

May 10, 2009

For Immediate Release

For more information contact:

Lloyd McGee, President of NE Washington Forestry Coalition (509) 680-1468

Claudia Michalke, Executive Director, Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition  
(509) 684-3281

## **Collaboration with Colville National Forest Generates Millions for Tri-county Economy**

Job creation and economic development among top priorities for Coalition.

**Colville, WA** –With employment opportunities and the economy top on nearly everyone’s mind, the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition (Coalition), a group that includes timber businesses, foresters, conservationists, and other citizens, has released a new fact sheet that highlights the economic benefits their collaboration with the Colville National Forest (CNF) and the local timber industry bring to the tri-county area.

*The fact sheet, which is available on the Coalition’s web site at <http://www.newforestrycoalition.org/>, outlines the important role the Coalition’s collaboration with local Forest Service Officials plays in maintaining and creating jobs and local mill and other timber industry infrastructure in the tri-county area.*

“The local timber industry spends over 200 million dollars in the tri-county annually,” said Coalition President Lloyd McGee. “All of that economic activity supports thousands of jobs and businesses and has a huge impact on the entire community whether you have anything to do with timber industry or not.”

Over the past six years, the Coalition has brought together the timber and conservation community and Forest Service staff to collaborate on over 22 projects and to find solutions to forest management problems on the CNF. Despite these successes, the economic downturn has created potentially devastating challenges for the local timber industry and has put our region’s exceptionally unique milling infrastructure in jeopardy.

“Not only are the timber industry and thousands of jobs in northeast Washington at risk by the downturn in the economy and housing market,” said McGee, “but addressing significant forest health and hazardous fuel priorities on private and public land may not be economically feasible if we lose the local infrastructure to treat those problems.”

According to McGee, the Coalition is the only group that has brought together the right participants to work with the Forest Service and develop supportable projects that maintains and even increases the timber flow off the CNF. The depressed timber market has limited the availability of logs from private lands.

“Without the proactive attitude of Forest Supervisor Brazell and his staff to collaborate with the Coalition to keep logs coming off the CNF, we might be seeing more mills going out of business and more people losing their jobs” stated McGee.

Forested lands make up approximately 80% of Ferry County, 92% of Pend Oreille County, and 83% of Stevens County and the region’s six sawmills, a plywood mill, paper mill, and a state-of-the-art green energy producing facility are vital for the future management of private, state, and federal forest lands.

In addition to helping to maintain critical industry infrastructure, the Coalition’s collaboration with the Forest Service has supported thousands of jobs in our communities. An estimated 12 jobs are created for every million board feet (MMBF) of timber harvested according to an economic analysis completed by Headwater Economics for the Coalition in June 2007. The Coalition hopes to continue to increase the CNF’s annual harvest rate beyond this year’s jump to 61 MMBF of harvest volume.

“Currently there are over 2,000 workers employed directly by the mills and in logging and trucking of raw materials in the tri-county area,” said Coalition Executive Director Claudia Michalke. “And those jobs support hundreds of other businesses and families throughout the region. We can’t pass up an opportunity to come together to maintain and hopefully create even more jobs”

With this year’s budget shortfalls, the CNF currently has a budget for only 30 MMBF annual harvest volume, which is a disappointing setback for the Coalition and the CNF staff. However, it has given the Coalition and the CNF another opportunity to work together to find innovative ways to get the volume back up closer to last year’s 61 MMBF level.

“The Coalition is pursuing grant funding opportunities and has requested 1.5 million dollars from the USFS under Title VII to hire local private contractors and consultants to create a large-scale "turnkey" harvest project on the CNF. This proposed project would be at least 50,000 acres in size. If funded, the proposed "turn-key" project will be in addition to on-going USFS projects and will be selected based on forest health problems and risk of catastrophic wildfire as assessed by county wildfire protection plans. The proposed project will create valuable additional jobs and supply much need material to our local timber companies. We would like eventually to see a project of this magnitude happen in each of Stevens, Ferry and Pend Oreille County's. The CNF is working closely with the Coalition and doing everything they can to make this happen. Everyone seems to realize that we all need to stick together in these tough times and not let funding challenges keep us from moving these large scale projects forward,” said McGee.

The Healthy Forest Restoration Act, passed by Congress in 2002, requires National Forests to collaborate whenever projects designed under those authorities are proposed. Over the past six years, the Coalition has helped implement that law by bringing interested participants together to find forest management solutions on the

CNF, while operating on a shoe-string budget, an all volunteer board, and a part-time Executive Director. According to the group's fact sheet, the Coalition board members, including representatives from Vaagen Brothers Lumber, Avista, Conservation Northwest, Columbia Cedar, The Lands Council, and Ponderay Newsprint, represent nearly 100 years of conservation experience and over 250 years of professional forestry experience. It also notes that the Coalition donates over 2,300 hours of volunteer labor annually in the field, at meetings, and working on several committees for the betterment of our forests and communities.

For more information, contact NE WA Forestry Coalition Executive Director Claudia Michalke at [claudia@ultraplix.com](mailto:claudia@ultraplix.com) or go to the Coalition website [www.newforestrycoalition.org](http://www.newforestrycoalition.org).