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Comments: I would like propose the following improvements and ideas for the Ward Lake Rec Area.

I am for the general rehabilitation and refurbishment of facilities and trails in the area and the agency needs to devote sufficient resources to make this happen. I would propose Auk Village or Starrigavan be used as a basis for a theme for the area that is consistent on the Tongass.

Build a cabin that would serve as a campground host residence during the summer when campgrounds are open. It could be located in site 2 of Signal Creek or in Last Chance CG somewhere. A cabin that is similar in design and scope to the one at Settler's Cove State Park would increase options for recruiting quality candidates to fill host vacancies. Additionally, the cabin could convert to rental status during the off-season and winter and the revenue from the rentals would offset the costs of running it as a host site in the summer. This cabin would be in addition to any proposed rental cabin already under consideration by the Forest Service and NFF.

Consider commercial options for the sale of firewood to those camping in the campgrounds. This would alleviate workload for the agency and increase the availability of supply to campers.

Redesign and rebuild the Ward Lake trail. Currently the trail around the lake is too low on the portion between Signal Creek and the Day use area and as such is subject to repeated flooding. This section needs to be raised to mitigate flood impacts. Additionally, the current design is subject to blowouts, scouring, and sinkhole formation and should use designs that allow for proper drainage to mitigate damage from water erosion. Finally, all of the bridges need to be replaced. They are aging out or of poor design and don't hold up to high water events.

Redesign and raise the five road side picnic sites along Ward Lake road. These sites are poorly designed, not ADA compliant, and prone to flooding. Redesign them to elevate them against flooding, provide accessibility, and be an inviting and well thought out space.

The trail to Grassy point is supposed to be ADA compliant. However, frequent highwater events have scoured away the gravel and the trail does not meet ADA compliance. Consider a redesign of this portion of trail that will meet ADA compliance as well as high water events.

New outhouses. The outhouses in Ward Lake are dark, dingy, and old. Replace with newer products that are more inviting and are easier to see when using them.

Emphasize sustainability, affordability, and long term maintenance when building facilities and trails. As there is no guarantee of long term funding any facilities that are rebuilt or replaced should be done with an eye towards sustainability and resilience to the harsh weather of SE Alaska.

Signal Creek Campground. Low lying campsites along the lake are subject to flood events that flood people out and preclude the use of these sites. They should be raised and armored against high water events so they can be used. Consider exploring a redesign of the campground that separates Ward Creek trail from the roadway through the campground to reduce conflicts between walkers and vehicles. Finally, consider moving the gate forward to lock out the first 5 sites. During the shoulder seasons and winter people camp here which creates issues with opening the campground and often become places where people reside for longer than the special order.

Redesign Ward Creek trailhead. The slope on that trail head is wrong. It should be flattened with a gentle grade

to allow runoff. Currently, water runs down and collects on the north side causing erosion under the railroad ties. In the winter the slope of the TH lot makes getting in and out difficult under slick or icy conditions.

The existing Ketchikan Ranger District special order should be reviewed and updated with regards to the Ward Lake Rec Area. It should be reviewed to make sure existing conditions at the site are still necessary and appropriate. Additionally, I would propose a special order requiring physical restrictive control of animals within the boundaries of the Rec Area be added. Dog-on-dog and dog-on-person conflicts are common and an often heard complaint from regular users of the area. Finally, a no camping outside of designated campsites order should be included as homeless people can, and do, camp in the woods within the boundary of the rec area, often long term.

I am opposed to any anti-trapping regulations. The Forest Service making the move to ban trapping in this area would be out of character for the agency and would be stepping on the toes of the State Board of Game. For any trapping restrictions to be implemented there should be clear and consistent evidence of an ongoing problem with trapping and conflicts with users. Despite the protestations of the local, and vocal, anti-trapping lobby, no such evidence of this problem exists. As such the Forest Service should not entertain any trapping restrictions.

Thank you for taking my comments under consideration.