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To the Forest Service, Chugach National Forest, Alaska

I would like to begin my comments on the draft forest plan by saying that I support an Alternative "D" Wilderness recommendation. For the Nellie Juan College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

I have been fortunate enough to spend well over 1,000 days in the WSA over the last 21 years working for a permitted business in the Chugach National Forest, guiding small groups of visitors from all over the world who were seeking an experience in the coastal temperate rainforest wilderness of Alaska. During the course of my time working in the WSA I have watched the reactions of these visitors to a true Wilderness experience and listened to the same repeated comment by visitors to the WSA: "This is what Wilderness truly feels like and it needs to be protected for future generations to experience and enjoy". I have explained for years to visitors that it is a Wilderness Study Area and is managed as if it were a Wilderness by the US Forest Service, but it still lacks permanent and formal Wilderness designation and protection. It is high time that permanent Wilderness protection is extended to this unique, biologically diverse and spectacular piece of public land. A majority of public lands in Alaska are open for motorized recreation, and other non-Wilderness activities, please protect Nellie Juan College Fiord WS for its Wilderness qualities and for future generations.

I was encouraged to see the Chugach NF proposal for strengthening WSA management in response to 2016 comments, but please continue the work by making the following improvements to the proposed Forest Plan:

Do not backtrack on almost forty years of clear policy to protect the wilderness character of the WSA by promising only to protect its "existing character." Protecting the area's Wilderness character is vital to maintaining healthy ecosystems and today's quiet, undeveloped conditions in western Prince William Sound.

Restore the WSA to the Forest Monitoring Program described in Appendix A. Monitoring in the WSA is necessary for informing the Forest Service about effective management, continued recovery of wilderness resources damaged during the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS), and growth in snow machine and other motorized uses on the perimeter of the WSA.

Restore strong protection to the lands within the WSA that were purchased by the federal government for restoration of wilderness resources following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill disaster. The lands should not be moved from the WSA Management prescription (MA1) to the weaker "EVOS-acquired Lands" (MA6) prescription. The Forest Plan needs to make clear these lands are to be managed "in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes," as promised when they were purchased in the aftermath of the Exxon oil spill.

The Chugach NF must address ongoing recreational use of chainsaws in the WSA. Every year this activity results in visible damage to picturesque beaches through the removal of live trees and the historic "ghost trees" left behind by the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake.

Continue to fine-tune WSA standards and guidelines so they protect the specific qualities of

wilderness character, including its undeveloped and non-motorized natural settings. And adopt the Alternative D ROS map, which appropriately applies the Primitive standard to all WSA lands.

Over the years I have seen non-Wilderness activities such as snow machine use, chainsaws and ATV's encroaching on the WSA. Permanent and formal Wilderness designation under the Wilderness Act of 1964 in conjunction with enforcement of the ban on motorized use in the WSA is critical to maintaining the Wilderness character of the WSA.

In closing, I would like to say I 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 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS). The exclusion of EVOS lands from the Wilderness contradicts the commitment to manage them "in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes."

Thank you for considering my comments on the new forest Plan.

Sincerely

Hugh Rose