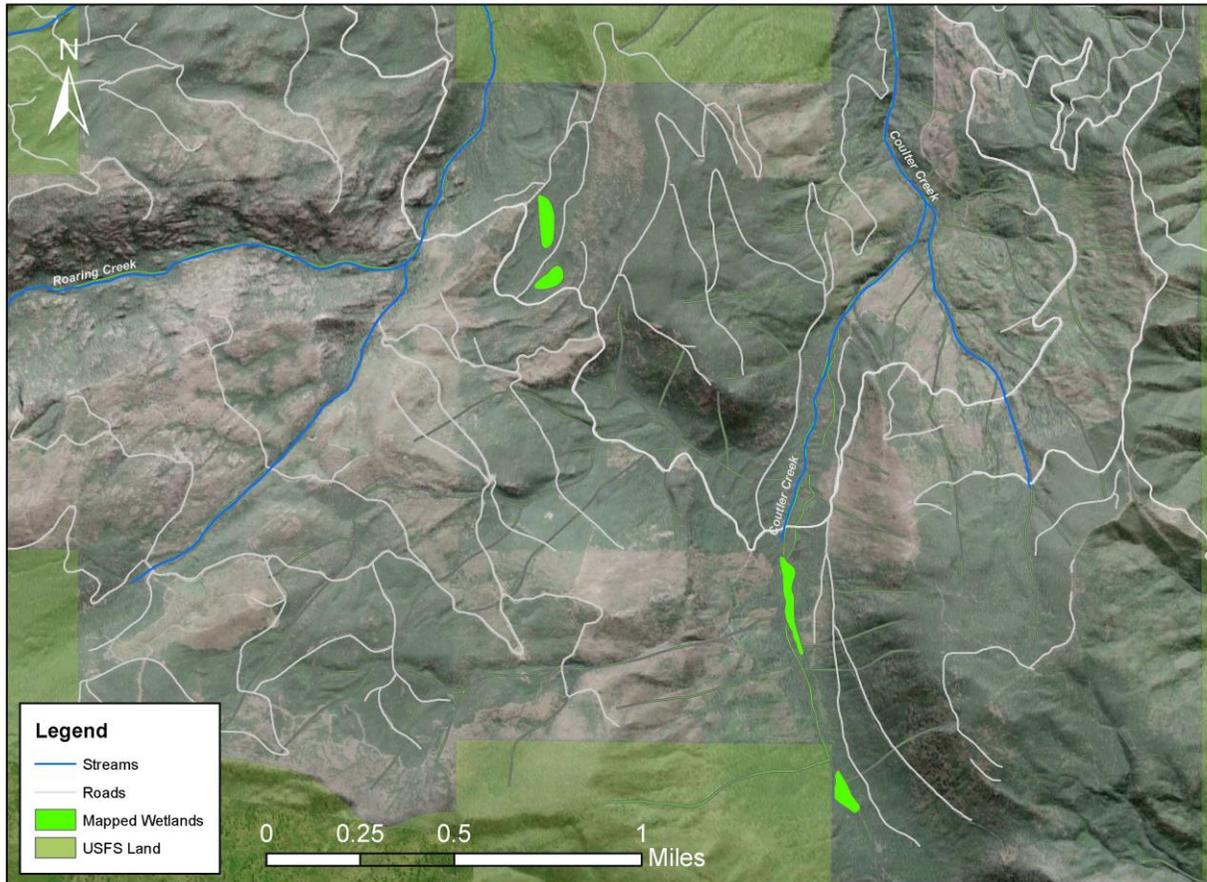
Other Intermittent Streams & Wetlands

Many seasonal streams feed the perennial streams on the Coulter Block lands. These streams can be identified through the DNR FPARs online mapping tool and other stream mapping resources, but also require on-site verification for accuracy of location and seasonality. While seasonal in nature, these streams are important in the overall aquatic functioning of the lands, and require protection and adequate management at road crossings and with timber management activities.

The Coulter Block lands also contain a couple known wetland complexes in specific terrain features. Coulter Creek flows through a low-gradient bench at mid-elevation on the property, slowing flow rates and creating beaver habitat. This area is known as the 'beaver ponds', and can be seen from the Coulter Creek road. This area is a mapped wetland (see Exhibit 20), and is

a priority area for conservation. There is also a wetland complex created in a low-gradient pocket fed by seasonal streams to the east of Roaring Creek at mid-elevation on the property. Recognizing and protecting these wetland complexes is critical for overall aquatic health on the property.

Exhibit 20 National Wetlands Inventory Mapped Wetlands on Coulter Block



CFP Coulter Block National Wetland Inventory Mapped Wetlands

USFWS, USFS, Chelan County GIS 2023

Source: USFWS NWI, Chelan County GIS

Aquatic Species of Concern in Nason Creek

The Nason Creek sub-watershed supports important aquatic resources and is a stronghold for fish species listed as threatened and endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Nason Creek is a Major Spawning Area for spring Chinook salmon and steelhead (UCRTT 2013), a stronghold for Coho, and a feeding and migration corridor for bull trout (with limited bull trout spawning in the upper reaches). Nason Creek contains spawning habitat for spring Chinook and steelhead—the creek contains 22% of spring Chinook redds in the Wenatchee basin, second only to the Chiwawa basin (48%) (CPUD spawning data).

However, relative productivity (juvenile survival rate) is much lower in Nason Creek when compared to nearby streams such as the Chiwawa and Little Wenatchee. This is likely due to low egg to fry survival rates in Nason Creek, which WDFW is currently studying. Low egg to fry survival rates occur when there are high levels of stream bed scour and elevated fine sediment levels in the water column; scour disrupts the redds and fine sediment smothers the eggs. Elevated road density and floodplain constriction in Nason Creek alter the hydroperiod resulting in flashy flows that increase bed and bank scour. Elevated fine sediment is positively correlated with road density, roads in use, and the number of road-stream crossings.

Stream habitat improvement recommendations for Nason Creek include (UCRTT 2013):

1. Reconnect side channel and wetland habitat.
2. Improve channel bed structure and form.
3. Improve riparian condition.
4. Improve primary productivity (food).
5. Reduce fine sediment inputs.
6. Reduce competition from brook trout.

Nason Creek contains existing high-quality habitat and important aquatic species with high levels of spawning. Native fish populations are at risk, however, because of limited habitat diversity, channel instability, and sedimentation. Thus, Nason Creek is the highest priority sub-watershed for implementation of stream habitat restoration actions within the Wenatchee basin (UCRTT, 2013).

Potential Management Actions

Riparian Management Zones

In general, protecting the functions of a healthy riparian zone include the following objectives:

7. Protect wildlife species, including ESA listed salmonids.
8. Protect and restore aquatic resources and water quality.
9. Create and maintain healthy forests that provide habitat for wildlife, a healthy and functioning watershed, and fire resiliency.

