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First name: Nick

Last name: D'Alessio

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: PO Box 922

Address2:

City: Girdwood

State: AK

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 99587

Country: United States

Email: nick.dalessio@gmail.com

Phone: 907-441-0432

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

I would like to bring up important points regarding the outdoor guiding industry utilizing the Chugach National Forest and beyond.

Most importantly the standards and qualifications to work as a guide are very minimal. Actually there is hardly any qualifications necessary to be a guide, there are unqualified guides working the industry in Alaska and beyond. Just about anyone who has gotten their WFR (first-aid certification) and has sat through a basic avalanche course can work as a guide. Currently to be a "guide" you are not tested on skills and knowledge in the subject you are working. If a guide is working in avalanche terrain shouldn't they be required to pass a test showing that they can find and dig up people in a certain time? If a guide is working on glaciated terrain why shouldn't they be required to prove they can safely and successfully do a crevasse rescue? Some can not! This is something that needs to change, this is something that needs to change before there is a major accident from an unqualified guide that results in the need to make the change. Accidents can and do happen with highly qualified guides however decisions and rescue efforts are at a higher caliber with qualified guides.

I believe it is very important for qualified guides and operations to have access to the necessary areas in order to successfully and safely complete their mission with guests and students. These guests and students are public wanting to visit their public lands with the aid of a guide to show them the area safely and learn something new. It is very tough to have guests specifically ask to be guided to a certain mountain or area and have to tell them we can not because we are not permitted to do so. I would never ask for all areas be open to commercial operations however I believe it should be easier and more cost effective for qualified operations and guides to have the ability to operate where it makes sense for all users and land managers mutually.

Also, Please ensure land managers have the ongoing opportunity to manage motorized areas by differentiating motorized groups. Within certain motorized areas, interaction of snowmachines and helicopter skiers can create safety issues and user experience conflicts. Due rapid and onging progress of snowmachine capability, the effective range of those machines could dramatically expand during the lifespan of the current forest plan. In particular, the areas of Center and Divide Creeks should be maintained in their current status, which is open to winter helicopter use and closed to winter snowmachine use.

Thank you, the Chugach National Forest is a beautiful place!