MJ Turek

Ketchikan, Alaska

31 January 2022

Re: plans for the Ward Lake and surrounding Forest Service Lands.

As a lifelong resident of Ketchikan, I often use and work in the areas under consideration for improvements. At one time I was also an active member of the Ketchikan Trail Coalition. Locals want to have these beautiful areas respected and used responsibly. We love our forests and lakes and appreciate that we have nearby access.

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Continue to keep the Ward Lake and Frog Pond areas non-commercial.
2. Continue to allow commercial nature hikes along the Ward Creek trail. Group numbers should be limited as they currently are. People from out-of-town get an important appreciation of the rainforest.
3. Restrain the over-zealous trimming along the trails. Chopping everything interesting down is not a good idea. People are then tempted to step off the trail, it looks bad, removes some of the charm of the trail, causes safety problems, and is poorly timed. Specific example: In mid-summer people are sent out to ‘chop’ the trail edges including bearing salmonberry bushes. Then a hiker wants to sample one, but it’s a dangerous step down the edge. Also chopping fireweed is not needed. These are beautiful plants with many uses that will disappear after their place in the forest succession is done. Solution: Schedule the trimming for the late fall!
4. The Ward Creek trail parking lot needs at least one more latrine! Make this a priority.
5. The Ward Creek trail has a ‘short cut’ by the information sign. It’s very steep. Either block it off, reroute and start the trail there, and/or move the sign to the preferred trailhead.
6. The Ward Lake trail regularly floods along the roadside area. Raise this stretch where needed.
7. The “destination” at Perserverance Lake is disappointing. Extend the trail to make some good viewpoints and natural stopping places. It would be exciting to be able to go around the lake on a trail. I’ve gone around the steep left side – terribly difficult without a trail.
8. Connell Lake to Talbot. The ‘destination’ here is also disappointing. Extend the trail to allow a several real views of the lake.
9. Winter access would be high on my list. Ward Lake was frozen this year, but I knew the roads were too dangerous to drive there.
10. Pipeline trail. Would there be a way to continue this trail? Does it have bear-proof trash cans? Can you add some interest points?
11. Add a few more camp sites at Last Chance. Add a covered cooking/gathering area.
12. Consider a cabin at Last Chance. Example: At Lake Lindemann, there’s a warming cabin. So much appreciated.
13. Allow construction of camouflaged cell phone towers where appropriate.
14. People love loop trails. Keep that in mind as you consider extending trails.
15. Revilla Road. Do you realize that if you keep chopping back alders along the sides of the road, you encourage their regrowth? That’s their job! They are an essential part of the forest succession. They are also beautiful. Leave them alone. In a few years, thin out some for firewood. The road is wide enough for sight lines without slashing the sides. Also, visually, it creates a very bad impression!
16. An occasional guided hike (plant and tree identification and such) is a way to get people out and appreciating the forest. I know there were some such hikes in the past by FS biologists.
17. Know that the trail construction and maintenance that you do is universally appreciated. These recreation areas are key to the mental and physical health of our citizens.

Thank you for using our comments to guide your plans.

Sincerely,

MJ Turek