

Date submitted (Alaskan Standard Time): 10/29/2018 12:52:45 PM

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Comments:

The Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area is an ecological and scenic treasure. It is nearly two million acres of ancient rainforest, wild salmon, and stunning mountains and glaciers. Its meandering fiords are laced with hundreds of remote islands. The Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA was purchased by the federal government following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. These lands were acquired for the restoration of wilderness values and must be managed "in perpetuity for conservation and wilderness purposes," as promised when they were purchased.

The Plan must protect the "wilderness character" of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA), 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 Nellie Juan-College Fiord 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.

The Chugach NF must also address the ongoing illegal recreational use of chainsaws in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord 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 Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA, or 1.884 million acres). I support a modified Alternative D wilderness recommendation that also includes Lake Nellie Juan and the lands within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord WSA boundary that were purchased for restoration of wilderness resources following the oil spill.