

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/19/2016 5:39:41 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: February 18th, 2016

Attn: Chugach National Forest Service

Re: Chugach Forest Plan Revision #40816

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Chugach Forest Plan Revision, #40816. In short, I have some concerns about the proposed revision, and do not support what is diminished protections and the removal of wilderness study designations.

The wilderness quality of Prince William Sound (PWS) and the Chugach National Forest is what initially drew me to this area. I spent my first several summers in Alaska (I've been a year round resident since 2006 in Valdez) working as a commercial kayak guide for one of the local outfitters. It was amazing to share the wilderness quality of Prince William Sound with guests, and see them leave refreshed, inspired, and knowing that they had a unique experience in a special place. A place that is truly unique and could not be found elsewhere. I fear stripping back the current wilderness study area designations would negatively impact those experiences, and impact what is a sustainable tourism industry. People expect "wilderness" when visiting, and this is already challenged enough, particularly in Western PWS.

Additionally, these PWS wilderness study designations, and generally lightly tread landscape, provide good upland habitats which are essential for supporting the commercial fishing industry which brings a significant amount of jobs (including me one summer seining in PWS in 2008) and money to the PWS area and State as a whole. Again, when people buy Alaska salmon for example, they expect a certain "wilderness" standard, not a product marred with debates over logging and land use, fish farming and dyed red meat, and dams and salmon ladders for example. The current protections are essential for these incredibly productive and well managed commercial fisheries to survive. Additionally, the current protections support the sport fishing industry, which in addition to jobs and tourism dollars is a large source of yearly foodstuffs for many of us, and very subsistence in nature.

With growing concerns over large scale ocean warming and acidification, climate change, and increased human activity, these Wilderness study area designations need to remain intact even more. And if anything see additional protections in order to allow for natural processes to play out as they have been for eons, and in turn help support those less protected areas around them. This wilderness quality is what gives the Chugach National Forest the charm, mystique, and raw character it is known for. And ultimately adds to our cultural identity, and what it means to live and identify yourself as an Alaskan, and in particular a member of one of the communities on the edge of PWS.

Other points I want to impress upon planners:

The Columbia Glacier area in particular is in many ways the heart of the Chugach. Columbia Glacier is incredibly unique even from a global perspective, a huge tourism draw, and experiencing radical changes in ice mass loss. It should remain a wilderness study area at minimum, or perhaps even more than the other areas in PWS, receive full-on wilderness designation in my opinion.

I do not support the personal use wood cutting modifications despite their known inconsistency with other Forest

Service planning and management doctrine.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed plan. I trust my concerns will be considered as the Forest Service works towards a final management plan.

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