

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/26/2016 12:00:00 AM

First name: Paul

Last name: Forward

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mary Rasmussen,

I apologize for missing the public comment period but saw on the website today that there I can submit comments to this email. Thank you in advance for all of your work on the Revision Plan and for taking the time to read through the comments.

I grew up in Eagle River and have shaped my life around living, working and playing in southcentral Alaska. For the past four years I've worked as a full time heli ski guide for Chugach Powder Guides in Girdwood where I now own a small home and plan to raise my family. I am also an avid backcountry skier, whitewater kayaker, mountain biker, hunter, fisherman and snowmachiner. As a result, I have spent many of the most valuable and formative years of my life recreating and working on National Forest land.

I've spent some time trying to better understand the Revision Plan and have noticed a few things that I think are important.

On Page 2, the proposed language states,

"Land management planning guides the Forest Service to fulfilling its stewardship responsibilities under the sustainable, multiple-use management concept, which is to meet the diverse needs of the American people and to protect the resources of the national forest. Sustainable, multiple-use management means that various activities that have social or economic values may take place within the national forest, while ecosystem processes and biological characteristics remain intact and functional over time.

I've talked about this a lot with the other folks and CPG who propose modifying the language to reflect the importance of managing business activities so that they can be sustainable; rather than "activities that have social or economic values may take place", say "social or economic activities that are compatible with multiple-use management should be managed that they can also remain intact and functional over time".

Another line that is of particular interest to me is, "Additionally, climate change may affect the timing, location, and ability to pursue some recreational activities (i.e., changing water levels for rafting, availability of fishing opportunities, and lack of snow at trailheads for skiing and snowmachining)."

Because of the thick, difficult to travel vegetation of warm winter low lands (i.e. not snow covered) the importance of building access trails for non-motorized use will become increasingly important. In areas where building access trails is unsuitable, aircraft access for winter recreation should be maintained, where it does not conflict with other management goals. In these areas, aircraft access may be one of the only means for recreational access.

Building on the premise that aircraft might be a critical form of recreational access to the land, land managers should maintain the privilege, should they deem it necessary, to open motorized areas to guided helicopter skiing, but seasonally close them to snowmachine use. As a snowmachiner, this is difficult to accept for me but I think it's the most appropriate option based on my experience in this terrain. Helicopter skiing occurs almost exclusively as a commercial activity because it is generally only affordable with the coordination of an outfitter. It is also an activity cherished by both locals and skiers/snowboarders from all over the USA and the world. Within certain motorized areas, interaction of snowmachines and helicopter skiers can create safety issues and user experience conflicts. Due rapid and ongoing progress of snowmachine capability, the effective range of those machines could dramatically expand during the lifespan of the current forest plan. In a general sense, this

foreseeable management challenge should be considered, and language should be adopted to give land managers tools to facilitate the safe, enjoyable, and economically stimulating use of the forest that commercial helicopter skiing provides.

The area of Center and Divide Creeks has been one such area where seasonal helicopter use has been allowed and winter motorized use has been prohibited. This small area is the only area south of the Turnagain arm that can't be legally accessed by snowmachines .

Thank you so much for taking the time to read through all of that and for your time on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Paul A Forward
Girdwood, AK