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Title:

Comments: City of Cordova Chugach Forest Plan Revision Comments

Attached Letter

Please accept these comments in objection to the US Forest Service's (USFS) Draft Land Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Chugach National Forest. Specifically, the City of Cordova objects to the anti-hatchery and anti-commercial use bias that appears to be prevalent throughout the document and encourages Chugach National Forest USFS leadership to solicit more substantive comments from commercial fishing industry and local stakeholders on this issue or reference science-based data or reports to substantiate comments before finalizing this process.

The City of Cordova supports and benefits greatly from Prince William Sound (PWS) salmon fisheries enhancement program (i.e. hatchery production) through the creation of local seafood processing jobs, fisheries business tax revenues, and increased commerce and seafood industry investment in our community. Further benefits to the area's recreational fishing industry resulting from PWS hatchery production are also accrued through the sale of sporting goods, custom processing, lodging, fuel, harbor moorage, floatplane charters, fishing charters and other purchases.

Further, the City of Cordova supports the unbiased and scientific methods to assess the interaction of Alaska's salmon hatchery programs with natural salmon stocks, such as the Alaska Hatchery-Wild Salmon Interaction study which began in 2011 and is scheduled to conclude in 2023. The City of Cordova and many other local stakeholders have been actively engaged in a review of the Prince William Sound area's hatchery program through the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) process, whereby Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and other fishery stakeholders have worked to increase the board's understanding of the importance of the Alaska salmon hatchery program to all Alaskans. Upon brief review of the Chugach National Forest Draft Land Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, it appears though more work should have been done as a part of these efforts to engage with USFS staff, as we believe that many of the anecdotes or misstatements currently in this document could have been informed with more recent and relevant resources and considerations.

The City of Cordova currently benefits from the many use opportunities on the forest for resident recreation opportunities and subsistence activities. However, commercial activities meet with strong institutional resistance in the form of length processing timelines or denials of special use permits for commercial activities ranging from guides and outfitters to renewable energy development to the harvest of forest woods, foods, and resources.

We appreciate the public outreach on this process, the extent to which you have incorporated comments to improve the language regarding use, and encourage an even more aggressive support of commercial activities that complement the independent adventure tourism base that is in character with the community and minimally impacts the forest and its resources.