10 March 2021

From: Dick Shellhorn

 Cordova, Alaska 99574

To: Jennifer L. MacDonald

 USDA - Cordova

 Box

 Cordova, Ak 99574

 jennifer.l.macdonald@usda.gov

Subject: Cordova District Ranger District Guided Helicopter Skiing Project #59615

Greetings:

I am lifetime Cordova resident, and have been skiing and ice skating in this area since I could lace up ski boots or skates.

In fact, a pair of my original skis are being used in a display about Cordova skiing at the Cordova Museum.

I was in on original hearings about heli-skiing many years ago, and was happy to see that Pts. North and locals were able to reach a agreement about which areas they would operate in, without impacting areas where many of us locals have skied, skated, hiked, and enjoyed countless other outdoor recreation.

The basic concern was conflict between the disruption helicopters and guided skiing would have on our backcountry experience. There is certainly a lot of area out there for both parties to cooperate in mitigating such impact.

I was very surprised to look closely at the latest proposed expansion for held-ski operations. Among other things, the map shows expansion down to the northern edge of the Copper River Highway in several areas, as well as directly adjacent to both sides of Sheridan Glacier, and on the edges of Eyak Lake near the Queen’s Chair. The proposal also abuts the edge of the highway beginning not far beyond the exit to the Alaganik Landing all the way out to Mile 27.

Thesw are all very popular areas for outdoor recreation, and intrusion by helicopters would have a major impact on the quality of said recreation.

For example, I ski across Eyak Lake and then ski the Queen’s Chair basin. Imagine all that effort to have a guided group drop in by helicopter. Countless Cordovans ski or skate on Eyak Lake, Envision a nice excursion over to Middle Arm interrupted by choppers landing just above you.

With recent great XC conditions, I have been skiing up from 10 Mile far up Scott River. Almost all this area would be in permitted heli-ski terrain.

Ditto those who ice skate on Sheridan Lake. The proposed area for heli-operations begins almost immediately at the end of the USFS road terminus, and would permit helicopters access on the mountains on both sides of the lake, a hugely popular skating area.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to visit with you personally to go over the maps and share ideas on the impact of this proposal.

Backcountry users and Pts. North have worked well together, and their operations up from their base at Orca Adventure Lodge go almost unnoticed.

If I understand this proposal correctly, this expansion would have a devastating impact on the quality of outdoor experience for countless Cordovans.

In fact, I would go so far as to request that you have a well-advertised public hearing on the proposal, as many locals are completely unaware of just how dramatic a change this could foretell..

Sincerely,

Dick Shellhorn

(76 year resident)