

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/30/2018 8:00:00 AM

First name: KEVIN

Last name: BENNETT

Organization:

Title:

Comments: In regards to the 2018 Chugach National Forest Draft Land Management Plan.

To whom it may concern:

I grew up in one of the best places in the world, Girdwood, Alaska. It's a small town surround by forests, glaciers and mountains. This place has one of the most amazing backyards, the Chugach National Forest. Over my lifetime my friends and I have created some amazing memories in this very special place I call Home.

After growing up skiing at all the local ski hills I wanted to access more terrain. I teamed up with some friends and learned the ropes of exploring the backcountry. This started by hiking the non-motorized side of Turnagain Pass to enjoy limited access ski lines. After reaching the top of a mountain peak one day I quickly realized how much terrain the eye can see and how much the CNF has to offer.

I looked over from the top of Tin Can and watched the seemingly effortless climb of the snowmachines across the valley. I started to dream of endless terrain that the motorized community enjoyed such quick and easy access too. They had the ability to travel to many areas and explore much further in one day then we could hiking in ten days. I wanted more then anything to get close these zones that seemed so distant.

As soon as I could drive I worked to get transportation and a snowmachine. I wanted to explore more of Alaska and all of its winter offerings. Some close friends who also enjoyed backcountry skiing linked me up with the local snowmachine group. I found myself helping with tech support in trade for learning the details about sleds.

Quickly tech support merged into helping with graphics and video editing. This group produced backcountry sledding films about riding in Alaska. These movies became known around the world and were idolized as some of the originals of the sport.

This energized a spike in backcountry snowmachine interest and inspired many people to explore and push the possibilities of this new sport. This was only a possibility because we had access to some of the terrain that is currently in question with this Draft Management Plan.

Now basing my travels from Anchorage, I bring my business to the following locations; Anchorage, Girdwood, Portage, Whittier, Moose Pass and Seward. I spend upwards of \$5,000-10,000 dollars a season at local restaurants, lodges, gas stations and snowmachine shops.

I frequently use the following winter motorized areas; Whittier, Placer River, Turnagain Pass, Johnson Pass, Trail Lake, Grandview, Snow River, Nellie Juan and Lost Lake. I am strongly opposed to any reduction of winter motorized recreation opportunity on the Chugach National Forest. Alternatives C and D are simply not acceptable alternatives. From what I've researched Alternative B is the least restrictive and seems like the best choice but with some minor modifications.

The additional land above and to the South West of Whittier, AK along the boundary of the WSA as proposed as "winter motorized allowed" in Alternative C be brought over and included in Alternative B as an access corridor to the Blackstone Area.

One thing that the Proposed Alternatives in the EIS do not address are the importance of, use of, and creation of new motorized access corridors such as South Fork of Snow River and 20 mile drainage. This is a modern forest management tool that could be utilized to allow motorized users to access other areas of the forest such as Mills Creek while keeping a "buffer" between other user groups.

Additionally, I don't feel it is appropriate to recommend any more acreage for Wilderness designation in this forest plan beyond what was recommended in 2002. This has the potential to displace snowmobilers in areas that we have enjoyed recreating in, some of which are extremely difficult to access without a snowmobile, boat, or helicopter. In addition, snowmobiles pose little to no impact on the forest when they operate in areas that have adequate snow cover.

Warmer winters have affected snowpack at lower elevations in the Chugach National Forest. The EIS and proposed plan do not bring solutions forward to address this issue. For example, Lost Lake (via Primrose or Firehouse Trail) is often closed to motorized use when there is adequate snow cover 500' up the trail. Construction of a slightly wider "winter route" trail could solve the issue. At other locations in the forest such as Johnson Pass, motorized use could be restricted to an existing road or trail until a point is reached with adequate snow cover.

In conclusion the access to lands is extremely important to me as an Alaskan resident. I am strongly opposed to losing any acres of the Chugach National forest to motorized use. Alternatives C and D as detailed in the EIS are not acceptable and at a minimum we should be able to maintain the areas we have today. As such, I am in support of Alternative B.

Thank you for considering my comments; I appreciate the opportunity to participate. If you have any questions or would like any further information my contact information is as follows.

Kevin Bennett

KB Design + Photo

907-202-5642

kbdesignphoto@gmail.com

kbdesignphoto.com

Attachment: Image

Attachment: Image

Attachment: Image

Attachment: Image

Attachment: Image

Attachment: Image