

Arctic Connections

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February 19, 2016

Chugach National Forest's Supervisor's Office

Attn: Forest Plan Revision

161 East 1st Street, Door 8

Anchorage, AK 99501

Re: Chugach National Forest Plan Revision / Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA

Dear Forest Service:

As an Alaskan who has hiked, kayaked, camped, backpacked, cross-country skied, picked berries, watched birds and bears, photographed, and regained sanity by experiencing wild nature in the Chugach National Forest over many decades, I support the strongest protections for the entire Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area – Wilderness recommendation!

I am also a small business owner who engaged in wilderness guiding in some of our most remote lands in the Arctic for over the course of a decade and understand the life-changing effect these places have had in my life as well as for my visitors. There is great economic as well as intrinsic value from designated Wilderness and Wilderness Study Area protections because they are the real and perceived extremes of the tourism and recreational spectrum for Alaskans – and the world. The existence and the future opportunity to experience such wild places is vital in our changing world for growing creative, imaginative Alaskans and Americans.

I am disappointed that the proposed plan would abandon protections for nearly 600,000 acres of the WSA by eliminating it from the WSA. Instead, I strongly support recommendations for the full 1.9 million acres of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and surrounding roadless lands to be kept within in the WSA as they are eligible and suitable for the status.

It is important that your agency -- entrusted by Congress to protect this area for future generations of Americans until Congress takes action -- protect the wild character, naturalness, and opportunities for solitude for the entire WSA. This means keeping the area as it is currently – undeveloped and a place with non-motorized character (including chainsaws). As recreational visitor pressure grows throughout the region and especially the forest, we have a unique chance to keep some of the Chugach at its wildest!

It is so disappointing that the proposed plan would divide the WSA into two smaller units. One value of the full WSA that Congress designated in ANILCA is preserving the wholeness of the ecosystem and managing for long-term integrity. Keeping the area as one whole WSA also will better manage for resilience in the face of the already changing landscape from climate change impacts. Please reverse the recommendation and instead keep the long-held protections for Knight Island, Columbia Glacier, Port Wells, mainland Knight Island Passage and Lake Nellie Juan. It will be harmful to fish, wildlife, and

the wilderness character of these lands to permanently strip them of the long-held protections afforded by the WSA.

While I support use of snow-machines for subsistence and traditional uses in the WSA, I am concerned about the impacts of recreational snow-machine use and how it could further expand over the coming decades. I think about the craziness that has happened at Yellowstone National Park and other places and although that is hard to imagine in the Chugach – we must keep strong protections now in order to keep the real Alaska real.

I am concerned about the many changes proposed in the plan that would allow harmful uses in the WSA, including residential timber harvests, expanded motorized uses, habitat manipulation, mining, and helicopter-supported skiing / hiking. These activities will eliminate over time the wilderness character of these special lands and waters– and shrink the special kind of experiences we Alaskans and our visitors seek.

I urge the Forest Service to revise its plan. Please keep the current protections and forward a Wilderness recommendation for the entire Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area and the adjacent roadless lands. We Alaskans and all Americans will benefit far more by seeing these lands and waters permanently protected as Wilderness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela A. Miller". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Pamela A. Miller