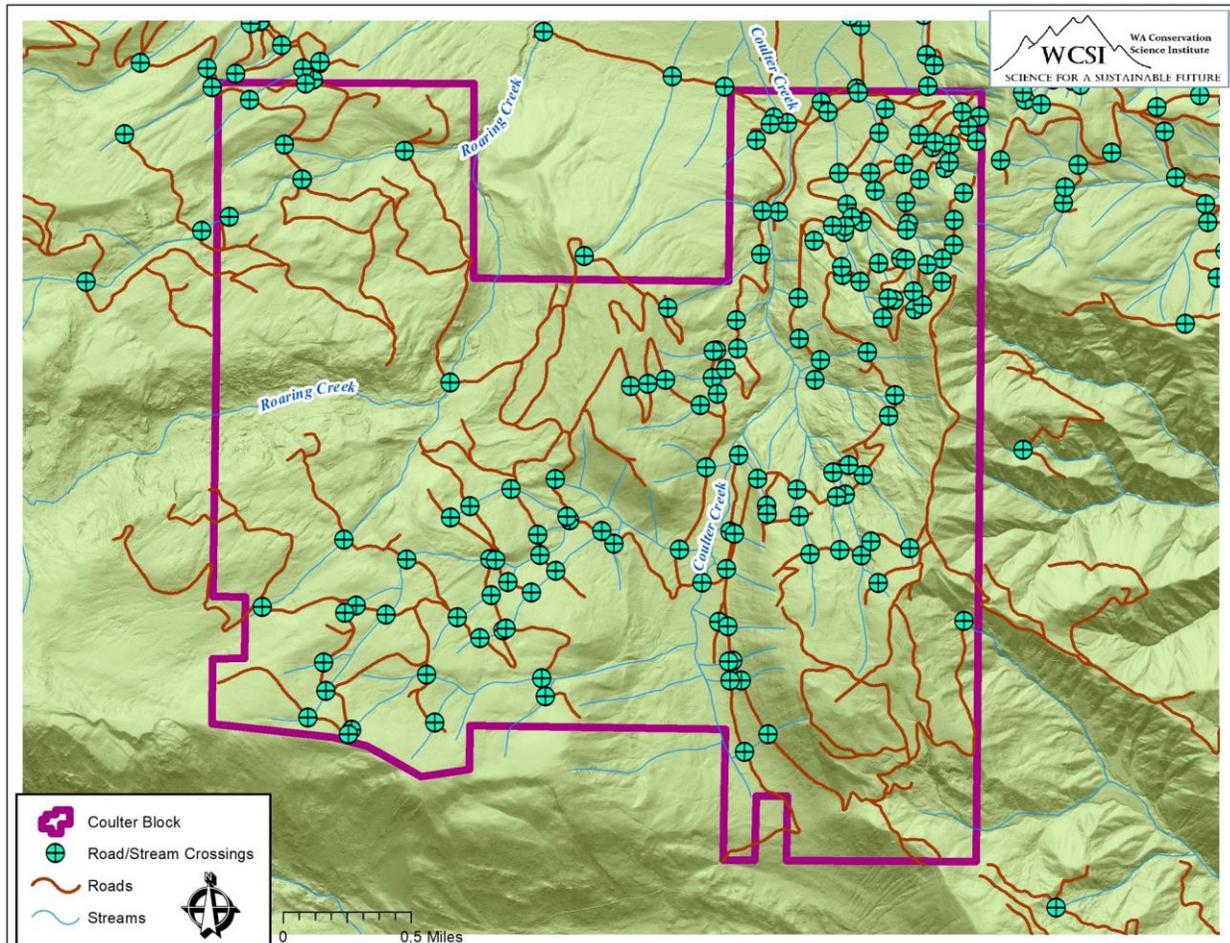
Riparian management objectives include:

1. Maintain existing high-quality forested areas.
2. Enhance riparian vegetation as needed to facilitate sediment removal and erosion control, protection of water quality, moderation of shade and water temperature, and habitat structural diversity.
3. Retain vegetation on steep slopes and in riparian management zones to protect water quality, flow regime, habitat structure, food source, and access for salmonids.
4. Reduce the road density to restore the natural hydrologic cycle within Nason Creek and reduce fine sediment inputs to Nason Creek.
5. Provide opportunities for natural history and land management education by creating a living classroom for all education levels.

Roads

As previously mentioned in the Road Management section, high road densities and roads in proximity to streams and erodible soils can adversely impact aquatic ecosystem functioning. Work completed under the 2017 Nason Creek Watershed Road Assessment (Gaines et. al. 2017) included mapping areas of surface erosion, road/stream crossings (Exhibit 20), and modeled potential for sediment inputs into aquatic systems (Exhibit 21). This information can be utilized to identify priority actions to help address potential aquatic functioning issues on the property as well as in Nason Creek downstream from the Coulter Block lands and road systems. Addressing sediment delivery issues on the property will directly benefit the spawning and rearing habitat of listed salmonids in Nason Creek adjacent to the property.

Exhibit 21 Coulter Block Road/Stream Crossings



Source: Washington Conservation Science Institute, (2023).

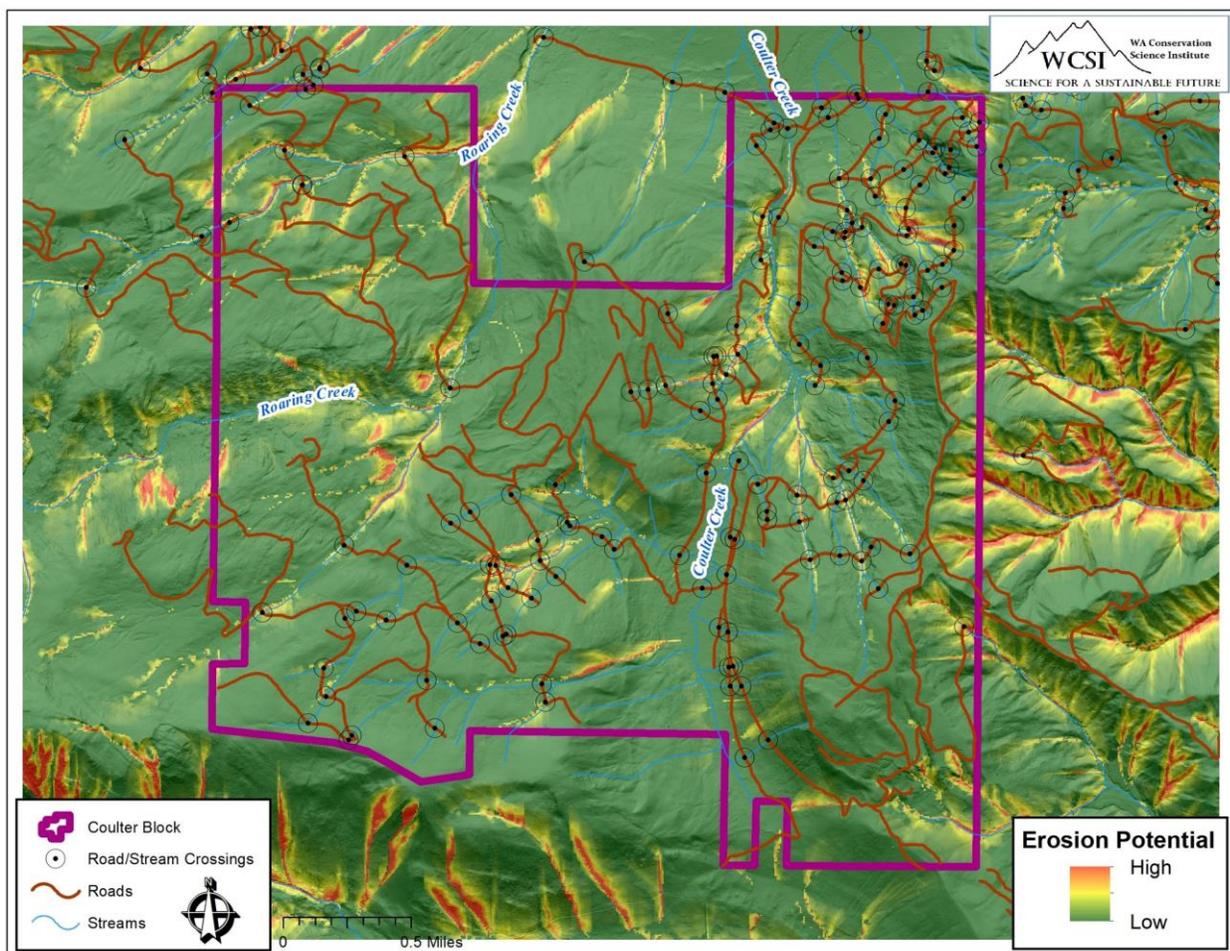
Stream habitat improvement recommendations for Nason Creek applicable to this property include improving riparian condition and reducing fine sediment inputs.

