**Coulter Block Assessment**

**Recreation and Access Stakeholder Input from August 16th meeting**

Participants: Eunice Youmans (Chelan-Douglas Land Trust), Natasha Staton (local resident), Donal Fennessy (local resident), Joe Cannata (local resident, owner of 59er Diner), Tiana Luke (Wilderness Society), Wenzel and Selena Peikert (local residents), Justin Donahue (owner of Alpine Lakes High Camp), James Munly (Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance), David Walker (Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue), Danny Bacheldor (Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue), Rich Finger (WDFW), Tim and Mary Gallagher (local residents, Audubon), Sean Simmons (local hunter), Chad Spies (local hunter), Shon Smith (Chelan County Commissioner), Mike Kaputa (Director, Chelan County Natural Resource Department), Rollie Schmitten (local resident and historian), Bill Deters (Audubon), Erin Mckay (Chelan County Natural Resource Department)

Chelan County Natural Resource Department hosted the August 16th, 2023 meeting 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. This input will be included in the Coulter Block Assessment Report, which will provide information on the property to aid in the discussion led by Trust for Public Lands of the future land ownership and management of the Coulter Block Lands.

**Current 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-county 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 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 assess 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

**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