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Organization:

Title:

Comments: District Ranger Steven Namitz,

I am writing today in support of the proposed issuance of special use permits for guided helicopter skiing activities on NFS lands within the Cordova Ranger District.

Since 2018 I have had the privilege to fly helicopters for Points North Heli-Adventures in the Chugach. Over that period I have been able to share these exceptionally wild, rugged, and remote mountains with visitors from all over the world. No one can depart from a week of heli-skiing here without a renewed sense of appreciation for wild Alaska and for the town of Cordova. The proposed expansion to our operating tenure will allow access into higher, colder, more remote, and larger mountains. It will allow for the showcasing of what I feel is the gem of National Forest lands in the United States. Few have seen what the heart of the Chugach looks like in winter or visited Cordova before it wakes up for fishing season. Those that do frequently return and speak with reverence for this very special place. Our clients come to ski powder, but they leave having experienced much more.

Community concerns regarding noise, wildlife, and impacts to other backcountry users are valid. As a pilot and a former National Park Ranger, I am not interested in harassing wildlife, impacting other backcountry users, or creating a noise issue for town. Points North Heli-Adventures has a sterling track record for working with the community, the city, state, and federal government to address and mitigate concerns while still remaining commercially viable. That commitment remains. Past operations have demonstrated that Points North takes their role as a good neighbor seriously. It's one of the reasons I feel good about flying for them.

A few of our staff here are full-time Cordova residents and although I'm only here for a short time, I feel a deep appreciation for the town community. Trips to town this year have been intentionally infrequent, but on a normal year you'll see clients and staff at local businesses and restaurants. To me, it feels good to be able to give back a bit to the community that I'm lucky to call home for a couple months a year. It's a special place that deserves respect.

I really feel that this proposal can be a positive for all the stakeholders. The forest gets more exposure to people from all over the world. Points North gets more terrain allowing more flexibility in different weather conditions. The town of Cordova gets a continued economic boost during a sleepy time of year. And all of us who are concerned about noise, wildlife, and the backcountry experience of other users understand that we're in this together and committed to mitigating those concerns in good faith.

Many thanks for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Nick Giguere
Juneau, AK