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First name: Suzanne

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear National Forest Service,

February 19, 2016

I am writing in regards to the Chugach Forest Plan Revision #40816. It is my understanding there are areas of the new revision plan that are not clear or specific enough when addressing the perimeters and level of protection in the Congressionally-designated Wilderness Study Area (WSA), specifically the 2 million-acre Nellie-Juan Fjord WSA, which has existed since 1980. This area is pristine and has been treaded upon very lightly by man thus far. The WSA is home to unique and flourishing ecosystems which should remain a rare privilege for human traffic and a basic right to native peoples, so as not to disrupt these fragile systems further.

As it stands, and has for thousands of years, there are prosperous native villages dependent upon the WSA's rich resources for subsistence living. This should take precedence over future logging or mining proposals, as wells as allowing increased motorized traffic (including snow machines, four wheelers, chainsaws, helicopters, and drones). The United States Forest Service (USFS) should maintain current protections of the WSA, which by USFS Alaska Region policy have been based Wilderness Act, with Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) provisions.

The WSA is an incredible opportunity to be a long living and thriving example of our appreciation for our earth and the myriad creatures besides ourselves that inhabit it. It is evident many parts of the world that were once untouched have been degraded by man's consumption to a point beyond repair and restoration. The Nellie-Juan Fjord WSA is a gift to us all who live here and all who visit to appreciate and enjoy as it is and has been for the past 40 years, with the highest level of protection by the USFS. Therefore, the USFS should recommend to Congress continued and permanent protection of the entire WSA, including Knight Island, Glacier Island, Erlington Island, Perry Island, Esther Island, Columbia Glacier, Lake Nellie Juan, Port Wells, and the mainland along Knight Island Passage. In addition, the USFS should clearly state WSA policy on ground and air-based motorized equipment, limiting such and by all means NOT increasing access! Again, the WSA is entirely too delicate in wilderness character to withstand motorized traffic of any kind other than that minimally necessary for designated subsistence living by local Alaska Natives.

Finally, the USFS should follow 1994 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Recovery Plan's intent to protect conservation, recreation, fishing, and wilderness values of Prince William Sound. These areas are home to small business owners and families who rely on the area's wilderness character for recreational tours which operate to share the privilege of being in the WSA in as noninvasive ways as possible. As well as to share the purity of these environments for many future generations to come.

I thank you kindly for your time and efforts regarding the revisions to the WSA. I look forward to seeing the specific designations of WSA that are currently in place in the final revision and also the use of clear language identifying motorized activities mentioned above as being off limits in the Nellie-Juan Fjord WSA.

Sincerely,

Suzanne M. Schafer

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