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Comments: Comments Regarding Chugach National Forest Management Plan

Submitted by Fran Mauer

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During the course of my 47 years of life in Alaska I have been fortunate to have made several trips to Prince William Sound and all of which have enriched me with astonishing experiences of beauty, scenery, and a feeling of awe. However, the rise in human activity gives me concern for the future of this place.

My strongest concern is that the Nelle Juan Wilderness Sturdy Area (WSA) should be designated Wilderness according to the Wilderness Act of 1964. Until such time when Congress fulfills this promise, the U.S. Forest must protect the wilderness character of the WSA, and not just the existing character as is stated in this draft plan. During the interim period, all lands within the WSA should be categorized as Primitive to assure the protection that is necessary. All lands that have been purchased within the Nelle Juan WSA with funds provided through the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) must also be protected for their wilderness character. The final plan must address these matters.

A very serious concern is the baiting of black bears that has sharply increased since the Whittier tunnel was completed. These animals are very vulnerable in many locations in the Sound, especially where there is only a narrow strip of forest cover between salt water and steep mountainous terrain. There has been a sharp decline in black bear numbers due to baiting activities. Another disgusting aspect is that many bait stations have not been cleaned up by the hunters due to poor enforcement of regulations. A result is that wilderness character and qualities such as scenery are being destroyed. I realize that there are now some cooperative studies under way by ADFG and the Forest Service, this should not be necessary if preventive measures were taken early. Instead these special values have been neglected. This Plan must embrace a cautious, preventive approach. The old "business as usual approach," is unacceptable.

Alternative D offers the best possibility of addressing the points that I have laid out above, however it should be changed to include all EVOS purchased lands as well as the Nelle Juan Lake area.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide my comments for this very special part of Alaska.

Fran Mauer

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