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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service officials:

Although I am not an Alaska resident, I am a visitor who has hiked in the Chugach National Forest. I care deeply about the proper management and conservation of the Chugach National Forest. I also appreciate that these federal lands and resources belong to all Americans regardless of their residence, and thereby that these lands and resources should be sustainably managed to ensure the long-term public interest.

I am appalled and disappointed to learn that the 6.9 million-acre Chugach National Forest does not yet have a single acre of designated wilderness. However, I am pleased to learn that the Chugach National Forest does have the spectacular, Congressionally-designated Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

I strongly support and urge the Forest Service to adopt and implement the following changes:

- * The Plan must protect the "wilderness character" of the WSA, not the Forest Service's weak proposal to protect just its "existing character." Furthermore, 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.

- * 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.

- * The Chugach National Forest 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.

- * Alternative D recommends the maximum amount of land for Wilderness of any of the Alternatives (97 percent of the WSA, or 1.884 million acres). I strongly 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 oil spill.

Thank you very much for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Richard Spotts
Saint George Utah