

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/16/2016 12:51:38 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: These comments are directed to the Forest Plan Revision Team:

I am an Anchorage resident and recreate in a variety of locations within the Chugach National Forest. One of the primary reasons I moved to Alaska in 2007 was for the opportunities to recreate in wild places close to Anchorage. I ski, hike, sea-kayak and mountain bike in the Chugach National Forest. I have two principal concerns.

My first comment focuses on the lack of proposed wilderness designation. The Revised Forest Service Plan for the Chugach fails to include recommending a single acre of designated Wilderness in the almost entirely wild 5 million acre Chugach National Forest. Currently, there are a total of 2 million acres of Congressionally designated Wilderness Study Area ("WSA"), but the Forest Service is proposing to delete 600,000 acres of the WSA from its Wilderness recommendation. I seek out solitude and quiet and value those wilderness attributes protected in the Chugach National Forest as a WSA. I have taken trips to Nellie Juan fjords to sea-kayak precisely because of its wild nature. The deleted WSA acreage includes many beautiful destinations in Prince William Sound, including Lake Nellie Juan. Instead of removing WSA areas, I recommend that the Forest Service propose the entire WSA to be designated Wilderness.

My second comment focuses on the importance of preserving the opportunity for recreation free of man-made sounds (like those from motorized vehicles). Recreating in the National Forest is something I do throughout the winter and summer. Being able to recreate - mostly ski - during the winter in the Turnagain Pass area is important to me. While snowmachine use is limited, the noise impact extends far beyond the areas where snowmachines are allowed. It can be incredibly difficult to get away from the sound of snowmachines when backcountry skiing. I have also skied outside of Whittier, where snowmachines were prevalent. While the scenery was outstanding, the noise of the snowmachines greatly reduces the outdoor experience. Having the opportunity to recreate and experience both natural sounds and quiet is important to me. I look to the Chugach National Forest as a place where I should be able to have such quiet experiences. Snowmachines should not be allowed in any WSAs. In addition, helicopter-assisted skiing and hiking should be limited and not allowed on lands managed as Wilderness.

In sum, I recommend that:

1. No areas be removed from those currently designated as WSA.
2. All areas in the WSA be classified as "Primitive."
3. The entire WSA be recommended to Congress for Wilderness designation, or that at least Knight Island, Columbia Glacier, Perry Island, Esther Island, Port Wells, College Fiord, Lake Nellie Juan, and the mainland along Knight Island be added to those lands already included in the 2002 recommendation.
4. The Copper River/Bering River area should be protected.
5. The Forest Service should recommend that the Forest be withdrawn from mineral and forestry activity.
6. The Forest Service should recommend Wild and Scenic River designations.
7. The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) Restoration mandate for the region must be upheld and strictly adhered to.
8. The Plan should include additional non-motorized areas in the Kenai Peninsula, with both summer and wintertime limitations.
9. The Plan should include greater restrictions on snowmachines to address the noise impacts and reduce the impact to those that seek quiet in the National Forest. This may require additional noise studies to determine the extent of snowmachine created sound and its impacts on those engaged in non-motorized activities.

Thank you,

Brian Litmans