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First name: Catherine

Last name: Woods Roeterink

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Catherine Woods and I am a third generation Alaskan with strong ties to Prince William Sound. My grandfather was a vessel pilot helping ships to safely enter Prince William Sound with supplies for Pipeline Construction. My parents took me and my siblings boating in Prince William Sound throughout my childhood. I am a former boat-owner who frequently traveled the Sound based out of Whittier. The quiet bays, beaches, and undisturbed nature of the Sound were a child's (and later an adult's) paradise. PWS is a local and national treasure, and the developments that have come to the Sound since the opening of the Whittier Tunnel in 2000 threaten the very nature of this wilderness paradise that I love.

Since the opening of the 2000 Whittier Tunnel, there has been increased recreational and hunting use, unauthorized structures and littering, human sanitation problems at crowded campsites, illegal chainsaw use, and overhunting of black bears, largely through bait stations that can leave an ugly mess.

I would like to recommend that all of the wilderness study area be designated as formal wilderness, along with 10 rivers identified for inclusion under the National Wild and Scenic River System.

I would like to urge the Forest Service to strengthen its current protections for the wilderness study area. The vast majority of this region is primitive in nature: roadless, wild, spectacular. The Forest Service should maintain the wilderness character of this world-class area. Instead of caving into special interests, and chipping away valuable acres of the study area -- such as Knight Island and Glacier Island -- the Forest Service should do all it can to protect one of Alaska's greatest wild treasures.

I would urge the Forest Service to:

- *Recommit to the long-standing Alaska Region policy to preserve the area's wilderness character, with clear language to leave it undeveloped, untrammelled and nonmotorized (boats, airplanes and snowmachines traffic would continue under ANILCA's "traditional activities").

- *Follow the 1994 Exxon Valdez oil spill recovery plan's goals to restore the Sound's recreation, wilderness and conservation values.

- *Recommend Congress permanently protect Knight Island and the rest of the wilderness study area to secure today's protections for the future;

- *Recommend purchase of subsurface estate on all Exxon Valdez oil spill acquired lands and manage them for conservation and wilderness purposes, as stipulated in the purchase agreements.

Prince William Sound is a national treasure. Please preserve it for current and future generations.

Thank you.