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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for the significant effort at undertaking the management plan for the Chugach National Forest. We understand and value what a challenge it is to adapt forest use to the wide variety of Goals established for it, and to do so looking into an uncertain future. We hope you consider our comments as thankful participation in the process.

The proposed language states:

"Land management planning guides the Forest Service to fulfilling its stewardship responsibilities under the sustainable, multiple-use management concept, which is to meet the diverse needs of the American people and to protect the resources of the national forest. Sustainable, multiple-use management means that various activities that have social or economic values may take place within the national forest, while ecosystem processes and biological characteristics remain intact and functional over time.

We propose modifying the language to reflect the importance of managing business activities so that they can be sustainable; rather than "activities that have social or economic values may take place", say "social or economic activities that are compatible with multiple-use management should be managed that they can also remain intact and functional over time". "Additionally, climate change may affect the timing, location, and ability to pursue some recreational activities (i.e., changing water levels for rafting, availability of fishing opportunities, and lack of snow at trailheads for skiing and snowmachining)."

Due to the incredibly harsh vegetation of warm winter low lands (i.e. not snow covered) the importance of building access trails for non-motorized use will become increasingly important. In areas where building access trails is unsuitable, aircraft access for winter recreation should be maintained, where it does not conflict with other management goals. In these areas, aircraft access may be one of the only means for recreational access.

Building on the premise that aircraft might be a critical form of recreational access to the land, land managers should maintain the privilege, should they deem it necessary, to open motorized areas to guided helicopter skiing, but seasonally close them to snowmachine use. Helicopter skiing occurs almost exclusively as a commercial activity because it is generally only affordable with the coordination of an outfitter. It is also an activity cherished by local and international skiers and snowboarders alike. Within certain motorized areas, interaction of snowmachines and helicopter skiers can create safety issues and user experience conflicts. Due rapid and ongoing progress of snowmachine capability, the effective range of those machines could dramatically expand during the lifespan of the current forest plan. In a general sense, this foreseeable management challenge should be considered, and language should be adopted to give land managers tools to facilitate the safe, enjoyable, and economically stimulating use of the forest that commercial helicopter skiing provides.

The area of Center and Divide Creeks has been one such area where seasonal helicopter use has been allowed and winter motorized use has been prohibited. This small area is the only area south of the Turnagain arm that can't be legally accessed by snowmachines

I have been an employee of Chugach Powder Guides for a 9 years, employment with CPG is the reason I moved to the wonderful state of Alaska. Helicopter ski guiding is my career and I hope it to be for years to come. I believe that the Center Creek Divide area is a keystone for our business. As an avid and enthusiastic snowmachine rider I have seen the improvement of machines greatly increase the the terrain accessible by both experienced and unexperienced riders. I believe that land managers maintaining the privilege, to open motorized areas to guided helicopter skiing, but seasonally close them to snowmachine use is critical to our business.

Sincerely,
Rich Peterson
Chugach Powder Guides