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Comments:

I have been to the Forest and it must be managed so as to protect and preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Thank you strengthening WSA management in response to 2016 comments.

Please continue the good work by making the following improvements to the proposed Forest Plan:

Do not backtrack on over thirty years of clear policy to protect the wilderness character of the WSA by promising only to protect its "existing character." "Existing character" alone is not meaningful. It is the area's "Wilderness character" that must be preserved. Protecting the area's wilderness character is vital to maintaining healthy ecosystems and remote, undeveloped conditions in western Prince William Sound.

Restore the WSA to the Forest Monitoring Program described in Appendix A. Monitoring wilderness character in the WSA is necessary for informing the Forest Service about effective management and continued recovery of wilderness resources damaged during the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS).

Restore strong protection to the lands within the WSA that were purchased by the federal government for restoration of wilderness resources following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. Do NOT move these lands from the WSA Management prescription (MA1) to the weaker "EVOS-acquired Lands" (MA6) prescription. The Forest Plan needs to make clear these lands are to be managed "in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes," as promised when they were purchased after the Exxon oil spill.

The Chugach NF must address ongoing recreational use of chainsaws in the WSA. The activity is not permissible by law and every year results in senseless damage to picturesque beaches through the removal of live trees and historic "ghost trees" left behind by the 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake.

Continue to fine-tune WSA standards and guidelines so they protect the specific qualities of wilderness character, and adopt the Alternative D ROS map, which appropriately applies the Primitive standard to all WSA lands.

We support a modified Alternative D wilderness recommendation that also includes Lake Nellie Juan and the lands within the WSA boundary that were purchased for restoration of wilderness resources following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS). Not including the EVOS lands in the wilderness recommendation contradicts the commitment to manage them "in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes."