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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern, regarding the Chugach National Forest's Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area:

I am a former visitor to the Chugach National forest, and as someone who came away appreciative and in awe from the experience, I have tried to keep up with developments in the management of wild Alaska. After hearing of the USFS' new proposed plan for the Forest's Wilderness Study Area, and then reading the report itself, I would like to make the following comments and recommendations:

I urge you to 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.

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.

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.

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.

Management of the WSA should follow the Forest Service's Regional Office WSA direction, since ANILCA contains no substantive guidance on WSA protection.

The Forest Service should not implement any plan that would allow residential timber harvests, expanded motorized uses and manipulation of habitats, mining, and/or helicopter-assisted skiing and hiking. Wilderness is a finite and ever-appreciating resource in today's world, and the special qualities of Alaska's wild lands are something it should hold in trust for future generations to enjoy, as I and many others have. The most crucial elements that elevate it above other places in "the lower 48" are the very lack of timber cutting, mining, helicopters and other motorized vehicles that this proposed plan threatens to introduce to the Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA.

Thank you for reading and carefully considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Tim Lawnicki