- Actions to improve aquatic habitat conditions on and adjacent to the Coulter Block parcel would primarily aim to reduce fine sediment inputs and restore hydrologic processes (such as infiltration) on site. This would be achieved by stormproofing roads, reducing overall road density, reducing the number of road-stream crossings, and removing roads from floodplain and landslide areas. These actions could reduce the level of fine sediment that accumulates in spawning beds in Lower Nason Creek and the Upper Wenatchee. This in turn would improve egg to fry survival rates for steelhead and spring Chinook, thus increasing

productivity. Restoring natural hydrologic processes may also reduce scour of eggs.

- Maintenance and upgrades should be made to roads in areas with visible surface erosion (which deliver sediment to streams) that will remain because they provide access for recreation, forest health management, and fire safety. Short-term management actions could include de-commissioning road segments that meet the following criteria: not currently drive-able, not used for existing recreation access, not needed for fire safety, not needed for short term forest health management, or contain a risk to aquatic habitat.

Exhibit 22 Coulter Block Erosion Potential and Road/Stream Crossings



Source: Washington Conservation Science Institute, 2023.

4

Terrestrial Wildlife and Habitat

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Species of Conservation Concern

The Coulter Block lands provide important habitat and key movement corridors for a variety of terrestrial wildlife that are federal or state listed or species of conservation concern. There are three federally listed species for which parts of the Coulter Block lands are considered a Sensitive Location according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitats and Species List (Exhibit 23): northern spotted owl, gray wolf, and yuma myotis (a species of bat). In addition, four species found in this area are candidates for the Endangered Species list: northern goshawk, fisher, wolverine, and big brown bat. Several additional species have been identified as being "highly" vulnerable to the anticipated impacts of climate change (WDFW 2015) and occur in or near this area: American pika, Cascade red fox, spruce grouse, and wolverine. Other priority species found on the property include mule deer and mountain goat (WDFW 2023). The lands fall within the North Cascades Recovery Zone for grizzly bear, and efforts are underway to study options to restore this population (USFWS 2021).

Northern spotted owl, northern goshawk, gray wolf, wolverine, fisher, big brown bat, and myotis all have documented occurrences within proximity to the Coulter Block lands. The Napeequa wolf pack is known to reside north of Highway 2 in the general vicinity of western Lake Wenatchee, and the range of this pack could easily encompass parts of the Coulter Block lands (WDFW 2023). Wolverines are known to cover vast tracts of land within their normal range, which includes the high alpine areas of the Chiwakum Range above the property.

Four Priority Habitats are located within the Coulter Block lands: Aspen stands, Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland, Shrubsteppe, and Freshwater Emergent wetland. These habitats provide critical ecosystem functions and very specific habitat types supporting various types of wildlife. They also carry special protections from a management standpoint and preservation of these features should be a management priority.

When considering all the species of conservation concern that may be present on or near the Coulter Block lands, it is important to consider landscape connectivity with adjacent lands. Many species of conservation concern use large landscapes for their home ranges to seek food, water, shelter, and breeding habitats. Many of the "Priority Habitats" (WDFW PHS 2023) provide essential functions for a host of wildlife species and are connected to other key habitats (e.g., wetlands) and functions (e.g., habitat connectivity, water storage for wetlands, etc.) within the Nason watershed. Protecting and restoring these habitats and species on the Coulter Block lands will contribute to broader conservation and recovery goals that reach far beyond the

boundaries of these lands.

Exhibit 23 Species/Habitats of Conservation Concern for Coulter Block Lands

PHS Species/Habitats Overview:

Occurrence Name	Federal Status	State Status	Sensitive Location
Northern goshawk	undefined	Candidate	No
Fisher	Candidate	Endangered	No
Northern goshawk	Candidate	Candidate	No
Rainbow Trout	N/A	N/A	No
Spring Chinook	N/A	N/A	No
Steelhead	Threatened	N/A	No
Dolly Varden/ Bull Trout	N/A	N/A	No
Summer Steelhead	N/A	N/A	No
Bull Trout	Threatened	N/A	No
Westslope Cutthroat	N/A	N/A	No
Chinook	Endangered	N/A	No
Mountain goat	N/A	N/A	No
Mule deer	N/A	N/A	No
Aspen Stands	N/A	N/A	No
Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland	N/A	N/A	No
Shrubsteppe	N/A	N/A	No
Freshwater Emergent Wetland	N/A	N/A	No
Northern Spotted Owl	Threatened	Endangered	Yes
Wolverine	Candidate	Candidate	Yes
Big brown bat	Candidate	Candidate	Yes
Gray wolf	Endangered	Endangered	Yes
myotis spp	Endangered	Endangered	Yes

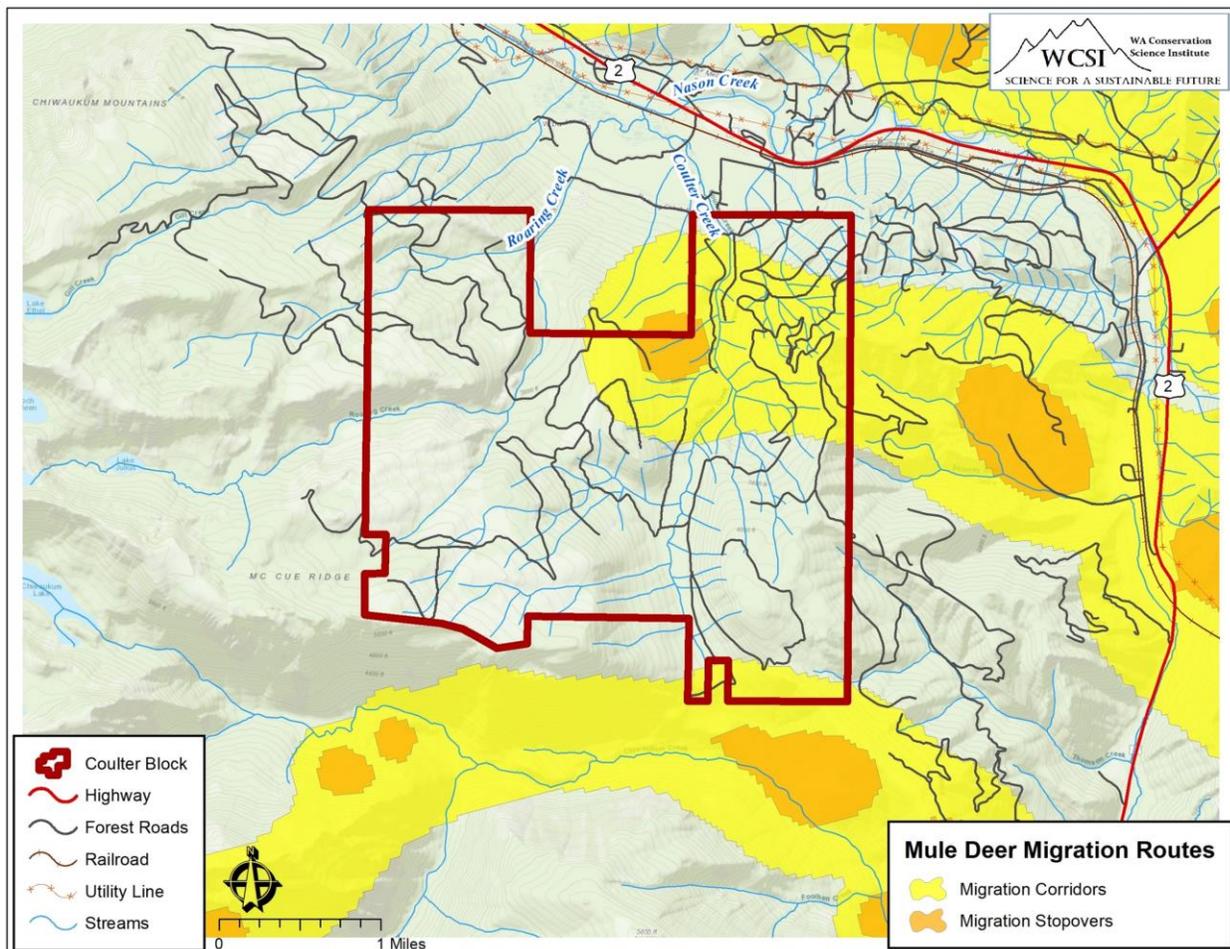
Source: WDFW Priority Habitats and Species Webmap 2023, WDFW State Wildlife Action Plan 2015.

