

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/25/2018 8:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: First, I want to say thanks to David Fitz-Enz of the US Forest Service for taking time over the past weekend to reach out and engage with the backcountry community in Anchorage, by being present at the open house at AMDS on Saturday October 20th, 2018. Mr. Fitz-Enz was a very knowledgeable Forest Service employee who was easy to talk to, open to listening to questions and opinions, and good at inserting other perspectives into the conversation for folks to consider during the discussion that took place. He was able to answer questions that myself and a group of friends had showed up to ask, and carry on conversation from those questions to explain how use rules affected private citizen users of the forest, operator/guide users and clients, as well as Alaska State and USFS employees. Mr. Fitz-Enz was very helpful, so I wanted to say thanks to him for his education and outreach efforts- they were well received.

My name is Will, I live in Anchorage with my wife, our daughter, and our dog. I moved to Alaska eight and a half years ago for work and snowboarding. I tried backcountry snowboarding the second winter I lived here, and then spent the third epic winter of 2011-2012 logging probably 45 days of backcountry snowboarding- primarily in the Turnagain pass area of Chugach National Forest. I also tried snow machines out in the spring of 2012. The next year I bought a snow machine to access more backcountry for snowboarding and took it to Valdez and my mind was blown with the staggering scale of the mountains in that place. I also tried heli skiing for the first time that trip. The last several winters I have been spending the majority of my free recreation time hiking, snowboarding, and sledding in the Church National Forest in the areas like Turnagain, Johnson Pass, Placer drainage, SKOOKUM drainage, Whittier, Lost Lake, Summit. I make it over to Valdez every once in a while- and just this past year was able to make it out two days in a row to the boundary of that large area between Valdez and Cordova that seems to be up for debate on becoming eligible for winter motorized use or not. Its like a 70 mile round trip day on a sled to make it out there- and I will say with no hesitation: that is some of the most beautiful and humbling country I have ever had the opportunity to experience. It's awesome to be reminded of just how small you are by those big mountains and glacier features. I probably would have never been able to experience that place without a sled.

Sorry for my thoughts wandering. I love this forest and I love recreating in it and I want to keep sharing it with folks and having access to it myself on the various modes of transportation we are free to recreate and experience the forest with. My wife and I have slogged with heavy backpacks up the winter firehouse trail on snowshoes to spend a new years eve at the Dale Clemens forest service cabin at lost lake. In the summer I have ridden my mountain bike across Lost Lake Trail as well as trail run it. I have biked Devils Pass and Resurrection Pass. I have gone boating and camping in Prince William Sound in the summer. I have taken out of state family on the train to Spencer Glacier and hiked with them out to Byron Glacier. I have done a lot of recreating in different forms in the Chugach National Forest and I can't say that I have run into a situation where I viewed other users as a conflict, or had other users view me as a conflict to their recreation either, with any of the many ways I have experienced the forest. So I would advocate for keeping recreation options open to as many uses as you can permit while being stewards of the land. I also don't want to miss out on seeing places like the snow river corridor out to Nellie Juan lake because I have not had the chance to make it out there yet on my sled- and don't have the legs of that crust skier AK guy to make it out on skinny skis.

All the recreation I do in the Chugach supports the economy up here too. Over the course of several years I have bought three snow machines from local dealers, paid money for helicopter skiing, bought food from local restaurants on the drives back and forth from Anchorage, bought thousands of dollars worth of gear, a couple mountain bikes from local shops, rented forest service cabins, paid for hotel rooms on longer trips, and had friends from out of state pay airfare to come up to visit with the sole purpose of recreating in the wild land we have access to in Church National Forest. I have paid for professional guide services like avalanche training and

helicopter skiing- and I think it would be really cool to see new areas opened for operator/guide permit applications for helicopter ski access.

As I understand the guidelines of the way the forest service recreation use maps work- the indicated area uses are the MOST unrestricted uses that the forest service can permit- and areas can be closed or have their use times managed by forest service order. So, I think it is reasonable and safe to experiment with opening new areas for more user groups in the plan revision- knowing that the Forest Service has the power to manage the use according to how you see it is affecting the area or other user groups in the area.

My family and I look forward to enjoying more time out in the forest for lots of years to come. Please keep giving us the freedom to explore it in the ways that we have grown to love.

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