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Organization: karl becker watercolors

Title:

Comments: April 4, 2021

Re: Environmental Assessment for the Cordova Ranger District Guided Helicopter Skiing Project #59615

We are Cordova residents living here for 44 years. Over that time we have recreacted in the summer and winter in the areas surrounding our town and the Copper River delta. We ski in the surrounding mountains and regularly ice skate, ski, and bike on the frozen lakes at Sheridan and Saddlebag glaciers, and the Scott Glacier outwash plain. In addition, we recreate in the winter on the trail systems at Pipeline Lakes, Muskeg Meanders, and the ponds and rivers of the delta. Motorized recreation is at carrying capacity in our area. The expanded areas of use requested by the heli ski operators will severely impact the quality of the recreational experience for many of our residents.

The unspoiled qualities of these areas are made easily accessible by a generous Forest Service trail network and cabins with limited motorized vehicle presence. The minimum human impact, silence, and wildlife viewing opportunities are precious in a world where those experiences are increasingly rare.

Winter and summer mountain goat habitat surrounds Scott, Sheridan, Sherman and Saddlebag glaciers. Moose, bears, coyotes, wolves, wolverines, and other wildlife also use the areas surrounding the glaciers. Frequent winter helicopter travel in these areas poses a risk of wildlife disturbance at a time of year when the animals are most vulnerable.

The local heli skiing company has operated for years using areas accessed through Nelson Bay north of Cordova. This use has avoided conflicts with residents' use of traditional recreation areas. Because of this, over the years, Cordova residents welcomed the local heli skiers. It would be a shame to spoil that goodwill now.

I request that the U.S. Forest Service issue a permit to Points North with the following conditions:

Confine heli-ski areas to the Tasnuna River drainage and those areas currently in use.

Limit access to these areas to the existing heli-ski corridor of Nelson Bay and the Rude River drainage.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment for the Cordova Ranger District Guided Helicopter Skiing Project #59615.

Sincerely,

Karl Becker and Nancy Bird, Box 1185, Cordova, Alaska 99574, 907-424-7466 H; 907-429-7467