

Date submitted (Alaskan Standard Time): 10/31/2018 2:54:37 PM

First name: Michael

Last name: O'Meara

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: PO Box 361

Address2:

City: Homer

State: AK

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 99603

Country: United States

Email: mikeo@horizonsatellite.com

Phone: 9073994022

Comments:

I've been a regular summer and winter user of the Chugach National Forest since 1969. My primary interest is in non-mechanized recreation but I also value the forest for its intrinsic value and the services it provides in support of human and other life on the planet.

The present draft Forest Management Plan strikes me as an improvement over previous versions from 2013 and 2015. Consequently I'll be brief here and focus on a few things that are of special significance to me regarding the Wilderness Study Area.

I support the largest possible area be protected and studied for wilderness designation. Please include lands inside the study area purchased with EVOS Trustee Council funds. As I recall, they were obtained with the intent of restoring wilderness qualities. I urge that Lake Nellie Juan be included as well.

Over the years the wilderness qualities of parts of the study area have been eroded by incompatible uses due to lax Forest Service oversight. Consequently, the present Management Plan's commitment to protect the study area's "existing character" is a significant step backward. The plan should replace this feeble language with a commitment to restore and protect the true wilderness character throughout the study area under a Forest Service Primitive land classification.

The Forest Service service must strive to step up oversight and enforcement throughout the WSA to reduce unlawful recreational use of chainsaws and other mechanized activities. Actually, there is need for this throughout the Chugach.

Finally, there are other areas in the Chugach beyond the present WSA that could merit review for potential wilderness designation. For example, most Forest Service lands on the Kenai Peninsula above 2,000 feet in elevation provide a pretty pristine alpine to subalpine environment. The high valleys and ridge lines offer refuge to wildlife from increasing human activity along trails and wilderness trekking at its best.