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Comments: I am opposed to the USFS proposed plan for the Chugach which would reduce protections throughout the area and permanently remove protections from some of its most important places. This proposal would reduce protections that have been in place for decades and degrade the wilderness character of this magnificent Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The proposed Chugach plan would also unacceptably allow residential timber harvests, expanded motorized uses, manipulation of habitats, mining, and helicopter-assisted skiing and hiking. The Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area on the Chugach National Forest in Alaska's western Prince William Sound is an ecological and scenic treasure. It is two million acres of ancient rainforest, wild salmon, and stunning mountains and glaciers. Its meandering fiords are laced with hundreds of remote islands. And the area is critical to Alaskans, for subsistence, commercial fishing, recreation, and the tourism industry. It is also a unique and special place for solitude and non-destructive outdoor recreation and camping.

I respectfully request that:

The USFS protect and keep the entire 1.9 million eligible acres of the WSA and surrounding roadless lands eligible for wilderness designation as Wilderness. Do not abandon protection for the nearly 600,000 acres which the proposal would unacceptably eliminate from the WSA.

The USFS keep its longstanding promise to protect the wild character of the entire WSA until Congress finalizes its protection. This means maintaining and clarifying rules on all land-based motorized uses including chain saw use and preserving the area's current undeveloped and non-motorized character.

The USFS reconsider and remove the highly destructive recommendation to divide the WSA into two smaller units. This proposal is neither sound management nor protective. This would fragment wildlife habitat allow increased intrusions and dramatically shrink the area by permanently stripping long-established protections for Knight Island, Columbia Glacier, Perry Island, Glacier Island, Culross Island, Esther Island, Port Wells, mainland Knight Island Passage, and Lake Nellie Juan.

The USFS prohibit recreational snowmobile use in the WSA. Snowmobile use has exploded in the WSA in recent years. Snow machines for subsistence and traditional uses may be allowed, but recreational snowmobile use should not be.

The USFS manage the WSA following the Forest Service's Regional Office WSA direction, since ANILCA contains no substantive guidance on WSA protection.

In the Chugach National Forest, the Forest Service is entrusted to manage some of Alaska's most treasured wild lands in the Congressionally-designated 2 million-acre Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA. Changes that would allow residential timber harvests, expanded motorized uses, manipulation of habitats, mining, and helicopter-assisted skiing and hiking-would seriously harm and degrade this beautiful WSA. The proposal defies common sense. Instead, the USFS should maintain current protections and recommend to Congress its perpetuation. This world-class wild area deserves permanent protection now and far into the future.

I ask the USFS to protect this area, withdraw the proposals for withdrawing acreage or protections and implement management that protects and recommend this WSA for permanent inclusion in our wilderness system.