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First name: Christopher

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Comments: Hello,

I have been fortunate to have been born and raised in Alaska. I was lucky to have a family that introduced me to the outdoors and showed me what was available around our great state for recreation, fishing, history, hiking, and exploring opportunities. As I grew, I broadened my areas around the state for recreation and exploration to using fixed wing aircraft, snowboarding, skiing, snowmobiling, atv. With each passing year I find that there are more and more places that I want to get to and see/explore before I'm either not capable or has been lost to either time or access. I now live just outside of the Chugach National Forest boundary in Valdez but recreate as much as possible in the CNF and make my living showing people from all over the world how wonderful the CNF is through glacier, wildlife, and historical tours. This area is a special area and has a lot of history that is forgotten about or unknown by most. Prince William Sound and what is now the Chugach National Forest has been used for a multitude of uses through out it's history. It has been a multiuse area from the beginning and should continue to be so.

I have been listening, reading, and watching over the years about the use and management of the CNF and have taken part in several of the public meetings that were held in our town. Over the years we have talked about areas of use for number of specific reasons ranging from land access in the sound, the amount of use that Sound/CNF sees, and snowmobiling and atv use among other things. Reading through the Draft Land Management Plan (DLMP) I find that some of the subjects that were specifically talked about or asked for input on from NFS aren't reflected in the document. I realize that you can't please all the people all the time but there are some areas in the DLMP that should be considered for revision.

The Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is a very large area to say the least. A lot of this area has seen use in the past and present from different industries, exploration, and recreation. Some of these uses are sited in the DLMP but some of the proposed areas for inclusion as proposed wilderness lands don't meet the definition of wilderness lands. Some examples are Glacier Island, Unakwik Inlet, Ester Island, Ester Passage. Glacier Island has been used as a fox farm and mining area with man made things left behind such as fox feeding hutches, cabin remains, marine railway, and rail and carts for mining. Unakwik Inlet was at one had an active fish trap and saltry working in it which you can still see some of the poles, pilings, and machinery along the shoreline. Ester Island and the northern end of Ester Passage were commercially logged and used as an encampment and the effects are still visible today. One other example of an area that is being proposed as wilderness is the upper reaches of Columbia Glacier. While this area is far away from where most anyone travels it has not always been that way. There is a gold mine, the Ruff and Tuff mine, on a nunatak in the area of proposal. This mine is piece of the history of the area still showing the access road from their airplane landing site to the mine, a track machine, the mine building, and a host of other equipment in the area. These are just examples of were areas have been used in the past and still show the character of those uses and the diverse history of the area. While they are all still very beautiful and scenic with the history of the area still attached to them, they do not meet the definition of wilderness per part C-1 of the Wilderness Act.

Another comment on the CNF management of the WSA is regarding Columbia Glacier and the study of it. Columbia Glacier is the second largest tide water glacier in North America and the last tide water glacier in North America to start it's first retreat in modern times. It is the first tide water glacier that has been able to be studied and documented from the start of its first retreat to when it will eventually stop. Imagine what could have been learned if science were able to witness the retreat of the glacier that occupied what we now call Glacier Bay National Park when it started its retreat in the 1740's. In the past the CNF had allowed the use of helicopters and landings for dropping of scientists but to my understanding this has changed. Also, the removal of a

photographic monitoring site on the north side of the Great Nunatak was a great loss in the study and recording of this event. Columbia Glacier is a truly impressive site and unique area, history happening, but unfortunately the scientist that are trying to study this unique site and situation are being hindered. Access to the area is limited to helicopter and boat. Boat travel is only possible some of the time and limits what is accessible for research. Helicopter is much more feasible, quicker, and can better access the areas that will garner the best information. Please reconsider the access to this area for glacial research and the reinstallation of the photographic monitoring site.

