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First name: Mike

Last name: Mahoney

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern.

With this letter, I am submitting comments on project #59615 "Cordova Ranger District Guided Helicopter Skiing Project".

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. My name is Mike Mahoney. I have lived in Cordova since 1999. Prior to that, I lived in Girdwood and Portage Valley beginning in 1996. I was employed with the Forest Service as an Interpretive ranger in the Glacier Ranger District. Then I was employed by the Cordova Ranger District as a member of the Easements crew in 1998. I worked for PWSSC in Cordova as an Environmental Educator for 2 years, partnering with the Forest Service while conducting overnight camps and educational programs for hundreds of kids and families of our community, Alaska, and around the nation. Much of that occurred in or adjacent to sections 10 and 11 of this proposal.

I bought a commercial salmon gillnet permit 21 years ago. I still commercial fish for my living and I am currently raising a family here. Through my experience as an outdoor educator, easement crew member and avid outdoorsman, I have spent time in a lot of the areas under consideration in this proposal. When I think of this quote by Aldo Leopold, I picture this part of the Chugach National Forest in my mind's eye.

"I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in. Of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?" -- Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

I have hiked, skied, snow machined, hunted, fished, harvested, climbed, biked, camped and canoed for 22 years in the valleys and mountains of sections 10, 11, and 12. Easements crew work brought me to the edges of sections 1,5,8,9 and 13, where I am lucky to have spent the majority of that season camped out and creating easement trails.

The Scott and Sheridan Valleys, with their glaciers, mountains, forests and streams along with the area from Saddlebag lake to McKinley lake and 18 mile system provide an incredibly wild, yet accessible wilderness for residents and visitors to explore. During the winter months, we use much of that zone as our access up into the higher elevations or exploring the remote lower zones. Many users stay fairly close to the road but still find opportunities to access the rare solitude and wildness surrounding our home. And many really do venture far into these zones. Right from the road, it is possible to experience the kind of wildness that Aldo Leopold wrote and advocated for, to the benefit of future generations.

The sight and especially the sound of helicopter traffic significantly impacts humans seeking solitude, and the sense of wilderness a place possesses. I think Aldo would have agreed, had it even been a possibility in his time, as he helped protect and shape the wilderness legacy contained in our National Forests.

It seems to me that there is enough room further north, using sections 1-9, to satisfy demand for heliski users without having an undue impact on those who must rely on other methods to access this specific wilderness we have come to know and love, especially in and around sections 10-13. I am a backcountry skier, and I own two snow machines, which I will continue to use in my national forest to ski and explore with my family and friends. I respectfully ask that you do not allow heli-ski activities to occur in areas with such valuable and accessible wilderness, which can be accessed by a much broader demographic group, and where there is such a long and

rich history of recreational and subsistence use. I'm specifically referring to the majority of land represented in the proposal as sections 10,11,12, and 13. The residents of Cordova, and other users of these lands should not have to contend with the sights and sounds of heli-ski tourism in the mountains surrounding our community. It is too intrusive, and it isn't needed. There is ample room for all of these activities. Please keep heliskiing activities in the more remote areas, and allow the rest of us and our kids access the solitude and wilderness we currently enjoy. That seems like a better balance of economic expansion and access for all users.

Sincerely,

Mike Mahoney

Cordova, AK 99574