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Comments:

To Whom it May Concern,

Of the four options being presented at this time, I would like to submit my support for the Forest Service Revision Plan Option B. More importantly, I want to declare that I am in no way in support of losing any current or future motorized access in the Chugach National Forest or any other state / federal lands therefore Options C & D are absolutely unacceptable. Designating more areas as "wilderness areas" is also unacceptable. We need to keep and increase areas of motorized access for numerous reasons, including but not limited to: increased safety, improved health, reduced environmental impact and improved economy being at the top of the list.

I have been recreating in the Chugach since I was a child. My dad brought our family up to Alaska because he fell in love with it while he was with the Army doing Jack Frost Training at Ft Richardson one winter. We moved up here when I was a year old. Coming from Colorado, I suppose you could say that is as close as it gets to born and raised. We spent many weekends camping, fishing, and snowmachining all over Alaska, but being raised in the Peters Creek area, the Chugach was our backyard.

My daughter who was born and raised in Alaska has had the same opportunities I had for recreation but perhaps even more since she got her first snowmachine at age 13. She was my main riding buddy. The first year she had her mountain sled, we made several trips to Carter and Crescent Lakes, as well as Lost Lake via the Primrose side. Over the next few years, we also rode Turnagain Pass and I myself rode Whitter, Placer, plus the Firehouse and Snug Harbor sides of Lost Lake. We have ridden lots of places up north, but there will always be a special fondness for the Chugach. The beauty and conditions in this region are like no other.

Keeping and increasing the motorized access areas is imperative for increasing safety in the backcountry. Being able to rescue an injured snowmachiner, hiker or skier via a motorized access corridor is crucial since often times it is not feasible for helicopters to reach an individual that is in need of rescuing, due to poor weather conditions. The more motorized access points we have in the Chugach and throughout Alaska helps to spread out the number of people recreating (motorized and non motorized). Less congestion in a specific region will decrease potential for accidents amongst all user groups in areas where the trails are not wide enough or there are just too many people in such a small zone, ie: the front side of Turnagain. Less congestion in specific regions will decrease the threat of others being caught in avalanches (human or naturally triggered). Trails such as Primrose really need to be widened for safety and to allow for adequate snow cover on the ground so that it can be open for more appropriate lengths of time. Often times there is a lack of snow on the trail near the parking lot due to trees shielding it, when just 500' up in elevation there is ample snow.

Keeping and increasing motorized access areas provides better parking for all user groups when planned to accommodate larger vehicles with trailers such as in Turnagain Pass. This being said, I feel very strongly that the lack of snow plow maintenance over the past several years for ALL parking areas in the Chugach has created serious safety issues that need addressed. There have been many times when the safety of both motorized and non motorized users has been compromised due to the fact that there is not adequate parking or adequate road access at a trailhead that is open for winter use. Primrose and Turnagain are prime examples. Proper snow removal from the roads and parking areas needs to start happening before people are injured and property is damaged. It is especially not safe to have anyone parking along the highway due to a parking area not being adequately plowed.

Keeping and increasing motorized access areas is imperative for improving the health of Alaska. We have always told newcomers and visitors that it is a MUST to have winter recreation and outdoor activities if you are going to live in Alaska. The long, cold, dark winter can wreak havoc on a lot of peoples emotions and mental health. Unfortunately, that is why so many struggle with depression in the winter and why the suicide rate in Alaska is so high. When I got back into snowmachining as an adult, I jokingly referred to it as my therapy, but in all truth, snowmachining absolutely contributes to my mental health. It is exhilarating and allows me to access the beauty of God's creation in areas and ways not possible otherwise. It is physically demanding and exerting which contributes to my physical health. Anyone who has never ridden and thinks it doesn't take effort or strength is sadly mistaken and those of us who are passionate about this sport will gladly give them opportunity to find out for themselves.

Keeping and increasing motorized access areas is imperative for reducing environmental impact. Technology in the snowmachine industry has blessed us with more efficient and less polluting machines in recent years, but even with these major improvements, it is still better for air quality to have less congestion in specific regions. The improved efficiency along with lighter weight and more capable machines allows motorized users to get to more pristine areas without causing any damage to tundra or vegetation. This was not necessarily the case when I was a child. We can certainly anticipate more technological improvements that will reduce environmental impact in the future. Having more motorized access areas reduces congestion which means that the overall "footprint" from motorized users in a specific area is reduced.

Keeping and increasing motorized access areas is imperative for maintaining and promoting economic growth in Alaska. There are a vast number of people in Alaska who own snowmachines. If you were to tally the cost for an average family to get into snowmachining and consider the impact on the economy, you would see that it is very beneficial for Alaska. There is the cost of a truck, trailer, snowmachines, clothing, safety gear, fuel, parts and service, food and beverages just for starters. We have several fantastic dealerships and aftermarket motorsport shops in this area that rely on motorized access areas being open for the health of their business. The more people that can ride, the more areas they can ride, the greater demand for their products and services.

Keeping and increasing motorized access areas is also detrimental for the survival and prosperity of local restaurants, lodges, bed and breakfasts, gas stations and gift shops during a time of year when we have less revenues from tourism and exports. We have some incredible tour guides that are able to entice folks from the lower 48 to come up and experience all that the Chugach has to offer in the winter, it is obvious the impact motorized access has on their businesses.

I would like to see that these motorized access areas are still available for my children and grandchildren. My grandson is almost 1 year old now and I am looking forward to taking him snowmachining in the Chugach when he is old enough to ride his own sled. Snowmachining is very important to our family as it brings together all three (soon to be four) generations in ways that can never be replicated or replaced with other activities. Over ten years ago we started doing an annual Alaska Ladies Ride in Eureka and then Petersville. We occasionally have all ladies rides in the Chugach as well. Seven years ago, the main annual event became a fundraiser for Friends of Providence Cancer Center and had 89 participants last year. The camaraderie these women experience together in Alaska's backcountry is priceless. We encourage them all to get out and ride as much as possible with or without their husbands and boyfriends. Many of these ladies are from the Anchorage area and would be devastated to not have access to their favorite riding areas in the Chugach.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments and for your efforts toward proper management our national forests in a way that benefits all user groups. I write this as a hiker, cross country skier, mountain biker, fisher-woman, hunter, nature lover, explorer, atv rider and snowmachiner. Being deeply rooted in Alaska, I believe that we can all amicably work together to protect and enjoy all of God's creation.

Respectfully,

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