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Comments: The Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is an ecological and scenic treasure. It is nearly two million acres of ancient rainforest; wild salmon; stunning mountains and glaciers; meandering fiords laced with hundreds of remote islands.

I am submitting a comment on the Forest Service's Draft Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chugach National Forest in Alaska. While the 6.9 million-acre Chugach does not yet have a single acre of designated Wilderness, this National Forest does have the spectacular, Congressionally-designated Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA. My intent by submitting a comment is to further improve the Forest Service's Final Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

In reviewing the proposed Forest Plan I support a modified Alternative D wilderness recommendation that includes Lake Nellie Juan and the lands within the WSA boundary that were purchased for restoration of wilderness resources following the oil spill. Alternative D currently recommends the maximum amount of land for wilderness of any of the Alternatives (97 percent of the WSA, or 1.884 million acres), it needs to be expanded.

To improve the current proposed Forest Plan I propose the following changes:

1. The Forest Plan must protect the "wilderness character" of the WSA, not the Forest Service's proposal to protect just its "existing character." Furthermore, the it 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.
2. Restore strong protection to the lands within the WSA that the federal government purchased 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.
3. The Chugach National Forest plan must address ongoing illegal recreational use of chainsaws in the WSA, which has resulted in damaging tree removal along dozens of wilderness beaches, including in sensitive areas.