In addition to the list above, American pika, Cascade red fox, Spruce grouse, and wolverine are considered species of conservation concern in the WDFW State Wildlife Action Plan due to their high vulnerability to the effects of climate change (WDFW 2015).

The property is also known to provide habitat for many other terrestrial species including elk, cougar, bobcat, black bear, beaver, moose, and a multitude of bird and small mammal species. The area was formerly popular for deer, elk, bear, and grouse hunting, but is currently not accessible for public hunting.

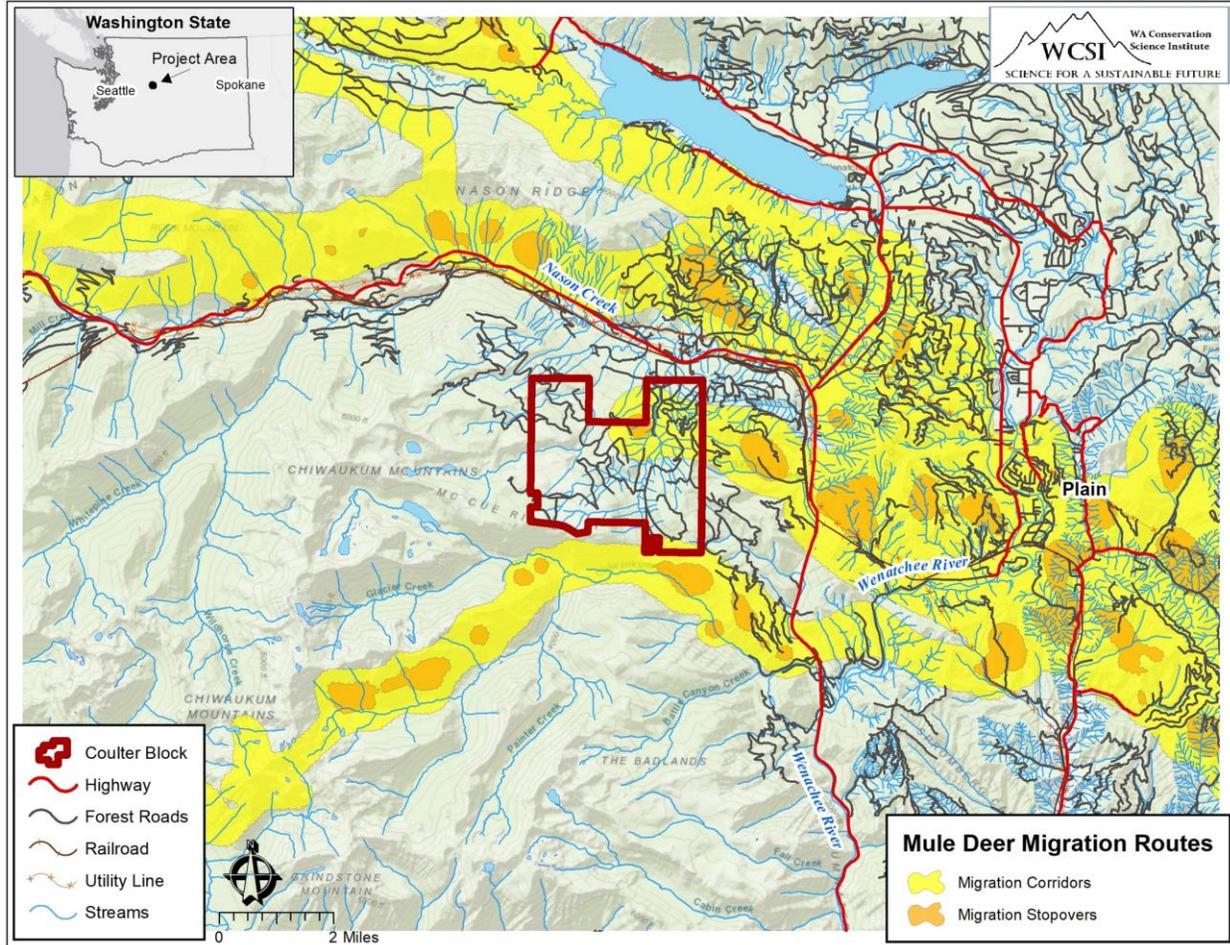
Not only do the Coulter Block lands provide habitat for a variety of terrestrial wildlife species and birds, they are also utilized as migrations corridors and seasonal foraging zones (stopovers) for ungulates and other migratory species. This usage is important in a landscape-scale context as we consider the critical connections that animals need to connect seasonal habitats and succeed in healthy populations. Mule deer in particular are known to utilize these lands as part of their seasonal movements across the landscape. Exhibits 24 and 25 illustrate these movements on the Coulter Block Lands and across the greater landscape.

Exhibit 24 Coulter Block Mule Deer Migration Routes



Source: Washington Conservation Science Institute.

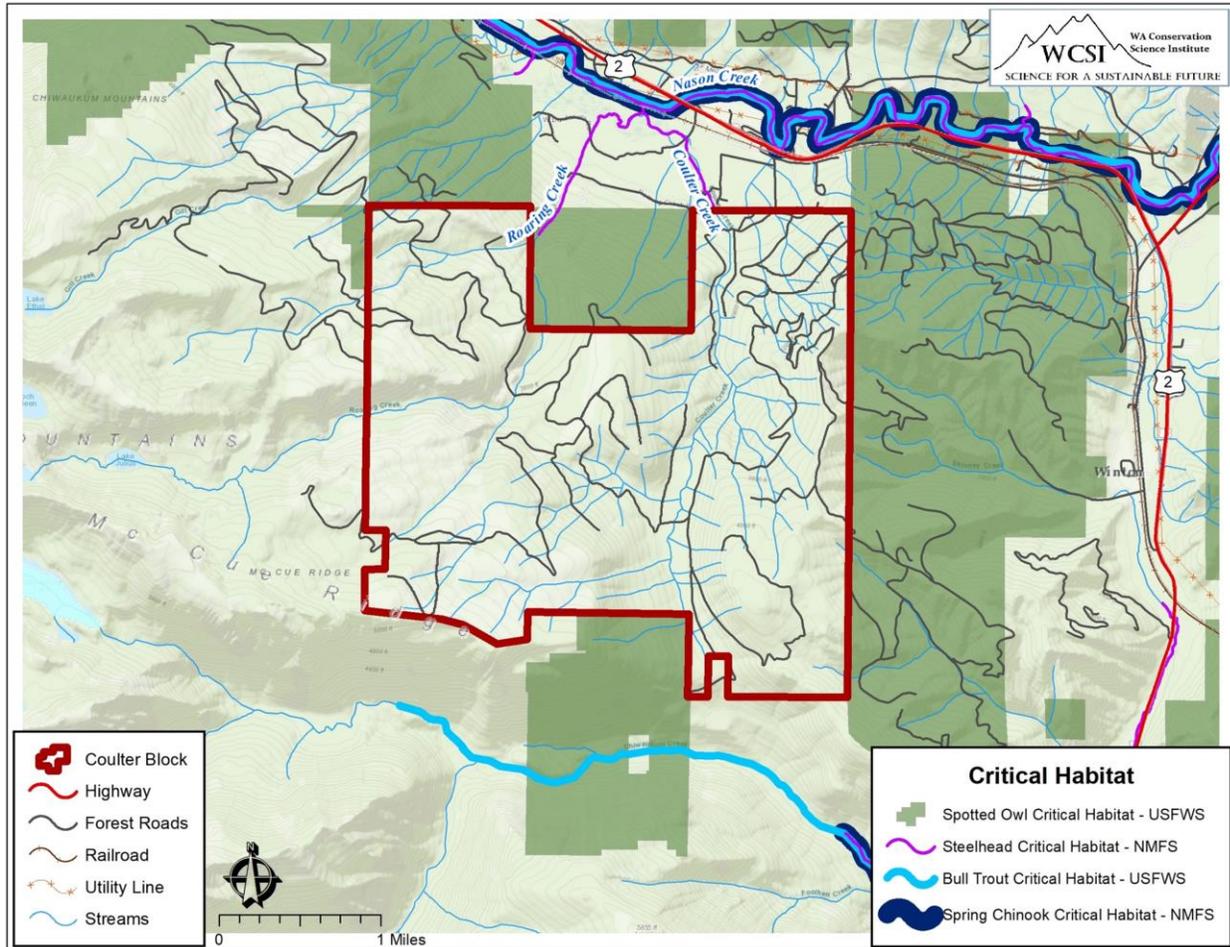
Exhibit 25 Upper Wenatchee Area Mule Deer Migration Routes



Source: Washington Conservation Science Institute.

