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Organization:

Title:

Comments: February 19, 2016

Chugach National Forest Supervisor's Office

161 East 1st Street, Door 8

Anchorage, AK 99501

Via Email To: chugachplanrevision@fs.fed.us

Re: Forest Plan Revision

Dear Forest Service Planners:

I write to comment on the Proposed Revised Land Management Plan for Chugach National Forest.

Some of my early trips after I moved to Alaska in 1990 were to Prince William Sound and the Chugach National Forest. So much has changed, and much of it was brought about by a lack of serious consideration of what infrastructure and modern recreational toys make possible. I am speaking, of course, of the road to Whittier, but also to modern snowmachines and jet skies.

After a long absence, I traveled in the Chugach National Forest and in Prince William Sound last summer, and I was amazed and appalled with the changes I saw. I saw only 2 bears- a scrawny brown bear and a small black bear. I was told that the bears were being over hunted because the area is now so accessible from Anchorage. I was also told that black bears are not even considered game animals, and there are no limitations on hunting them. I know that these factors come under the jurisdiction of Alaska Fish & Game, but it's very important that the Wilderness Study Area and Wilderness Recommendation be managed to support healthy brown and black bear populations.

My first comment on the plan is that it is not apparent from the website exactly what the Forest Service wants us to comment on. The maps are confusing, and I can't tell what changes the plan will propose as designated wilderness. As I understand it there is a 2 million acre Wilderness Study Area, and the Forest Service either did remove or considered removing or is now considering a recommendation to remove about 600 thousand acres from it's Wilderness recommendation. I support keeping the entire 2 million acres in the Wilderness recommendation, and managing the entire 2 million acres as wilderness.

Second, I oppose allowing motorized vehicles in the Wilderness Study Area and/or the Forest Service's recommended wilderness. I think the Forest Service's interpretation of ANILCA is incorrect. ANILCA does not allow motorized use for nontraditional activities and recreational snowmachining and jet skiing is not a traditional use in this area. Traditional use applies to a pre-ANILCA timeframe and that does not fit the Wilderness Study Area. Recreational snowmachining should be prohibited in the Wilderness Study Area and in the recommended Wilderness.

Outside the WSA, recreational snowmachining should be allowed, but there needs to be a balance between motorized and non-motorized uses. Motorized uses are incompatible with non-motorized uses for both safety and aesthetic reasons. There needs to be more work to balance motorized and non-motorized areas.

Third, I oppose allowing helicopters to fly in skiers and hikers in the Wilderness Study Area and the

recommended Wilderness. Helicopters make a lot of noise. If helicopters are allowed, there should be a required permit, and the number of helicopters allowed should be limited, and the limitation would have to be based on the impact to the Wilderness and users in the Wilderness rather than based on the demand of skiers, hikers, and helicopter operators. Overall, it would be better to not to allow this use because it will be difficult to managed and contain as populations grow and demand increases.

Fourth, I am concerned with the adaptive management concept. For example, does the sentence "It is intended to be adaptive, in that new knowledge and information can be reviewed and the plan changed, if appropriate, at any time." mean that the plan can be reviewed and changed without a public process. I think that is a very bad idea.

Overall, I ask the Forest Service to make protecting wilderness values, concentrating on maintaining a healthy ecosystem, its overall management priority. I mean that keeping the wilderness wild and natural and whole is more important than access, and access should only be a factor in management when it can be done without harming the wilderness values.

Thanks for your attention to my comments.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ruth D. Wood

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