**From:** Marybeth Holleman [mailto:marybeth.holleman@gmail.com]
**Sent:** Thursday, May 21, 2015 6:20 PM
**To:** Marceron, Terri -FS; FS-Chugach Forest Plan Revision
**Subject:** Wilderness Designation for CNF - Revision Phase II comments

Dear Terri Marceron:

Thanks for this opportunity to comment on the Revision Phase II stage of the Forest Plan Revision process for the Chugach National Forest.

I have been enjoying Chugach National Forest since moving to Alaska 29 years ago. My first summer was spent selling tickets on the Whittier Shuttle, and getting out on the waters of Prince William Sound as often as possible. I have continued to kayak, camp, hike, and ski in the Chugach Forest, and the presence of this national forest so near my home is what makes living in Alaska so wonderful. Most of my direct experience is in western Prince William Sound, and my comments reflect that.

What I value most is wilderness solitude, quiet non-motorized areas of use, non-consumptive use, and healthy vibrant wildlife populations.

Emerging issues in the forest are primarily from increased use, both by Alaska’s growing population and by the increase in tourism especially to Prince William Sound from the publicity from the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill and from increased access via the Anton Andersen tunnel. Prince William Sound in particular is increasingly at risk from degradation from over-use with little regulation and/or enforcement. And given that the ecosystem is still not fully recovered from the oil spill, even as it is also being affected by climate change, I am very concerned about this wilderness that I have loved and enjoyed for nearly three decades.

Perhaps the most important thing that the Forest Plan Revision can do to ameliorate this is to **recommend full wilderness protection for the WSA areas**. This would include not only the areas the USFS has most recently recommended, but would also include two very important areas that should most definitely be wilderness: Knight Island and Columbia Bay.

The plan should also **require the USFS to manage the WSA as Wilderness so as to protect wilderness values until it is fully designated as wilderness.** Otherwise, the USFS is allowing wilderness values to vanish, thus deciding de facto against wilderness designation. Clearly, this is not the intent of establishing a WSA. Protecting wilderness values means that any activity in WSA areas should be consistent with wilderness designation. An example of use which is not in keeping with wilderness resource values is the use of snowmachines, and a motorized access corridor, along the south fork of Snow River which allows access into portions of the WSA. The 2007 decision to create a motorized access corridor is therefore in complete conflict with managing the WSA as wilderness, and should be reversed.

As well, the plan should include any **regulatory and/or enforcement actions that would protect ecologically sensitive areas from overuse.** For example, I understand that the USFS has allowed mining exploration and development in upper Kings Bay. This remote area should be managed as wilderness, since it is currently part of the WSA, so the revision plan should not allow such activity in any part of the WSA.

I’ve also seen one type of overuse in many areas of the western Sound within the WSA. These areas, for example Gamaak Cove, are being degraded by overuse by large groups of kayakers. Large groups should be required to have special use permits, and their usage areas should be managed so that they don’t overuse any one area.

Another type of overuse that I and other frequent users, including water taxi operators, have seen as an increasing problem, is the **overharvest of black bears in western Prince William Sound**. As well, trapping along trails is of concern, given the danger to non-consumptive users. I understand that the state manages wildlife populations on USFS lands, but I also understand that the USFS does have some jurisdiction, and a mandate, to manage these lands for all users - including those of us who wish to view wild bears - and for ecosystem health. This goes doubly for the WSA, so that it is managed as wilderness. To that end, I urge the Forest Plan revision to include management options for dealing with this type of issue.

As far as other areas of the CNF, I recommend that **all eligible rivers be designated wild and scenic**, including the Copper, Martin, Bering, Katalla, Snow, and Resurrection Rivers, Alaganik Slough, Twentymile River complex, and Martin and Bering Lakes.

The Chugach National Forest, and especially Prince William Sound, is an astonishing place, truly one of the crown jewels of Alaska’s natural beauty. Given its proximity to most of Alaska’s population, it needs far more protection than it is currently receiving, so that future generations can experience the pristine wilderness and vital wildlife diversity that have drawn so many of us to live here.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

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Please sign my petition for Denali's wolves at: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/423/700/229/halt-the-killing-of-denali-national-park-wolves/>

Even after all this time, the sun never says to the earth, "You owe me." Look what happens with a love like that. It lights the whole sky.   ~Hafiz