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REF: Assessment of the Ecological and Socio-Economic Conditions and Trends Chugach National Forest, Alaska

Dear Mrs. Marceron,

I'm a 4 generation Alaskan, my family has lived here over 110 years. I grew up in Anchorage and although I spent a lot of time outdoors I didn't spend much time in the Chugach National Forest. It wasn't until my early 20's that I began spending a significant amount of time mainly each winter exploring the Forest. I started by going to Squirrel flats and Turangain Pass, then later Whittier, Lost Lake, Johnsons, Moose Pass, Nellie Juan, Grandview just to name some. I've basically been everywhere in the Chugach that open to motorized vehicles and had some of the best times of my life doing it. The technological advances in snowmachines not only has made them quieter and more fuel efficient they can go places they couldn't even 10 years ago. From leaving the parking lot in the morning it's unbelievable how much ground you can cover in one day on a snowmobile compared to on foot or on skis. The CNF is almost 7 million acres in size which is larger in size than 8 US states, the opportunities to explore and recreate are unlimited.

It's inevitable and unfortunate that as populations increase that motorized recreational opportunities get pushed farther from population centers, in turn making the access to them more restrictive. The CNF is just over an hour from my front door, this is hugely invaluable to me. Besides CNF other areas with comparable riding conditions are several hours drive from Anchorage. The close proximity to Anchorage is especially valuable with the limited winter sunlight and the ability to get a few hours in after work on those longer spring days. With snow conditions being spotty as they have been in recent years its hugely beneficial to have motorized areas in multiple climate zones. It's amazing to see how different weather events can affect one area so differently from another. As populations increase and the popularity of the sport continue to grow, if riding areas are affected or limited this will contribute to higher concentrations of users at the available areas. This could in turn cause problems with parking and other problems being experienced in the lower 48 like increase numbers of injuries and deaths from collisions. The more areas open to motorized vehicles the less likely users are to be all recreating in the same area.

With adequate snow coverage, the impact to grasses and other vegetation from snowmachines is minimal, in fact less pounds per square inch of pressure on the ground than created by a human walking. I think we all have seen the effects humans or animals can make from consistently traveling the same path during summer months. High traffic snowmobile corridors do not experience the same erosion that a highly traveled foot path does. As technology continues to improve snowmachine are getting increasingly quiet while emitting far less emissions than older model machines. The increased fuel economy and reduced oil consumption also contributes to reduced impacts on the environment.

I think that moving forward it is important to continue to expand motorized opportunities rather than restrict them. It wasn't long ago that people rode snowmachines in south Anchorage on what we now know as Dimond Blvd. If these trends continue like they currently are, we will someday face the same issues as the lower 48 seeing motorized use areas becoming a thing of the past. Humans are very unique creatures with a vast array of hobbies and interests. Within these public lands we should all have a place that we can recreate, as long as it can be done so responsibly, regardless if its biking, skiing hiking or motorized. We live in the largest state in the US with one of the smallest populations, there should be no reason why we need to restrict the opportunities that we currently have. In between Anchorage and the CNF the opportunities for non-motorized users are almost unlimited. When I was in college at Alaska Pacific University I dedicated 3 semesters during my senior project, to reopen winter motorized use of Kincaid Motocross track for youth snowmobile racing and expand other opportunities throughout the state. This project involved research, methodology, data collection through public survey, public input through attending community council and parks and rec board meetings to name some. Ultimately, we were successful in our goal of reopening the Kincaid Motocross Track for conditional winterized use and the nonprofit that I cofounded, Alaska State Sno-X Lions is about to start its 5 year of organized youth snowmachine races this year. The snowmachine community is more unified and organized than ever before. Self-policing between users and user education are at an all-time high within the Alaskan snowmobile community.

Of the current plans proposed I think that B is the best plan for me and my user group, though if in some ways combined with A could benefit more user groups. I think that even the current plans lack useful expansion to snowmobile corridors and designates exceeding amounts to wilderness areas. I would like to see expansion of snowmobile corridors and no further expansion to wilderness areas. Moving forward I would like to see more motorized opportunities in the Chugach and I would like to see them available to my children, grandchildren and generations to come. I've had some of the best times of my life in places most can only access on a snowmobile or other motorized transport in the Chugach National Forrest and I hope future generations can experience the same.

Sincerely,

Soren Sieberts