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Organization:

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Comments: We are newcomers to Alaska, after arriving here in May 2013, but we are not newcomers to the wilderness. Before Alaska, we spent twenty-five years running expedition charter boats in the Antarctic and the Antarctic island of South Georgia, and have sailed to Greenland, through the Chilean Channels, and around South Island, New Zealand.

## A World-Class Wilderness

Our arrival in Prince William Sound took our breath away. It is one of the finest wildernesses we have ever had the privilege to work, and yet, it is accessible to urban Anchorage. Other parts of the world have had to surround themselves by the raging gales of the Southern Ocean to maintain such a protection. Instead, Prince William Sound and the Chugach Forest depend on the stewardship of the Forest Service to maintain this sliver of wilderness.

An article in the Wall Street Journal last week (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/south-georgia-island-a-wilderness-replenished-1454688892>) lauds the success of the British Government in South Georgia in preserving the wilderness, and restoring wildlife after the batterings of commercial sealing and unregulated whaling and fishing. Shouldn't we be equally proud of the efforts of recovery in Prince William Sound? The Sound is recovering from the Exxon Valdez oil spill and boasts one of the most valuable and well-regulated fisheries in the world. It is a working eco-system that brings both revenue value and breathtaking beauty. Increased motorized traffic, fuel docks, lodging, logging, and other commercialization threatens both those assets.

Last summer, we had a BBC natural history unit producer on board. She has worked in South Georgia, Africa, Antarctica, Arctic Canada - just about every place where you can find wilderness remaining. At the end of a week in Prince William Sound, watching salmon, whales, bears, eagles, and climbing mountains, she said, "This place rivals South Georgia," which is widely regarded as one of the most pristine wilderness regions in the world.

## Effects of Motorized Transport and Logging

We mustn't throw that away. We can see the effects of logging in the Sound: erosion, lack of wildlife, new growth forest which doesn't provide the same environment. Any logging or motorized activity in the Chugach would heavily impact coastal regions, which are currently experiencing extreme pressures, from both the vagaries of the "Blob" in the north Pacific, which may be implicated in the murre die-off, and the logging on private lands. Black bear season closed early this year - we are not maintaining a working system, even when hunters have to walk up the hill. Allowing four-wheeler access would put more pressure on the system.

The commercial fishing of Prince William Sound supports the surrounding communities, the beauty and silence of the Sound supports the quest of Anchorage citizens to find nature and catch a few fish, to kayak, and to hike. The rich wildlife of the region relies on the expanse of undisturbed land and water. It is the job of the Forest Service to protect and maintain this oasis in a world of urban and suburbanization, to preserve the wilderness for future generations. The Forest Service's mission is "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." (<http://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency>) While we recognize that in some National Forests this can include logging, in the Chugach, with its inaccessibility and high mountains, the only viable logging is on the shoreline, and logging this precious border region would have far more impact on the beauty, wildlife, and commercial fishing than might be imagined from its small percentage of the 7 million acres of Chugach forest.

Please reconsider this revision of land management for the Chugach National Forest.

sincerely yours Kate and Hamish Laird