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Comments:

I am writing regarding the future of the Nellie Juan - College Fjord Wilderness Study Area. This truly world class wilderness has been awaiting action for nearly forty years, and it seems high time that it be designated wilderness. While I know this is not your decision, you are the caretakers of this amazing place, and I urge you to do all you can to protect its wilderness character while the tortuous politics of wilderness plays out.

I note that in your draft plan you propose to protect "existing character" of this WSA. That is fine as far as it goes, but I think you should protect "wilderness character." This is a well-defined concept that the Forest Service is using across its system, and it seems to me a more appropriate management goal than "existing character." As the years have passed since the designation of the WSA, there has been some erosion of wilderness character, and the goal should be to restore wilderness character where this is the case.

After the infamous Exxon Valdez oil spill, the federal government was able to purchase land within the WSA and this should be given the same level of protection as the rest of the WSA. This would be, in my view one of the few positive outcomes of the spill.

This truly amazing place is attracting ever more attention as a recreation destination, and this is a good thing, but some of the visitors are mistreating it, leaving garbage and using chainsaws to fell trees behind some of the beaches for their campfires. This is a vast area in which to police user behavior, but ways must be found to reduce the impacts of recreation users on wilderness character. The Forest Service is charged with sustaining the wild nature of this place until a decision is made regarding its inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The degradation of the resource in places is another reason why managing for "existing character" is not enough.

I support a modified Alternative D wilderness area that includes Lake Nellie Juan and the lands within the WSA boundary that were purchased for restoration of wilderness following the oil spill.

While I now live far away from this magnificent place, I have been there and regard it as one of the most significant wild places in the world. It is a unique and exceptional wild region that should be protected for future generations. You have a large responsibility.

Thank you for considering my comments.