

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/19/2016 12:00:00 AM

First name: Mike

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Organization: Lazy Otter Charters

Title: President

Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing concerning the Chugach Forest Service Plan Update, and more specifically about the Nellie Juan, College Fjord Wilderness Study Area. We oppose removing any area from the WSA in the Chugach National Forest. Lazy Otter Charters Inc. has been operating a water taxi/sightseeing business in Whittier for 22 years. It is our livelihood taking people out to experience wilderness. We have three messages of why this is important to maintain wilderness values in this area.

1) Western Prince William Sound is experiencing increased pressure since the road has opened in 2000. Some of the new young travelers may not be as informed or experienced in what Wilderness designation is and how to behave in wilderness. Maintaining the wilderness designation gives the Forest Service managers tools to educate and enforce wilderness policy.

2) The areas being considered for removal from the WSA are vitally important to Prince William Sound and Alaska. Knight Island is fantastic wild area where you can still find solitude and pristine forests, however, some of this area still suffers from effects of EVOS. It should be a duty to continue to protect it from further damage.

Glacier Island and Columbia Glacier are so scientifically important with its natural phenomenon of recent deglaciation and plant succession. What scientists can discover in actual time is significant. Since managing to climate change is part of the FS plan revision then this area absolutely must be preserved.

Port Wells is likely one of the most traveled passages in Prince William Sound. Nearly every tour boat, every cruise ship that comes into PWS, and many, many private pleasure craft traverse this passage to get to Harriaman and College Fjord to view the largest concentration of tidewater glaciers in North America. This passage is our story, our message to the world. We are telling the world that we still have Wilderness, we still value wildness, and it is available to all of us. A logging operation or mining operation is completely inconsistent with that important message.

3) Finally, it is certain, we cannot make more wilderness. Every little bit of land that is removed from the WSA is gone forever. We must not jeopardize what wilderness we have left. We must do everything in our power to protect it.

Thank you,

Captain Mike and Kelly Bender

Lazy Otter Charters Inc.