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Organization:

Title:

Comments: This letter is to ensure my comments are counted. There have been dozens upon dozens of letters and comments compromised during this process.

I have lived in Alaska since 1975.

I am an avid outdoorsman. My activities include hiking, mountain biking, fishing, and accessing the Alaska backcountry most weekends on my ATV and snowmobiles. This is what keeps me centered and grounded. I need access to the backcountry and wild areas to maintain perspective, and is why I stay in Alaska.

I am not a young man, I am nearly 47 years old, and my access options to the Chugach National Forest will be limited as I get older, to mainly motorized options. To declare additional forest areas as wilderness, would do a great disservice to a vast swath of the population in my age bracket, who simply don't have the time or the physical capacity to get into the backcountry on foot. What good does that do? Or is that the underlying intent, with the purported mission statement of environmental protections? I sincerely hope that is not the case here. My friends and my family also regularly recreate in the Chugach National Forest. Many of their activities also include mountain bikes or motorized access in designated areas on our ATVs and snowmobiles.

We love to recreate in the following areas:

[bull] Girdwood and surrounding areas.

[bull] 20-mile River Valley

[bull] Placer River Valley

[bull] Turnagain Pass

[bull] Moose Pass [ndash] Trail Lake [ndash] Trail Glacier

[bull] Bartlett, Trail and Spencer Glaciers

[bull] Lost Lake Area

[bull] Nellie-Juan River Valley and surrounding areas.

Instead of shutting off access by declaring additional areas as wilderness, we should open more to the public for our use, like hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, etc.

As I stated earlier, when you declare an area wilderness, you essentially cut access to a great swath of the population in this country.

I am in strong opposition to losing any more acreage of motorized access on the Kenai Peninsula as a whole, and any other areas in the United States. We are already so limited in available areas to ride, and we have so much vast undeveloped areas, that it doesn't make any sense to set aside these massive swaths, or expand previously declared wilderness areas.

I truly believe, that most outdoor enthusiasts, including motorized users, are for the most part conservationists. I, nor any of my friends, do anything to sully the great privilege we have of accessing these backcountry areas. In fact, the opposite is true. We take great care to preserve the trail conditions, we pick up litter, we improve access, and we respect off-trail areas and give wildlife a wide berth.

It is also worth noting that the trails that serve motorized users, and the winter trails put in by snowmobiles, are often used as access routes for emergency responders FOR ALL OTHER USERS, for firefighting, search and rescue, etc.

PLEASE DO NOT RESTRICT MOTORIZED ACCESS ANY MORE THAN IT ALREADY IS.

In fact, I would implore you to open additional areas up, to better serve the public these land assets actually belong to, and not have them sit there, locked up, serving nobody.

Thank you for your time.

Brian T. Harten, P.E.,

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