Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/1/2018 8:00:00 AM
First name: Andy
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Great meeting you again during the Girdwood public meeting; I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Management Plan. I encourage you to keep the good current balance in Alternative B with no major changes to the Land Management Plan for the next 10 - 15 years to assist with a transition to a carbon neutral world.

The Chugach National Forest is how I support myself, business and community by guiding Americans as well as foreigners seeking recreation with solitude on the National Forest since 1999. I also support myself and community via 10 year special use permit with Alaska Backcountry Access since 2006. Besides guiding for 25 years I am an organic wild blueberry farmer, maple syrup producer and forest products manager on my 320 acre remote farm and forest in Downeast Maine so have a keen interest in working forests like the Chugach.

My life as a backcountry recreation guide, USCG licensed boat captain and forest products producer shape my view that the Chugach Forest should stay multi-use for a variety of recreational, mining, food production and forest product resources. The Chugach Forest uplands with its rock, ice, soil, flora and trees are already doing their vital job of absorbing carbon, storing it and producing oxygen with a healthy habitat on the Forest for animals and people. Limiting access to the Forest and resources will only make the transition to a carbon neutral future more difficult as we shift to growing more forests, harvesting foods and utilizing forest product resources.

The 750,000 Alaskans and a sustainable number of visitors are not a major impact to the Chugach Forest; Alaska is our renewable resource and further major protections are needed on the Chugach. There are no major mining, fishery or forest threats on the Forest so there is no reason for major access changes to the Management Plan for things like chain saws, forestry equipment and transportation.

Maintaining the current level of multiple-uses will sustain our Forest and surrounding communities to avoid creating underserved populations. Gentrification is affecting communities like my home of Girdwood similar to Chugach Forest and other National Forest border towns. Rising costs of living near the Forest make it more necessary to manage it to support jobs, forest products and sustainability and we need access to do this. Currently there is a good balance between multiple uses like commercial outfitting, private recreation, mining, fishing, special permits and wildlife and forest products so I believe no major changes are needed for the Management Plan so Alternative B is the best option.

Commercial recreation is important to showing Americans our National Forests so access should not be limited by the Forest Plan, Wilderness designation, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum or Wild and Scenic River classification. Access to the forest via helicopter is one of the top rated tourist activities in Alaska and often the only way people with reduced mobility can experience the Forest. Helicopter access should be maintained at current levels for the next 10 -15 years and drone use studied.

Options to reduce peoples[rsquo] access to the National Forest outlined in Alternatives C and D will remove their connection to the working forest, wild harvest, fire wood gathering and log production. The Forest Service is directed to encourage multi- use recreation and forest products like wild berries, mushrooms, tree saps, willow tips, spruce tips, firewood, cabin logs and fish and wildlife harvest so you should select Alternative B to allow access to these forest resources.

The Chugach Draft Management Plan does little to explain navigability and waterway ownership disputes with the State of Alaska; the public needs to properly understand river jurisdiction boundaries to comment on Wild and Scenic River status. Navigability disputes on waterways like the Twentymile River where I operate mean it should not be considered for Wild and Scenic or Prince William Sound Wilderness. Will you please have your office contact me if the Forest is seeking a navigability determination on Twentymile, Portage or Placer Rivers?

Burning acres of land is how I produce organic wild blueberries and is a natural process needing direct management by people who need access to the land utilizing chainsaws, off highway vehicles and machinery for safety. The draft Forest Management Plan does not seem to allow continued access for forest machinery to prescribe burn for fuel reduction and fire suppression so I encourage you to select Alternative B.

The Twentymile River is likely State of Alaska waters so I kindly ask how closing the river March 1st to June 1st to me and the other commercial boat operators who take less than 1200 clients per year will help the Beluga? The National Marine Fisheries on page 19 item 4 says authorized activities on the river are not likely to adversely affect Beluga. Commercial allocation of 1200 clients per year is well below 50% of total general public use of the Twentymile River so should be considered the same as general public use. Please understand protecting the Beluga is especially important to me since they are federally protected; there is much that I do to avoid them and I should be treated with the same rules as the general public or the general public should be restricted as well.

There is already plenty of designated Wilderness areas in Alaska and the current conditions within the relatively accessible Chugach Forest are fine. There is no need to ban helicopters, boats, chain saws, snowmobile, ATV[rsquo]s, airplanes, forestry equipment to preserve the wilderness nature of the Chugach National Forest. Congress is the one who must act to create Wilderness to show the long term will of Americans.

To conclude, conservation has to happen on a large scale and I do not believe the Forest is under significant direct threat by the relatively small number of people who utilize it and the current management under Alternative B is sufficient for the next 10 -15 years.

Sincerely;