Northern spotted owl critical habitat is present on lands surrounding the Coulter Block lands, particularly on USFS lands containing old forest structure. However, there is no critical NSO habitat mapped within the Coulter Block lands (Exhibit 26). Occurrence polygons may overlap onto the property, leading to management considerations around forest treatments.

Exhibit 26 Critical Northern Spotted Owl Habitat



Source: Washington Conservation Science Institute.

Potential Management Actions

Forest management and land management decisions on the Coulter Block should always consider impacts to fish and wildlife. At a minimum, the lands will need to be managed pursuant to state and federal guidelines for threatened and endangered species. Managers should conduct surveys following relevant, current protocols for those species prior to any planned ground-disturbing activities (e.g., habitat restoration, timber harvest, bridge or culvert

replacement, road construction or maintenance). In addition, managers may identify additional priority species beyond state and federal regulations, such as the species mentioned above with particular vulnerability to climate change.

In addition to protecting existing populations of priority species, forest management should also seek to improve upland forest habitat and promote habitat diversity across the property. For example, when marking stands for harvests, foresters should retain large snags and live trees with habitat like broken tops and nesting cavities. Foresters can also create “skips” by retaining areas with unique structure beneficial for wildlife. Overall forest management activities should seek to develop more complex forest structure and resilient habitat. Promoting habitat diversity and maintaining connectivity across the greater landscape is key to helping maintain species and habitats on the landscape scale.

Maintaining connectivity of migration corridors and stopover areas is an important consideration when making land management decisions, particularly around recreation and public use. Understanding the elements on the landscape that create security and cover (topographic features, buffers from open roads, vegetation clumps) can help balance management priorities with protection of deer and elk habitat. Forage and nutrition are also important considerations for supporting survival and breeding success of deer and elk populations. Integrating forest health treatments into the landscape with the added benefit of improving forage in key areas could also help support these populations.

5

Recreation & Public Use

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Recreational Context

The Coulter Block lands and surroundings are a great potential recreational asset, not only for neighbors of the property, but for the entire Wenatchee Valley and beyond. The with a vertical rise of around 3,000 feet, the terrain is both challenging and conducive for many different recreational objectives. Wide views and intriguing micro-climates make for rewarding aesthetic pursuits. Proximity to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, miles of USFS hiking trails, and beautiful wilderness lakes are an alluring asset. Copious winter snowfall and a north aspect make this area very appealing for winter recreation. Planning for existing and future recreation and access will be a significant element of future management approaches.

Public access to the property is currently limited to USFS easement roadways on the property, which allow walking, biking, and riding street-legal motorcycles. This situation does not technically allow for access to the high country, as the road accessing the McCue Ridge Trail and the high lakes passes through private property owned by Alpine Lakes High Camp. Additionally, the Lake Ethel Trail does not currently connect through private property in Section 9.

Alpine Lakes High Camp plays a very important role in recreational use of the Coulter Block Lands. Situated on private property along the southern, high elevation boundary of the Coulter Block, Alpine Lakes High Camp welcomes customers to their alpine retreat year-round, to enjoy the natural beauty and solitude of the property and adjoining lands. Alpine Lakes High Camp also holds a lease from Chinook Forest Partners for recreation on the entirety of the Coulter Block lands, allowing their customers to utilize a variety of recreational opportunities on the lands including hiking, biking, skiing/snowboarding, and snowshoeing. The history and perspective of Alpine Lakes High Camp is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

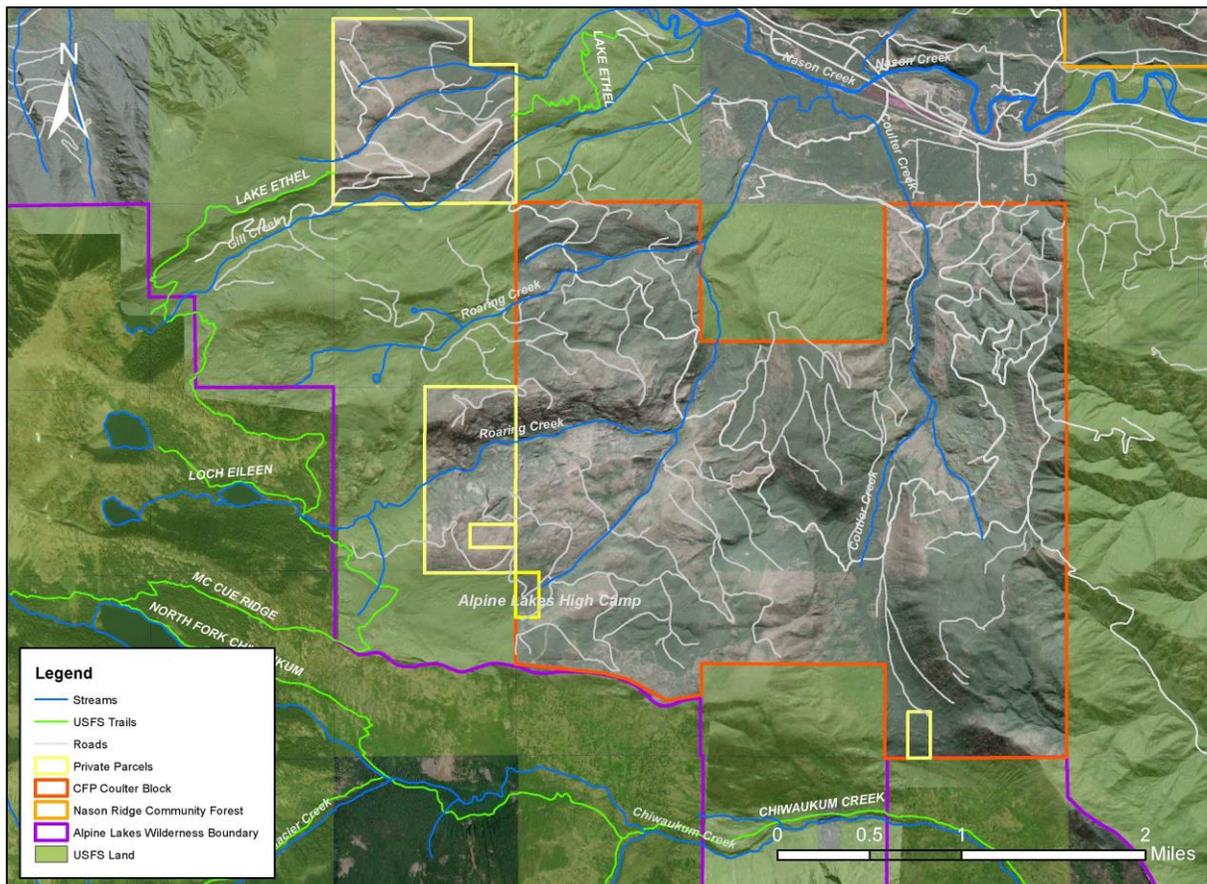
Hunting and access to fishing are probably the longest-standing recreational uses of the property. According to local historian and former Fish and Wildlife commissioner Rollie Schmitt, the area was part of a designated Bow Hunt zone in the 1970s. The area has been popular for local hunters over the years, and in the recent past a permit system was managed by Weyerhaeuser to allow hunting access by vehicle into the property. The permit system is currently not in operation under Chinook Forest Partners, and hunting access on the property is not allowed by vehicle or off of the USFS easement roads.

