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First name: Barbara

Last name: Lydon

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Barbara Lydon

2018 Chugach National Forest Plan Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I applaud the Chugach NF for strengthening WSA management in response to the 2016 comments, and hope that the new forest plan will include the addition of an Alternative D Wilderness Recommendation. Additionally, I support the following improvements to the proposed Forest Plan:

* Maintain the [ldquo]wilderness character[rdquo] of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area.

Do not backtrack on over thirty years of clear policy to protect the wilderness character of the WSA by promising only to protect its [ldquo]existing character.[rdquo] Protecting the area[rsquo]s wilderness character is vital to maintaining healthy ecosystems and today[rsquo]s quiet, undeveloped conditions in western Prince William Sound.

*Restore the WSA to the Forest Monitoring Program described in Appendix A.

Monitoring in the WSA is necessary for informing the Forest Service about effective management, continued recovery of wilderness resources damaged during the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS), and growth in snow machine and other motorized uses.

*Include EVOS-acquired Lands in the WSA Management prescription.

Protect the lands within the WSA that were purchased by the federal government for restoration of wilderness resources following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill disaster. The lands should be included in the WSA Management prescription (MA1), not the weaker [ldquo]EVOS-acquired Lands[rdquo] (MA6) prescription. The Forest Plan needs to make clear these lands are to be managed [ldquo]in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes,[rdquo] as promised when they were purchased in the aftermath of the Exxon oil spill.

*Create Forest Orders to prohibit the use of helicopters, drones and chainsaws.

The Chugach NF must address ongoing recreational use of chainsaws in the WSA. Every year this activity results in senseless damage to picturesque beaches through the removal of live trees and the historic [ldquo]ghost trees[rdquo] left behind by the 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake. Additionally, helicopters and drones degrade wilderness character; we are seeing more of these out in PWS and their usage needs to be addressed.

*Support a modified Alternative D wilderness recommendation that also includes Lake Nellie Juan and the lands within the WSA boundary that were purchased for restoration of wilderness resources following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS). Not including the EVOS lands contradicts the commitment to manage them [ldquo]in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes.[rdquo] Continue to fine-tune WSA standards and guidelines so they protect the specific qualities of wilderness character, including its undeveloped and non-motorized natural settings. And adopt the Alternative D ROS map, which appropriately applies the Primitive standard to all WSA lands.

My family and I value the wilderness study area as a unique part of the Chugach National Forest. I hope that it can be protected in perpetuity so that my daughter, her children, and her children[rsquo]s children can experience the wild, primitive area of this unique landscape. Thank you for your consideration as you finalize this important plan that will provide direction for Chugach over the next 10-15 years.

Sincerely, Barbara Lydon

lydon_barbara@yahoo.com