

Date submitted (UTC): 2/11/2016 10:51:38 PM

First name: DIANE

Last name: KASTEL

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 1658 DOVER COURT

Address2: UNIT A

City: WHEATON

State: IL

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 60189-8444

Country: United States

Email: CLASSYLADY1@COMCAST.NET

Phone: 630-456-4927

Comments:

ALERT-NATION'S LARGEST WILDERNESS STUDY AREA NEEDS YOUR VOICE:

2 million-acre Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA in Alaska at Risk!

Comments needed by Feb. 19th

Chugach National Forest The Congressionally-designated Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) on the Chugach National Forest in Alaska's western Prince William Sound is an ecological and scenic treasure. It is two million acres of ancient rainforest, wild salmon, and stunning mountains and glaciers. Its meandering fiords are laced with hundreds of remote islands. And the area is critical to Alaskans, for subsistence, commercial fishing, recreation, and the local tourism industry. It is also a great place to visit by yourself or with the family.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Forest Service just released a proposed plan for the Chugach to loosen protections throughout the area and permanently remove protections from some of its most important places. This changes protections that have been in place for almost forty years and will hurt the wilderness character of this magnificent WSA. The proposed Chugach plan would also allow residential timber harvests, expanded motorized uses, manipulation of habitats, mining, and helicopter-assisted skiing and hiking.

It is critical that the Forest Service receive as many thoughtful comments as possible regarding the proposed loosening of protections for the Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA.

We are telling the Chugach National Forest to:

- * Keep your longstanding promise to protect the wild character of the entire Wilderness Study Area until Congress finalizes its protection. This means maintaining and clarifying rules on all land-based motorized uses- including chainsaw use- and preserving the area's current undeveloped and non-motorized character.
- * Recommend the 1.9 million eligible acres of the WSA and surrounding roadless lands eligible for wilderness designation as Wilderness. Do not abandon protection for the nearly 600,000 acres you propose to eliminate from the WSA.
- * Reverse the terrible recommendation to split the Wilderness Study Area into two smaller units. This would dramatically shrink the area by permanently stripping long-established protections for Knight Island, Columbia Glacier, Perry Island, Glacier Island, Culross Island, Esther Island, Port Wells, mainland Knight Island Passage, and Lake Nellie Juan.
- * Prohibit recreational snowmobile use in the WSA. Snowmobile use has exploded in the WSA in recent years. Snow machines for subsistence and traditional uses may be allowed, but recreational snowmobile use is not.
- * Management of the WSA should follow the Forest Service's Regional Office WSA direction, since ANILCA contains no substantive guidance on WSA protection.

In the Chugach National Forest, the Forest Service is entrusted to manage some of Alaska's most treasured wild lands in the Congressionally-designated 2 million-acre Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA. Changing that now-by allowing residential timber harvests, expanded motorized uses, manipulation of habitats, mining, and helicopter-assisted skiing and hiking-would harm this beautiful Wilderness Study Area. It defies common sense. Instead, the Forest Service should maintain current protections and recommend to Congress its perpetuation into the future. This world-class wild area deserves permanent protection now and far into the future!

The proposed plan is now out for public comment, with comments due by Feb. 19. Please speak-up for the magnificent Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA!