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To Whom it May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Chugach Forest Service plan. We are a family owned business that operates in Prince William Sound from Whittier. Not only do we make our living in the Chugach National Forest, but more importantly, we have raised our family here. Through our business we have afforded thousands of visitors to our state to experience pristine wilderness, which is a rare opportunity for so many people in the world. The Wilderness Study Area is of most concern to us. It is a truly special and remarkable place and protecting Wilderness is of utmost importance. We are most pleased to see there is no intent to remove any area from the and the WSA in this plan.

We are encouraged and pleased that the Forest Service intends to continue to "maintain presently existing character" with the goal for the "potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System." We recommend, however that "character" be replaced with "wilderness character "to ensure the wilderness values are upheld.

We urge the Forest Service to restore its successful program of monitoring conditions in the Wilderness Study Area. The value of monitoring changes is so important to continue to insure wilderness values. If the goal is for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, then the information gathered from monitoring the area would be vital. We have witnessed many changes and stresses (natural and man-made) to Prince William Sound in recent history, and surely more are to come. Monitoring is essential to keep up on issues and, ultimately, is responsible management. Along with that we encourage the Forest Service adapt a stewardship plan for the WSA. This plan would account for; invasive species treatment, campsite restoration, protection of sensitive sites, and other on-the-ground measures. Partnerships with private citizen groups and companies who use and value the WSA would help with this endeavor.

We agree with the recommendation from the Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation in urging the Forest Service to uphold the strongest conservation of the Prince William Sound parcels purchased following the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The proposed removal of such lands in Jackpot Bay and Knight Island from Wilderness Study Area protections appears to contradict the intent of the purchases, which include restoring the wilderness services damaged by the oil spill disaster. We also strongly encourage including these parcels already within the boundaries of the Wilderness Study Area in the proposed Alternative D wilderness recommendation, which best represents the majority of public comment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kelly and Mike Bender