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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello, and thank you for welcoming and considering my comments. I have been living and working in and around the Chugach National Forest for the last 10 years. As a sea kayak guide for a Forest Service permitted outfitter, I have the privilege of introducing Western Prince William Sound to thousands of people from around the world every summer. I teach teenagers who are just learning what it is to explore the outdoors, how to survive and thrive in the rainforest, and how to leave it cleaner than we found it. It's so rewarding to see countless people enjoying the quiet they can't find at home, wildlife in it's natural and undisturbed habitat, and the impact it has on them. My livelihood depends on the ability for these lands to be managed and maintained as wilderness. Prince William Sound, especially the land within the NJCF WSA, is a remarkable landscape, and presents fantastic opportunities for wilderness that should be valued and respected for it's natural beauty, untrammled by man. I have traveled extensively throughout the United States, exploring many of it's public lands, and I moved to Alaska seeking wilderness. I believe that wilderness is Alaska's greatest resource, and is something we should revere, respect and defend. I have spent far more nights sleeping in a tent on the shoreline and beaches of PWS than I have in my own bed over the last 10 summers. I love this land. It is my passion, it is my home. It would be a disgrace and disservice to future generations, if they one day could no longer have the opportunity to experience this beauty in it's most natural and preserved state.

Thank you Chugach NF for strengthening WSA management in response to 2016 comments.

Please continue the work by making the following improvements to the proposed Forest Plan:

Do not backtrack on over thirty 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 snowmachine and other motorized uses.

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 senseless damage to picturesque beaches through the removal of live trees and the historic "ghost trees" left behind by the 1964 Great Alaska 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.

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). Not including the EVOS lands contradicts the commitment to manage them "in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes."

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