

Chugach National Forest's Supervisor's Office
161 East 1st Street, Door 8
Anchorage, AK 99501
Attn: Draft Land Management Plan

Oct. 31, 2018

Dear Chugach National Forest Service Supervisors Office:

I strongly oppose Alternatives C and D and specifically support option B in the Draft Land Management Plan for the following reasons:

1. Alternatives A & B enhance recreational opportunities for public enjoyment for *ALL* users, including both motorized and non-motorized.
2. Motorized recreation is inclusive for users with disabilities, such as my own family members.
3. Access for all users supports a robust tourism economy for "gateway" communities.
4. Properly managing public land, not just the travel mechanism on public lands, results in better protection of the natural land and cultural resources.

My husband and I moved to Alaska in May of 2012 from Colorado during one of the deepest of snow years. In those first months here, I became intimately aware of the limited access to the Chugach National Forest for recreation purposes, as I explored the forest daily as a skier and later as mountain biker. I am an avid backcountry skier, snowmobiler, winter fat-biker, summer mountain biker, hiker, boater, occasional ATV/ dirt biker, ice and rock climber, lover of all things natural and professional landscape designer.

Access to the mountains is currently very limited in Alaska, as often the trailheads are crowded and force parking along dangerous highways such as along the Seward Highway or amongst obscure access points in private residential neighborhoods. As an aging athlete and one with a full-time professional career, my body and vacation schedule limit my ability to access remote areas within the Chugach National Forest without considerable effort. Mountain bikes and snow machines enable my adventures to be more accessible. One of my favorite Alaskan winter activities is riding snowmobiles to access backcountry ski terrain that would normally only be accessed by helicopter or at least a week's worth of ski touring. When my husband proposed, we rode bikes to then ski once of the last remaining snow-filled chute during a late June day. Now my knees are damaged after multiple surgeries and I simply cannot physically walk to remote locations anymore, so biking (mountain and fat biking) truly is my main form of access to the forest in the summer.

I have ridden nearly everything legally possible on the Kenai Peninsula. Often my adventures are followed by an evening of dining out in local "gateway" restaurants and shopping in local stores. I value supporting local small business and the National Forests trailhead towns filled with gift stores, hotels and healthy local food, are often benefactors of my hard earned money. I purchase gear locally, rent equipment, use local mechanics, frequently supporting those already struggling to make a living. The trickle-down economics from outdoor recreation is a critical way to off-set the lack of oil revenue in the state's current fiscal crisis. Restricting access to our National Parks will severely restrict the local economies that profit from trailhead or gateway tourism.

Safety is also another considerable consideration when planning adventures in the forest. I am often with friends who have children or my disabled family member. Snowmobiles create excellent groomed access trails in winter that provide quick access for emergency responders as well as for those that have mobility disabilities. In summer, emergency responders can quickly respond via helicopter to injuries along trails in the Kenai that would be restricted under the Alternatives C & D. Forest fires can be extinguished faster with access and avalanche forecasters can access the snowy peaks with use of motorized machines, improving the safety of all backcountry recreationalists. Access to the CNF is already challenging enough, why would you make it more difficult and exclude it only those with deep pockets and endless vacation time?

This draft plan addresses some environmental concerns, however it does not present viable solutions for the ever pressing issues associated with climate change, including reduced snow accumulation at lower elevations. If access routes and trails were adequately identified and sustainably improved, social trails and further erosion of protected sites would be reduced. Wayfinding and improved trail etiquette signage needs to be increased and education on how users can become land stewards needs to be implemented. All too often I come across park visitors who do not know about the dangers of hiking (foot travel) over sensitive tundra, but who are eager to follow a trail once properly educated.

I have recreated as far east as Valdez area, south to Seward and all over the Kenai Peninsula, Girdwood and Turnagain area. My husband and I had a mountain bike wedding on top of Palmer Creek Road above Hope. We may not be Alaskans by birth, but our love is forever threaded through this landscape. I cannot imagine how I would continue to enjoy these mountains if access was any further restricted as proposed in options C & D. Please select Alternative B, as it is the most responsible option.

Thank you for considering my opinion and I am available for further discussion if interested.

Regards,



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