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First name: Carrie

Last name: Aro

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern

I was born and raised in Alaska and have been recreating all over this beautiful state since day one. Being outdoors hunting, fishing, and camping was the way of life for my family. We did not go on vacations outside of Alaska when I was younger, my parents took time off to explore a new area within the state. My mom was born and raised in Alaska and her parents instilled the same love and sense of adventure in her. My dad came to Alaska in the army and never left. He fueled my love for all things motorized in Alaska. He bought me my first dirt bike when I was five and my first snowmobile when I was seven, the rest is just history.

I graduated from the University of Alaska, Anchorage and during that time I found my passion for backcountry snowboarding. I loved spending time and my very sparse college dollars at Alyeska Resort in Girdwood, but my true love was using snowmobiles to access untouched areas of the Chugach National Forest to snowboard. Still to this day I hike, bike, snowboard, snowmobile, and dirt bike all over Alaska year-round, and 95% of the time I recreate south of Anchorage.

I am strongly opposed to any loss of winter motorized recreation opportunities in the Chugach National Forest. Restricting access would negatively impact my way of life and that of my future kids and family. As well, the economic impact on towns like Girdwood, Whittier, and Seward, to name a few would be devastating. Whether snowboarding in the Chugach via snowmobile or just snowmobiling, I personally spend a lot of money in these towns on gas, food, and lodging. I work for a powersports dealer in Anchorage and any decline in accessible areas to snowmobile would severely impact our business and our livelihood. Fewer places to ride would mean fewer snowmobiles being sold, fewer parts being sold and as a result fewer jobs being required. That being said, alternatives C and D are unacceptable.

I support Plan B, with amendments to open more areas to recreation. With the increase in backcountry recreation via snowmobile as a way for snowboarders, skiers, and hikers to gain deeper access into the backcountry an increase in available areas for all user groups is necessary. The impact of snowmobiles has decreased greatly over the years, with machines that are quieter, more fuel efficient, and cleaner running. Riders are now able to travel much farther into the backcountry and farther away from the road system separating motorized and non-motorized users, allowing all user groups to have their own desired experience in the mountains.

In my support of plan B with amendments, I suggest Mills Creek and Center Creek are opened to motorized use and the area above and to the south west of Whittier be included as an access corridor to Blackstone Bay. Motorized access corridors are the most logical way for users to gain access deeper into the backcountry and from a safety standpoint they could be very helpful in allowing access to first responders in emergency situations. The corridors at Snow River and 20 Mile currently allow access to all user groups.

In conclusion, with the snowfall that the Chugach National Forest receives, the advancements in motorized technology, and the number of backcountry enthusiasts there is no need to reduce land to motorized access or to designate any more land as wilderness. Having as much forest as possible to recreate in in Alaska is vital to the health and well being of Alaskans and allows us to continue a longstanding tradition and way of life we have come to love.

Thank you for giving us a chance to let our opinions be heard on this revision process. As I have stated, I fall into multiple user groups and just want the best interests of Alaskans to be met by allowing us to recreate in as much of the breathtaking Chugach National Forest as possible.

Thank you,

Carrie Aro