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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Michael S. O'Meara

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February 18, 2015

Chugach National Forest

161 East 1st. Avenue, Door 8

Anchorage, Alaska 99603

chugachplanrevision@fs.fed.us

Attn: Terri Marceron, Forest Supervisor

Re: Proposed Revised Land Management Plan

Dear Ms Marceron:

I've been a frequent recreational user of the Chugach National Forest since arriving in Alaska in 1969. I value its natural character and enjoy the solitude of hiking and skiing the undeveloped backcountry.

Unfortunately, over the years, this has become ever more difficult due to the dramatic increase and relatively unconstrained use of mechanized forms of recreation. Let me be forthright, my review of the Proposed Revised Land Management Plan has left me disappointed and more than a little concerned for the future health of the our Chugach National Forest. It's pretty clear that for whatever reasons, the Forest Service has ignored my previous comments (October 17, 2013 and July 14, 2015) regarding many significant management concerns. That's not to say that I find nothing of merit in this proposal and I do understand and appreciate the efforts Forest Service staff has put into the effort.

Nonetheless, I'll focus here on some of the changes I would like to see made in the present proposal.

As I read the proposed revision, protections for the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) would be reduced from those in the

2002 plan. Until a decision by Congress to confirm the area or parts of it as wilderness, it is your responsibility to manage the whole study area as consistent with the Wilderness Act. That means protecting the wilderness character as it was at the time of the WSA's designation.

It's pretty clear that this hasn't been happening and if the proposed management revisions are adopted conditions on the ground and in the water will continue to deteriorate. Under the the present proposal a variety of potentially destructive changes would apply, including but not limited to:

Personal use logging,

Manipulation of soils, vegetation, water resources, and fish habitat, Construction of fish hatcheries, dams, weirs, fish ladders, and other structures, Expanded use of all forms of mechanized transport.

None of this should be allowed to occur except, perhaps, for very limited use of snowmachines for so-called "subsistence" harvesting.

Recreational snowmachine or ATV use should not be allowed in the WSA under the guise of being "traditional use."

The WSA should not be subdivided into smaller units. Rather, all lands recommended for wilderness protections

in the 2002 plan should be recommended now for Congressional approval of permanent wilderness status.

I understand that the Forest Service will be updating its Winter Travel Management Plan after the forest plan revision process. This is encouraging. It is vital that the Forest Service make an effort to get a handle on the growing problem of user conflicts. Better guidelines governing large group, commercial, and mechanized recreation throughout the Chugach are needed. Without them and improved enforcement, user conflicts will continue to increase as population and forest use grows.

It is my hope that you will reconsider changing the proposed plan as I've suggested. It was very clear from the public testimony at recent meetings in Anchorage that I am not alone in my concerns.

Sincerely,

Michael S. O'Meara