Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/25/2021 8:00:00 AM
First name: Richard
Last name: Shellhorn
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Re: Comments re Cordova District Ranger Guided Helicopter Skiing Project #59615

Hi Jennifer:

I have been studying the Scoping Proposal regarding proposed heli-skiing analysis areas in the Cordova Ranger District area, and noticed that the seven page document does NOT include the map revealing the Cordova Ranger District Tasnuna and Scott-Sheridan Temporary Authorization Heliski Areas, which you sent me separately. When were these added areas (3A, 3B, 3C, and 3D) allowed, and why wasn't this included in the proposal document? It would seem to be indicative of added terrain already conceded, albeit temporarily, to heliski operations, and also perhaps serve as a suggested concession of terrain that should be made permanent, while limiting expansion no further.

Also, I would be interested in knowing how many additional acres were added by this temporary expansion; specifically, how many acres combined in areas 3A, 3B, 3C, and 3D?

Additionally, in the March 2021 Scoping proposal Map on page 3 of 7, could you give me an estimate of the acreage in each of the following numbered areas, namely 8, 9,10, 11, 12, and 13, plus how many acres total are currently are available in all the existing areas, not including the temporary ones in 3A, 3B, 3C, and 3D?

I am trying to get a handle on the size of the various regions displayed, to frankly serve as a measure of just how much terrain is already available, or will be available, if certain areas are added. That would seem a good starting point in analyzing the broad general areas outlined in the Map on page 3. It would be quite informative to note the percentage increases already conceded, and now under further concessions.

As a non-motorized outdoor XC and backcountry skier and skater, I am deeply concerned about the potential expansion of hell-skiing into areas accessible by non-airborne means that provide high-quality aesthetic outdoor recreation to many locals. The areas for helisking should NOT include regions 10, 11, and 12. Perhaps adding area 8 and 9, plus those areas already temporarily added. would satisfy the need for heli-ski expansion.

I constantly find myself pondering the fact that heliski copters have not only tremendous speed and reach, with the ability in five minutes to reach areas it would take non-motorized backcountry users hours, and also potential tremendous impact, on the quality of outdoor experience, through both noise and visual intrusion. i strongly feel they should be restricted to the existing access corridor up the Rude River drainage from Orca to reach the designated terrain, and not be allowed to overfly any parts of the Copper River Delta to access heliski locations. I also feel they should not be allowed to operate in any areas that are within the visual or audio range of land-based access near the Copper River Highway, nor any roads off that highway, nor near any trails or cabins operated by the USFS.

I also will be soon be sending another Comment illustrating in more detail the impact heliski operations could have on various popular local outdoor recreation locations; as well as a counterpoint to increased demand as a key justification for expansion of their operations.

Sincerely,

Dick Shellhorn

Lifetime 77 year resident of Cordova, with at least 70 of those years on skis.

Cordova, Alaska 99574