The high lakes have long been a recreational draw both for fishing and for enjoying the natural

beauty of the area. The high lakes are not on the Coulter Block property, but the road system has been used in the past to access the lakes. The Lake Ethel Trail also provided access to the high lakes in the past, and was a popular way to hike into the lakes from the Highway 2 corridor. The lakes were historically stocked, and still provide great alpine fishing opportunities to this day. However, due to changing ownership in private Section 9, the Lake Ethel Trail does not currently connect through the private property, and the lakes cannot be accessed via the Lake Ethel Trail. The owners of the private property in Section 9 are interested in working with the USFS on a possible trail re-route to continue to allow through-hiking on the Lake Ethel Trail once more. Additionally, the high lakes cannot technically be accessed through the Coulter Block property, because the road system that terminates near the lakes passes through the private property of Alpine Lakes High Camp before reaching proximity to the lakes. Re-establishing access to the high lakes will likely be a high priority for the local community in the future.

When considering current recreational uses, it is important to remember the Nason Ridge vicinity was historically used by the Yakama, Chinook, and Wenatchi tribes, who are now represented by the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. These tribes hunted, fished, and lived seasonally on the land, depending on the salmon returning from the Pacific each year for sustenance. While tribal fishing no longer occurs in this area, cultural resources still exist and the area still holds importance in the collective tribal values. Any proposed future recreation development should prioritize preservation of sacred and culturally important sites, and will rely on input from Tribal Archeologists to ensure protection of these resources.

Exhibit 27 Coulter Block Recreation Context



Coulter Block Lands Recreational Context

USFS, Chelan County GIS 2023

Source: USFS, Chelan County, 2023.

Geographic Context & Adjacent Landowners

The Coulter Block lands are centrally located in a recreation destination area, and are equally distant from the recreation hubs of Stevens Pass Ski Area and the town of Leavenworth. Though public access is currently limited to the USFS easement roads, the proximity to the surrounding USFS lands and their recreational opportunities make the Coulter Block lands interesting in geographical context.

Federal Lands

The Coulter Block lands are adjacent to federal lands within the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Several USFS trails, including the Chiwakum Creek trail to the east, the McCue Ridge Trail to the south, and the Lake Ethel Trail to the west, provide hiking access into the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and the Chiwakum mountain range. Several high alpine lakes (in addition to the lakes previously mentioned in this report) are accessible within a day's hike from Highway 2 on these USFS trails, including Larch Lake, Cup Lake, Lake Augusta, and Chiwakum Lakes. These trails connect into a vast trail network that can lead to Leavenworth via the Icicle Ridge Trail, to Icicle Canyon via the Lady Lakes and Chatter Creek pass, and to Stevens Pass via Frosty Pass. The Chiwakum Range is a little-known alpine destination that does not experience the crowds found in the nearby Enchantments. This area is highly valued for its beauty and solitude.

Exhibit 28 The Chiwakum Range Above Alpine Lakes High Camp in Fall



Source: Alpine Lakes High Camp

Alpine Lakes High Camp

Alpine Lakes High Camp is perched along the high elevation southern boundary of the property. This 20-acre private parcel contains overnight accommodation facilities in small rustic cabins,

and operates off the grid year-round, providing a woodsy experience in a beautiful setting for paying customers. Alpine Lakes High Camp has an interesting history, and continues to play a vital role in keeping roads open and accessible on the Coulter Block.

Bill and Peggy Stark, a local Leavenworth couple, first founded "Nomad Camp" in 1978 with the goal of introducing people to the Alpine Lakes area they loved (Alpine Lakes High Camp website 2023). Bill and Peg made their initial visit to the Enchantments in 1959, which at the time was an unknown area of the Cascades and the lack of trails meant they had to bushwack their way in. Over the years, they grew to love the area, and eventually helped create Alpine Lakes Wilderness in the 1970s. The Starks not only created a legacy with the foundation of the Enchantments and the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, but they also introduced hundreds of people to the region through the camp, which they ran for more than 15 years (Steigmeyer 2006).

Don and Chris Hanson became the next stewards of what they named Scottish Lakes High Camp in 1994 and championed the growth of cabins and operations of this unique backcountry business. Over the next 23 years, they introduced multiple generations to the splendor of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness area, just a short hike from camp. Over time, they created an incredible extended family of dedicated friends and guests. Their inspiring work created a unique wilderness property that can be seen through just about everything at High Camp! Generations of guests reminisce on the care and thoughtfulness the Hanson's brought to each interaction in the wilderness area they loved so much (Alpine Lakes High Camp website 2023).

Justin and Austin Donohue purchased the property in 2017 and renamed it Alpine Lakes High Camp. They continue to conduct year-round operations, bringing guests in with tracked Land Rovers and snowcats in the winter months. They run a cat-skiing operation on the Coulter Block lands in the winter, under the recreation lease with Chinook Forest Partners. Their operations are integral to the management of the Coulter Block lands, and will be an important aspect of management and recreation access and opportunity for any future landowner/manager.

Exhibit 29 Summer Recreation Near Alpine Lakes High Camp



Source: Justin Donohue, 2023.

Exhibit 30 Winter Recreation Near Alpine Lakes High Camp



Photo: Alpine Lakes High Camp 2023.

Private Property Neighbors

Other private property owners also share borders with the Coulter Block lands. In 2023 the Coulter Development LLC group purchased all but a 1/16th Section of Section 9, which has historically been in private ownership and is located on the western border of the property (Chelan County Assessor 2023). The northeast 1/16th section of Section 9 is USFS owned. The Coulter Development LLC group plans to utilize some of the lands for personal leisure and use, while selling off some 20 acre parcels to help offset the costs of purchase and road maintenance. The Coulter Development LLC is investing significantly in maintenance and improvements to the road accessing their property through the Coulter Block, which is FS 6930, a USFS easement road. As previously mentioned, the Lake Ethel Trail formerly passed through this property, but is no longer accessible to the public in Section 9.

There is also a ~20 acre parcel of private land along the southeastern border of the Coulter Block lands, in Section 25. This parcel is used recreationally by the landowners, who have access to their property via the Coulter Creek road. This parcel is in proximity to the Chiwakum Creek

trail, and is in the vicinity of where Alpine Lakes High Camp runs cat-skiing operations.

