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I would like to express my strong opposition for the Revision of the Land Management Plan for the Chugach National Forest, specifically focusing on removing access for motorized vehicles and/or restricting approved areas. As an Alaskan for 12 years, former federal and state Park Ranger and graduate in Wildlife Fisheries Sciences, this change would be detrimental to the thousands of Alaskan who utilize these areas. These areas are used for skiing, biking, hiking and snow machining by myself and many others. Closing down and/or limiting areas for motorized vehicles would be devastating to local economies. In addition to decreasing revenue, this restriction does not allow citizens the use of the land that was set aside for them for recreational purposes.

Given my career background, being a part of this process is nothing new. From my experience, many of these ideas generate from those who are not in the field or do not utilize the areas to their fullest. I was primarily a skier and now with these more economic environmentally friendly snow machines I am able to access more areas in the backcountry. The days of hiking up a mountain and getting one run for the entire day are gone. With the ability to access remote backcountry areas through snow machines, skiers are now able to have multiple runs through shuttling up the mountain via snow machine. This not only offers the ability for more run per day but also increases backcountry safety. With the use of snow machines, we are able to reach people quicker and exit quickly during an avalanche or medical emergency.

The wilderness areas within Alaska are so vast and generally inaccessible without the use of motorized vehicles. We need to expand the areas that are able to be accessed by snow machines to reach the backcountry we have been given in Alaska. The Chugach National Forest is just that, a National Forest, not a National Park. The greatest difference between the two is the multiple use mandates for National Forests. National Parks are highly vested and focused on preserving the land in its existing state. National Forests are managed for many purposes including timber, recreation, grazing, wildlife, fish, etc. We, as Alaskans, are vested in this state and care deeply about its resources, including being able to enjoy all aspects of the recreational opportunities it has to offer. Please consider revisiting your current plans for change to allow more areas access with motorized vehicles. Closing down or limiting areas are not the solution.

Thank you.