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Title:
Comments: Subject: Comments on Cordova District Ranger Guided Helicopter Skiing Project #59615, based on Acreage

Greetings:

I have already submitted several comments describing concerns and issues regarding the Cordova Ranger District Guided Helicopter Skiing Project #59615. As noted in prior comments, there is increased demand for use of these areas for both heli-ski and land-based recreational use.

Displayed below is a Table showing the acreage involved in the areas under discussion, listed as regions 1-13 in the Map provided on page 3 of the Scoping Proposal.

Upon request, I received this table from Jennifer L. MacDonald, USFS Recreations Special Uses Program Manager assigned to this project.

Before analyzing the numbers and submitting a proposal based on these acreage numbers, I wish to request that this data be immediately added to the Scoping Proposal, and notice of this data be included in a revised Public Statement for Comment Notice, as it is vital information that was somehow overlooked.

Also, the map showing Chugach National Forest Cordova Ranger District Tasnuna and Scott-Sheridan Temporary Authorization Heliski Areas should be added to the Scoping Proposal. It displays the areas currently being used, and is crucial to analyzing proposed changes.

I would also like to note that the map showing acreage under the Tasnuna and Scott-Sheridan Temporary Authorization Areas breaks the regions into smaller sub-units that exclude lower elevations between different parcels. This is misleading and decreases the apparent acreage in use, by ignoring the fact that the lower elevations are impacted by overflight of heli-ski helicopters, which must fly across them to reach the desired higher elevation terrain, and these lower areas may be on the edge of up and down ferrying of skiers as part of the heli-ski operations.

Based on both maps and acreage involved, I believe it is possible to come up with a proposal that satisfies the request for increased heli-ski areas while preserving areas for ground-based recreation that will not be impacted by heli-ski operations or overflights.

The proposal is this: Regions 1 thru 9, plus 13, be designated as heli-ski areas; Regions 10, 11, and 12 be designated as non-heli-ski areas, which includes prohibition of over-flight by heli-ski operators.

Here are some numbers to support this proposal.

From the Table listing Proposed Heliski Areas, the total acreage in Regions 1-9, plus 13, is 408,066 acres. The is increase of 181,022 acres over acres presently in use and represents almost 70 percent of all the acreage in the Scoping Proposal.

The total acreage in Regions 10, 11, and 12, in which no heli-ski operations or overflight is allowed, totals 181,411, which translates into roughly 30 percent of the Scoping Proposal.

The area in which heliski operations would be allowed is over twice as large as that set aside for non-heliski operations, and just coincidentally, is half the size of the state of Rhode Island.

It should also be noted that Regions 1-9, plus 13, are all part of or adjacent to current flights by heliski operators flying up the Rude River Corridor, making access through proposed flights by other routes are unnecessary.

I assume that after all Public Comments have been received, there will be analysis followed by further meetings and gatherings to allow more input into the Scoping Proposal.

I would request that all who have commented be notified of such proceedings, and additionally, if pandemic standards for gatherings are reduced, that such meetings be open to the public , so we can all work together to reach a satisfactory agreement on uses of the Study area.

I also want to thank Jennifer MacDonald for her excellent help in providing information as part of this Scoping Project.

Sincerely,

Dick Shellhorn

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