While reading the Marine Mammal Habitat Management on page 68, item 7, the 750-foot distance from a seal or sea lion is in contradiction to NOAA guidelines. From their website: on water "observe Steller sea lions from a safe distance of at least 100 yards and limit your time spent observing to 30 minutes or less." Or "on shore, remain at least 50 yards away." Being out in the sound and around these animals for years I have found that not much disturbs them. What stirs them up the most is either transient orcas swimming by or scientists walking on their beaches. At the least your guidelines should match National Marine Fisheries guidelines.

The last comment I have about this DLMP is the reclassification and limitations of some of the areas for motorized recreational use. I have not used any of the areas on the Kenai Peninsula for motorized recreation, but I do use a lot of the area on the eastern side. Some of the areas on the eastern side that are used are, and have been for years, apparently were listed as non-motorized in the 2002 Management Plan but no one was aware of it. Areas in particular are the end of Jack Bay and Entrance Point as well as the Marshall Pass/Tasnuna River area. These areas both came up in public meetings that were held in Valdez with the CNF. We had a diverse group of people that came to these meetings that represented both non-motorized and motorized users. Both groups explained the use of the areas and how much traffic the areas saw. We were told that the Jack Bay was listed as non-motorized because of cabins and private property in the bay. These private lands are on the southern shore at the entrance to the bay, no were near where motorized use can get to let alone be heard from. The Jack Bay area is used by both snowmobilers and ski/snowboarders and is an awesome place in touch with the mountains so close to the sea. Access to this area is only viable via a snowmobile even if you wanting to ski or snowboard due to the terrain and distance required to cover.

What is referred to as Marshall Pass area includes a great area. Essentially everything from Wortman's Valley/Glacier all the way to the Copper River to the northern shore of Orca Bay is interconnected and has been used for both snowmobile, ski, snowboard, helicopter, and fixed winged aircraft. Some of the greatest terrain to see and explore are in this area. There are steep slopes for skiing and snowboarding, valleys and glaciers to ride on and through and history to see and experience at the Million Dollar Bridge. All this area is accessed in a variety of means and while most are day uses, there have been groups have set up camps and enjoyed the area for multiple days. The groups that use these areas usually use motorized means to get out there as they are great distances from the nearest road access and doing it in any other manner would make it infeasible. The 2016 Winter Motorized Use map shows the Marshall Pass area as snowmobiles allowed but the 2002 Recreation Opportunity Spectrum and the DLMP Alt B both show these areas to be non-motorized. Please change the designation of these areas to officially be winter motorized accessible.

While reading through the DLMP and trying to use the maps provided to try and see what the proposed plan was, and the alternate plans was difficult to say the least. One thing that made it difficult was the lack of detail in the maps. Boundary lines were vague or blurred and the terrain that could have helped define areas was not visible through the coloration. I was trying to compare some of alternatives to see the differences but found them to be hard to follow due to some of them not even using the same coloration or descriptions. The Management Areas tab on the online interactive map is an example of what I am talking about. I also find that trying to find maps for use on the CNF website is difficult. In the years past I have resorted to having to have one of the CNF personnel email me certain maps because they weren't available on the website to the public. If you want people to know where the boundary lines are, available maps are needed. Maps with good detail such as a topo would be helpful. Even better would be a downloadable format that could be used in any number of applications and gps'.

A .kml or .kmz downloadable layer to be used in Google Earth would be helpful as well.

The Chugach National Forest is a large area and special area. It is the heart of south central Alaska and great place to see and explore. Limiting or stopping the opportunity of others to see this great area would be wrong and an in justice to the public. Making areas only accessible to certain user groups or types of access just means that some people don't have the opportunity to see or use that area. Dividing the areas between motorized and non-motorized more and more is just going to drive a bigger wedge between the two groups. I have watched it firsthand here, just outside the CNF, it does make for tensions between the two groups when one is trying to limit the other. More and more skiers and snowboarders are using motorized vehicles to access areas that were once out of range and enjoying the Chugach as all should. Don't limit the ability of someone to ask themselves "Wonder what's over there?"

Thank you.  
Chris Thoma