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Comments:

Dear Chugach NF

Please accept these comments regarding Forest Plan revisions.

I have been visiting the Chugach NF for decades.

The most important trait of the Chugach NF is its wildness and wilderness values. Therefore, I strongly recommend that the Chugach plan provides clear management direction that preserves these features.

In particular, I believe these areas deserve special protection for their wilderness values. They include the Columbia Glacier, Port Wells/Muir Inlet/Harrison Fiord, Nellie Juan WSA, Knight Culross, Esther, Perry and Glacier Islands. The Copper River Delta also deserves protection as potential wilderness. No development should be permitted in these areas, nor manipulation of natural vegetation or processes.

On the Kenai Peninsula, the FS should recognize that bark beetles and wildfire are natural ecological processes that are critical to production of dead wood. Dead wood is an important ecological component of these forest ecosystems. Many species depend on dead wood at some time in their life cycle--even fish (dead wood in streams provides great fish rearing habitat). Large wildfires in these forests are driven by periodic climate/weather conditions and cannot be precluded by logging or other interventions. Recognize that fact and act accordingly. Reducing flammability of homes and structures is the only sure way to protect property from such fires.

Also mountain bikes should be discouraged and eliminated from any wilderness study areas and roadless lands that have potential wilderness values. Not only do mountain bikes cause damage beyond what hikers create, but they "shrink" the wilderness values due to their mechanical advantage.

Sincerely:

George Wuerthner

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