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Comments: 1. We recommend the Forest Service keep the language from the 1984 and 2002 Forest Plans to maintain the [ldquo]wilderness character[rdquo] of the Wilderness Study Area, instead of the proposed change to merely maintain the area's "existing character." We believe the original language best describes the natural, undeveloped, and remote conditions that are vital to recreation, tourism, commercial fishing, subsistence, and the use and enjoyment of one of Alaska[rsquo]s finest wilderness settings.

2. We urge the Forest Service to restore its successful program of monitoring conditions in the Wilderness Study Area. The draft plan omits this program, which includes monitoring air quality, invasives, recreation impacts, and other basic measures. After witnessing the changes in Prince William Sound following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill and the 2000 opening of the Whittier tunnel to vehicle traffic, among other changes, we know monitoring is vital to responsible management. Our organization can help engage public partners and resources in monitoring, but only if the Forest Service maintains its commitment to a defined monitoring program.

3. We urge the Forest Service to uphold the strongest conservation of the Prince William Sound parcels purchased as restoration following the Exxon Valdez oil spill, especially those within the Wilderness Study Area. These lands should be managed under the Wilderness Study Area prescription and [ldquo]in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes,[rdquo] as promised following the Exxon spill.

4. We support the proposed plan[rsquo]s goal to better enforce against illegal helicopter and drone use in the Wilderness Study Area, which protects the remote setting valued by so many Alaskans. But we encourage the Forest Service to address the recreational use of chainsaws, which every year senselessly damages picturesque beaches through the removal of both live trees and the historic [ldquo]ghost trees[rdquo] left by the 1964 earthquake. (We support use of chainsaws for ANILCA purposes such as subsistence)

5. We strongly support the proposed adoption of a Wilderness Study Area stewardship plan. It should include goals for invasive species treatment, campsite restoration, protection of sensitive sites, and other on-the-ground measures. Such a plan would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of organizations such as ours already working toward similar goals.

6. We thank the Forest Service for developing the Alternative D Wilderness Recommendation in response to the 2016 public input. We support this recommendation, but with the addition of the lands around Jackpot Bay and Knight Island that were purchased for conservation and wilderness purposes in the aftermath of the Exxon oil spill.

We believe our proposed improvements to the Chugach Forest Plan are necessary to sustain current protections through the years ahead, benefiting both the ecosystem and the people of Prince William Sound.