

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/24/2018 8:18:58 PM

First name: mae

Last name: basye

Organization:

Title:

Comments: While the 6.9 million-acre Chugach does not yet have a single acre of designated Wilderness, the National Forest does have the spectacular, Congressionally-designated Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area, which is an ecological and scenic treasure. The Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA is nearly two million acres of ancient rainforest, wild salmon, and stunning mountains and glaciers. Its meandering fiords are laced with hundreds of remote islands.

The Chugach Forest Plan must protect the "wilderness character" of the WSA - it must not stop at the Forest Service's weak proposal to protect just its "existing character." The Plan must protect the wilderness character of the lands in the WSA by classifying ALL of them with the Forest Service's "Primitive" standard, which is the most protective standard in the agency's recreational classification system.

Any plan for the area must maintain and/or restore strong protections to the lands within the WSA purchased by the federal government following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. These lands were acquired for the restoration of wilderness values and must be managed "in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes," as promised when they were purchased. In this context, the Chugach NF must address the ongoing ILLEGAL recreational use of chainsaws in the WSA, which has resulted in damaging tree removal along dozens of wilderness beaches, including those in sensitive areas.

In consideration, Alternative D recommends the maximum amount of land for Wilderness of any of the proposed Alternatives (97 percent of the WSA, or 1.884 million acres). I would support a modified Alternative D wilderness recommendation: one that must include Lake Nellie Juan and the lands within the WSA boundary that were purchased for restoration of wilderness resources following the oil spill.