

Dear Forest Supervisor Terri Marceron:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Chugach National Forest plan. Thank you also for leaving intact the commitment to preserve the “wilderness character” of the Wilderness Study Area in Prince William Sound. However, I am concerned that protections for the WSA appear weakened.

Please amend the proposed WSA Management Intent to affirm the area will continue to be treated as wilderness until Congress reaches a final decision on its protection. As stated in the existing (2002) Forest Plan, management should be controlled by the Forest Service regional manual direction. This clearly supports the long-standing policy of modeling WSA protection after the Wilderness Act, with special ANILCA provisions. This has been the Chugach National Forest policy since 1984.

As stated in the 2012 Chugach National Forest Assessment and the 2015 Wilderness Area Inventory and Evaluation, Prince William Sound has experienced increased visitation and pressure on resources since the 2000 opening of the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel to Whittier. **Now is a time for maintaining current protections.**

The Forest Plan should continue to acknowledge and uphold the goals of the 1994 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Recovery Plan, which promises to restore the conservation, recreation, and wilderness values of Prince William Sound and specifically the WSA.

Please recommend to Congress continued and permanent protection of the entire WSA. This should include Knight Island, Glacier Island, Perry Island, Columbia Glacier, Esther Island, Port Wells, Lake Nellie Juan, and the mainland along Knight Island Passage. The 2015 Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation describes the high degree of wilderness character in these areas and their current value as wilderness.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Mark Yezbick  
Taxpayer and United States Citizen