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Comments:

Thank you in advance for this opportunity to comment on the Chugach Forest Plan Revision. I am writing this from the heart and hope that it will be read the same, keeping in mind and in heart what is truly at stake here, which is a beautiful landscape and seascape (and icescape) that does not belong to us as humans! It should not even be a question whether or not to maintain and increase wilderness and protected designations. I am not writing this as a "tree-hugging" environmentalist; I am writing this as a human being who believes that we have the very unique privilege to take care of the land, water and all the organisms great and small that need them to continue living as they have been for ages and ages, long before we showed up.

My heart broke when I heard of the plans of the Forest Service (FS) to weaken the designated wilderness study area, which the FS has the responsibility to manage and protect! If I could I would look into the eyes of each and every FS worker to ask them sincerely why they entered the FS, if not to honor and uphold the unique privilege to be the voice of the forest, of the glaciers, of the whales and sea otters? This is an important question to ask oneself. If the answer does not comply with the needs of the fragile ecosystems of PWS, then I suggest the FS worker do a bit of soul-searching. What gives a human the right to decide to take away the designation of wilderness?

I am a sea kayak guide, going into my 5th season, in Valdez. I don't feel it necessary to explain the reasons for taking on such a career and life path in a place as special and beautiful as PWS. However, one reason that I will mention is that a guide has the responsibility to speak for those without voices, such as mentioned above (animals, forests, glaciers). And this is why I am taking a stand to say that I do not find the proposed plan of diminishing wilderness designation acceptable! In fact, more areas should receive wilderness designation. And if that means that I can't continue to bring clients to certain beaches to camp, so be it. That's a sacrifice for the land and the sea that I am willing to make. Because I believe in the power of wilderness, which Alaska is one of the last places where it truly remains. Alaska needs to step up and demonstrate the integrity of its' FS employees and residents by fighting for its' wilderness and securing today's protections for the future. This is a critical moment in the history of PWS and all of Alaska, which should not be treated lightly. Diminishing of wilderness designations will have a lasting impact that may not be repairable. Let's remember the goals of the FS: to protect and conserve wilderness values!

Thank you very much for your consideration and proceed from the heart.