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Comments:

Foremost, the Plan must protect the "wilderness character" of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in Alaska and not the Forest Service's weak proposal to protect just its "existing character." Furthermore, the Plan must protect the wilderness character of the lands in the WSA by classifying all of them with the Forest Service's "Primitive" standard, which is the most protective standard in the agency's recreational classification system.

It is vital that the Forest Service restores the strongest protection to the lands within the WSA that the Federal government purchased following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. These lands were acquired for the restoration of wilderness values and are required to be managed "in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes," as promised when they were purchased.

The Chugach National Forest section must address ongoing illegal recreational use of chainsaws in the WSA, which has resulted in damaging tree removal along dozens of wilderness beaches, including in sensitive areas.

Alternative D recommends the maximum amount of land for Wilderness of any of the Alternatives (97 percent of the WSA, or 1.884 million acres). I recommend modifying Alternative D wilderness protection to also include Lake Nellie Juan and the lands within the WSA boundary that were purchased for restoration of wilderness resources following the Exxon-Valdez oil spill.