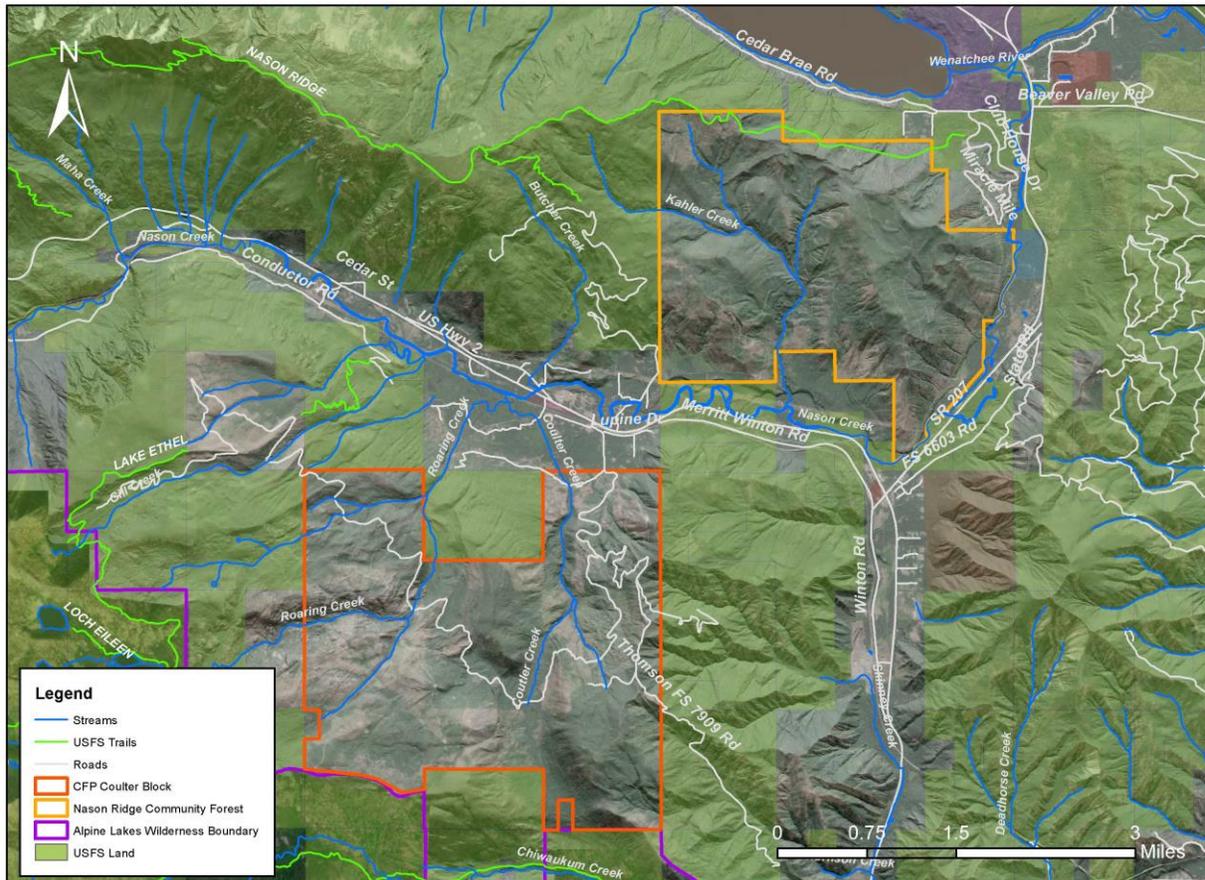
The northern boundary of the Coulter Block lands borders private properties in the Roaring Creek neighborhood. There are year-round residences along Roaring Creek road, which are direct neighbors of the Coulter Block lands. Engagement with all of the private landowners bordering the Coulter Block lands will be critical when considering future management options. There are great opportunities for partnerships and community input on management decisions with the neighbors of the Coulter Block lands.

Nason Ridge Community Forest

Across Highway 2 from the Coulter Block lands to the north lies the Nason Ridge Community Forest. The Nason Ridge Community Forest was purchased by Chelan County in 2022, after several years of fundraising and pursuing grant sources. Initially purchased from Weyerhaeuser in 2017 by Western Rivers Conservancy, the land was held for conservation and jointly managed until full funding was secured to put the lands into public ownership as a Community Forest. The Nason Ridge Community Forest is managed for multiple benefits including forest health and timber, wildlife habitat, recreation and access, educational opportunity, and local economic benefit. The management model is community-driven, with the Nason Ridge Stewardship Committee and greater community making management recommendations for the County. The Community Forest also has an MOU for Shared Stewardship amongst neighboring agencies and landowners, including Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, Washington State Parks, Kahler Glen Association, and Nasonview (Schmitzen lands). The Nason Ridge Community Forest was a result of the 2016 Upper Wenatchee Community Lands Plan priorities and engagement by the local community. It has provided local experience with purchasing, owning, and managing a Community Forest in the Nason area.

The maintenance and operations plan for the Nason Ridge Community Forest includes a long-term plan for revenue generated from timber harvest through selective harvest. In the near-term, Community Forest projects and Stewardship Group facilitation is funded through grant sources and local in-kind contributions through the MOU for shared stewardship. The early fundraising efforts also resulted in the creation of a Stewardship Fund that can support management needs on the property into the future. The Nason Ridge Community Forest Management Plan was completed in 2019, prior to the acquisition of the property, fulfilling a requirement for submitting a \$3 million funding proposal to the Washington state Community Forest Program. The plan was developed with input from a local advisory group. In 2023, the Stewardship Group worked with Chelan County staff to develop a Recreation and Access Plan, to be added as a supplement to the 2019 plan. The plan and Stewardship Group planning activities can be accessed on the Chelan County Natural Resource Department Nason Ridge Community Forest website (<https://www.co.chelan.wa.us/natural-resources/pages/nason-ridge-community-forest>).

Exhibit 31 Coulter Block Lands Proximity to Nason Ridge Community Forest



Coulter Block Lands Proximity to Nason Ridge Community Forest

USFS, Chelan County GIS 2023

Photo: Chelan County, 2023.

Current Access & Use

There are multiple facets of recreation and access on the Coulter Block lands. From the exclusive recreation lease held by Alpine Lakes High Camp to the changing history of hunting permits and wilderness access through various ownerships, recreation opportunity has been variable. To better understand the current recreation and access situation, Chelan County Natural Resource Department held a meeting in August 2023 to gather input from local residents, business owners, agencies, and stakeholders on current recreation opportunity, desired future recreation and access, potential issues/challenges, and overall objectives for

recreation and access on the Chinook Forest Partners- owned Coulter Block Lands. Input from that meeting and direct engagement with neighbors and other stakeholders is captured in this chapter.

Public access to the property is currently limited to the USFS easement road system, which is accessed via Coulter Creek Road (FS 6930). There is a locked gate at the bottom of Coulter Creek Road. Chinook Forest Partners, Alpine Lakes High Camp, and landowners with easements through the property are allowed motorized access through this gate. There is no public parking at the bottom of the gate. Currently there are no sanctioned public trail connections into the property.

Past and Present Uses/Opportunities

- Accessing Alpine Lakes Wilderness for hiking, camping, high hunt, solitude, etc.
- Fishing in high lakes- probably the longest-standing recreation type in this area
- Hunting mule deer, bear, and grouse (hunting no longer permitted by Chinook Forest Partners)
- Hiking, biking, and riding street-legal motorcycle on roads with USFS easement (FS 6930, 6935)
- Winter recreation including cross-country skiing, back-country skiing, snowshoeing, cat-skiing (winter recreation opportunities are provided through Alpine Lakes High Camp)
- Snowmobile by private landowners (not authorized for public)
- Intermediate to advanced recreation access due to elevation gain and steepness of terrain
- Off-road recreation such as hiking, mountain biking and skiing currently allowed only for Alpine Lakes High Camp guests through a standing recreation lease on Coulter Block lands

Future Considerations

Great potential exists for improving recreation opportunities on the Coulter Block lands, depending on future ownership/management. Local stakeholders provided the following input on what types of opportunities they would like to see on the property. Along with these desired opportunities, potential challenges/issues with recreation and access on the property were identified. Thoughtful, intentional planning with continued stakeholder engagement will be critical for a future land manager to address these potential issues when planning for recreation and access.

Future Desired Recreation Opportunity

- More beginner-level recreation opportunity
- Equal access to wilderness and recreation opportunity as that of private landowners adjacent to the Coulter Block lands
- Protect wilderness lakes from “Colchuck Lake syndrome” by gating road several miles from trail access (potentially in ‘beaver pond area’ with a buffer to protect ecologically sensitive areas)
- Preserve quiet character and secluded feel of lands
- Connect to Chiwakum Creek trail and other USFS trails
- Increase recreation access off of the USFS easement road prism, including opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, back-country skiing, snowshoeing, etc.
- Renew hunting access
- Explore options for hut system
- Consider permit system to generate revenue and/or regulate use
- Seasonal closures of specific areas during different seasons to meet different recreation opportunity objectives and protect habitat values
- Connectivity with Nason Ridge Community Forest groomed trail system for winter recreation
- Work with Alpine Lakes High Camp to find road management solutions that work for both public access and High Camp operations

- Consider options for snowmobile and ATV access

Potential Issues/Challenges

- Management of road system, both summer and winter (impacts of various types of recreation on road surface, as well as different types of vehicles accessing roads during winter)
- Ongoing maintenance of parking areas and related infrastructure
- Enforcement challenges, especially with encroachment into wilderness
- Permit system/regulatory management
- Potential for increased trespass on private lands adjacent to Coulter Block lands
- Safety for winter access- un-controlled slopes, variable conditions
- Potentially inflexibility on management depending on ownership
- More use could result in higher need for emergency response

Community Priorities for Recreation And Access

Overall community objectives around recreation and access were identified to provide future land managers with guidance on planning for future recreation and access on the Coulter Block lands.

