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Comments:

I am a long time Alaskan and Chugach National Forest user. My wife and I, along with many of our friends, have enjoyed various forms of recreation in the forest over the years.

We have backpacked and camped along many of the fine trails in the forest such as Lost Lake and Resurrection Pass. We've enjoyed rafting Six Mile Creek and canoeing in Placer River. We had a salt water boat that we launched from Whittier and recreated in the forest from the beauty of Prince William Sound. We've hiked and/or hunted on many of the islands including Culross, Naked, Knight, Ester, Montague, and others. We've sea kayaked and camped on the shores of Passage Canal, Blackstone Bay, College and Harriman Fjords.

The point I am trying to make is that we are very familiar with Chugach National Forest and love the place. We also very much love to snowmachine. I am very concerned that several of the alternatives presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, particularly Alternatives C and D, will take away areas that are currently open to riding when conditions allow.

I firmly believe that snowmachine use in the forest, the way it is governed now, is one of the least impactful means of motorized recreation in the forest. It only occurs in the winter when out of state visitation to the forest is a fraction of that during the summer. Areas are only opened after there is enough snow to protect underlying vegetation. In the spring, when the snow melts, so does almost all sign of snowmachine use in the forest. Snowmachines allow one to access parts of the forest that no one with a full time job and other of life's responsibilities can otherwise access. I have friends who are strictly foot powered backcountry skiers that haven't enjoyed half the places I have. They just can't get that far in the time they have.

To sum it up, I love the Chugach National Forest and all it has to offer, I use the forest often, and I believe that in particular, snowmachining opportunities should not be reduced under the new management plan.

Sincerely,

Rick Girouard

Anchorage, Alaska