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Comments:

February 16, 2016

Ms. Terri Marceron, Forest Supervisor

Chugach National Forest

U.S. Forest Service

161 East 1st Ave., Door 8

Anchorage, AK 99501

RE: Comments on Chugach National Forest Plan Revision

Dear Supervisor Marceron:

With this letter, I am providing my personal comments on the revision of the Chugach National Forest Plan. I am a retired wildlife ecologist living in Anchorage. I worked for 20 years with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Juneau, Fairbanks, and Anchorage and then nearly 15 years with Audubon Alaska. I have been involved in wildlife studies on both the Tongass and Chugach forests and have previously participated professionally in reviewing both forest plans. I currently live in Anchorage and my family and I regularly recreate in the Chugach Forest including cruising in Prince William Sound on our boat during the summer. I value the opportunity to comment on the Chugach Plan Revision.

As the nation's second largest national forest, the Chugach is also one of our most scenic and wildest forests. The recent history of the Chugach was to focus management of this forest on its fish, wildlife, and recreational values. I believe this makes much sense and will provide many Americans, including local Alaskans, the opportunity to hunt, fish, live a subsistence life style, and recreate sustainably in this spectacular rainforest ecosystem. The economic values of the Chugach, Prince William Sound, and the Copper River Delta are immense and highly sustainable as we have seen from the robust sport and commercial fisheries of the area as well as a growing and diverse tourism industry.

Having reviewed the draft plan, I would like to offer the following recommendations.

I strongly recommend maintaining the original boundaries of the Western Prince William Sound Wilderness Study Area and encourage the Forest Service to continue to manage this area as Wilderness. Removing areas like Knight Island, Columbia Glacier, and Harriman Fjord would significantly diminish this areas integrity. I also recommend managing the Copper River Delta with a focus on maintaining its ecological productivity as a major salmon spawning and rearing area and as one of the most important shorebird habitats on the Pacific Coast. I have visited all of these areas and plan to recreationally use these incredible areas in the future. I recall that during ANILCA, the City of Seward strongly and officially objected to the designation of Kenai Fjords National Park. About ten years ago, the City of Seward reversed itself on that resolution recognizing that Kenai Fjords had become a major tourism draw and significant economic driver for their community. I believe that Prince William Sound has incredible value to Alaska and the nation as a valuable wilderness resources with sustainable economic values (e.g., commercial and sport fishing, recreation, tourism, etc.) for generations to come.

To protect the sustainable ecological, scenic, and recreational values of Prince William Sound, I recommend continuing to manage this area as if it were an ANILCA Wilderness. I noted that the proposed plan would allow personal use logging to occur in areas of the western sound. I think that would be inappropriate and would risk degrading the ecological and recreational values of this ecologically valuable area. Allowing use of firewood for campers and others recreating in this area is one thing but allowing logging for personal or commercial use is something entirely different and not compatible with maintaining the region's wilderness character.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important plan.

Sincerely, John W. Schoen