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First name: Patricia

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Sir:

The Congressionally-designated Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) on the Chugach National Forest in Alaska's western Prince William Sound is an ecological and scenic treasure. It is an area that is critical to Alaskans, for subsistence, commercial fishing, recreation, and the local tourism industry. It is also a great place to visit by yourself or with the family.

The recently released proposed plan for the Chugach to loosen protections throughout the area and permanently remove protections from some of its most important places is a very detrimental idea. These proposals change protections that have been in place for almost forty years and will hurt the wilderness character of this magnificent WSA. The proposed Chugach plan would also allow residential timber harvests, expanded motorized uses, manipulation of habitats, mining, and helicopter-assisted skiing and hiking.

I strongly oppose the proposed loosening of protections for the Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA.

I am requesting that the Chugach National Forest consider the following:

- * Please keep your longstanding promise to protect the wild character of the entire Wilderness Study Area until Congress finalizes its protection. This means maintaining and clarifying rules on all land-based motorized uses-including chainsaw use-and preserving the area's current undeveloped and non-motorized character.

- * Please recommend the 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 you propose to eliminate from the WSA.

- * Please reverse the terrible recommendation to split the Wilderness Study Area into two smaller units. This would 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.

- * Please 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 is not.

The management of the WSA should follow 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. Changing that now-by allowing residential timber harvests, expanded motorized uses, manipulation of habitats, mining, and helicopter-assisted skiing and hiking-would harm this beautiful Wilderness Study Area. It defies common sense. Instead, the Forest Service should maintain current protections and recommend to Congress its perpetuation into the future. This world-class wild area deserves permanent protection now and far into the future!

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment. Sincerely, Patricia Dishman