Overall Objectives for Recreation and Access

- Balance accessibility with protection of wilderness and preservation of character
- Manage differently for different seasons (summer and winter) to address specific opportunities and issues
- Increase accessible (beginner level) recreation and education opportunities in lower elevation areas (gentler terrain)

- Continue positive partnerships between Alpine Lakes High Camp, landowner, and neighbors
- Balance recreation with forest health restoration and wildlife habitat protection
- Increase access to recreation opportunity off of the road prism
- Maintain/improve connectivity with adjacent public lands

This chapter provides a high-level look at existing recreation use and desired future conditions, but additional planning would be needed for development of site-specific recommendations that could be evaluated for environmental, economic, and social suitability as well as adherence to other management goals of land management. Any increased public use of the lands will require strategic planning to prevent unwanted impacts on the forest, fish and wildlife resources, and adjacent landowners. Stakeholder participation in planning processes will be key to balancing the opportunities and issues around recreation and access on this property. Ways to include partners and stakeholders in planning process include the following:

- Identify and reach out to recreation partners (adjacent landowners, local recreation advocacy groups, recreation interest groups, and state and federal agencies).
- Undertake a detailed planning effort to address issues and opportunities around access and recreation
- Overall recreation and access objectives identified in this assessment should help guide recreation management decisions.
- Notify the public of any plans/processes regarding land ownership/management decisions.

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Recommendations for Next Steps

This Assessment Report was compiled utilizing existing resources and input from partners and the local community. The report provides information to help stakeholders understand the existing and potential resources associated with the property, and can help guide future land management decisions. However, more work is needed to develop a clear picture of land management needs, maintenance and operation costs, and community engagement opportunities. This section offers suggestions for next steps that could help set up the successful transition of the Coulter Block lands to a prospective long-term owner.

➤ **Forest Management Plan**

This assessment effort did not include undertaking a full forest management plan. A Forest Management Plan will be key for fully understanding forest conditions and prioritizing forest management actions on the property. A Forest Management Plan should include short- and long-term management goals, recommendations for management actions, and detailed inventory information.

Depending on the overall objectives for ownership and management, a Forest Management Plan can also include chapters on Community Benefits, Road Management, Aquatic and Terrestrial Restoration, Recreation and Access, and Stewardship and Adaptive Management. The Nason Ridge Community Forest Management Plan provides an example of a well-rounded Community Forest Management Plan that incorporates these elements and was developed with local input. The Nason Ridge Community Forest Management Plan was a requirement for applying for Washington State Community Forest funding sources to acquire the property. Completing it prior to securing grant funding not only helped make Nason Ridge Community Forest a very competitive acquisition proposal, it also helped guide the management approach for the lands and established a strong stewardship model involving highly engaged local stakeholders in the management of the lands.

➤ **Maintenance and Operations Plan**

Any prospective future owner will need to understand both the maintenance needs and the potential revenue sources for managing the lands. A Maintenance and Operations Plan may look different depending on what the intended uses and management approach for the lands

are, and an exact budget can be difficult to impossible to determine prior to making decisions regarding acquisition. But prospective landowners can develop a general plan that incorporates their ideal management objectives with a projected budget and options for meeting the projected expenses.

Potential Operations and Maintenance Considerations

Management Costs	Revenue Sources
Staffing	Program budgets
Acquisition and Closing Costs	Grants
Road Maintenance	Local Grants (Community Foundations, Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation, Regional Impact Grants, etc.)
Invasive Species Control	State Grants (WA Recreation and Conservation Office, DNR Forest Resiliency, WA Dept. of Ecology, etc.)
Restoration Priorities	Federal Grants (Forest Legacy, Landscape Scale Restoration, Community Wildfire Defense, NRCS, etc.)
Access Improvements	Timber Harvest Revenue
Special Projects (recreation, restoration)	Donations/Stewardship Funds
Forest Management	
Facilities (bathrooms, etc.)	
Signage	

As previously discussed, the Coulter Block lands are surrounded by federal and private lands. One opportunity that should not be overlooked when considering operations and maintenance is the opportunity for shared stewardship with adjacent landowners. Developing partnerships amongst neighbors can be very beneficial for all parties when interests and needs overlap. Partners can leverage each other’s investments, increasing the footprint and impact in various ways.

➤ **Community Engagement**

Because land management decisions and ownership changes affect local communities, community engagement will be important moving forward with planning efforts for the Coulter Block lands. But even more importantly, local stakeholders can provide valuable input that can help land managers understand issues and opportunities and set effective overall management objectives.

The Trust for Public Land has actively engaged the local communities of Chelan County while coordinating the ongoing large-scale lands project with Chinook Forest Partners. Community engagement was also integral to completing this Assessment Report for the Coulter Block lands. Continued community engagement will be important throughout the process of determining a long-term landowner. When approaching the first two recommendations (development of a Forest Management Plan and development of an Operations and Maintenance Plan), an advisory committee is strongly recommended for providing local input and review. Exhibit 32 lists potential advisory committee members, but additional stakeholders may be added.

Exhibit 32 Potential Advisory Committee Member List

Suggested Advisory Committee Participation
Trust for Public Land
Chinook Forest Partners
Alpine Lakes High Camp
Roaring Creek Residents
Lake Wenatchee/Cole's Corner Area Residents
US Forest Service
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Lake Wenatchee Fire District
Adjacent Landowners
Local Business Owners
Professional Forester
Forest Ecologist
Wildlife Biologist
Summer Recreation Interests
Winter Recreation Interests
WA Department of Natural Resources
WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Yakama Nation

Confederated Tribes of the Colville
Cascadia Conservation District
Hunting Interests
Chelan County
The Wilderness Society

➤ **Community Forest Model**

While there are multiple options for future ownership and management of the Coulter Block lands, it is worth exploring the Community Forest model that is in place in the adjacent Nason Ridge Community Forest. This section offers a brief explanation of Community Forest principles.

The underlying theme of community forests is the ability of local stakeholders to be involved in the leadership, investment, and stewardship of the forest resources. Community forests provide many benefits to local residents and visitors alike. By allowing communities to help shape the future of their forest resources, those communities can ensure their objectives are met over time through short- and long-term management actions. This participation in management creates a sense of ownership in the land, in turn fostering an ethic of stewardship and a long-term commitment to the health and vitality of the forest.

Several themes usually emerge in Community Forest models, including sustainable forestry, recreation access and opportunity, and protection/restoration of the ecological functions and biodiversity of the land. The sustainable forestry theme strikes an important balance between harvesting to generate revenue for continued management and stewardship of the land, and managing for healthy forests and watersheds that are resilient to fires and sustainable in a long-term management sense. Recreation access and opportunity is a potential theme here, with limited existing recreation opportunity and potential for expansion of recreation access and infrastructure. The property contains a wide range of habitats and ecosystem types, including ESA listed species inhabiting Nason Creek. An understanding of the connectivity between upland and aquatic systems and the value of protecting various habitat types is an important consideration in this landscape.

Continued stewardship by the community will be a key factor in achieving these objectives, and a framework for maintaining community engagement and approaching adaptive management decisions is an important element of the planning process. What ultimately results in a successful community forest is community involvement in its long-term management.

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