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Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Forest Plan.

Like most Alaskans, I feel that retaining the wilderness character of western Prince William Sound is essential to our identity as Alaskans. The devastation from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill is still deeply felt. I believe it is critical that the draft Plan acknowledge that the Wilderness Study Area is still recovering and that an ongoing commitment is needed to restore and maintain the wilderness qualities damaged by the spill. These needs are well set out in the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Restoration Plan.

I broadly support the recommendations of the Prince William Sounds Stewardship Foundation. More specifically, I respectfully urge that:

(1) The draft Plan retain the "maintain presently existing wilderness character" language. Omitting the term "wilderness" would be confusing and undermine the commitment to preserving the area's wilderness character.

(2) It is essential to continue existing monitoring programs. Monitoring is vital to responsible land management. It will not be possible to address threats to the wilderness character of the area if there is no evidence of what the threats are.

(3) As a sea kayaker, I am well aware of the aesthetic and ecological impact of chain saw vandalism in the study area. I agree with the Stewardship Foundation that a Forest Order is necessary to address the legality of continued chainsaw use for non-subsistence purposes.

(4) To accord with the intent of the 1997 federal purchase of lands injured by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, the lands around Jackpot Bay, Paddy Bay, and Knight Island should be included in the MA1 Wilderness Study Area Management Area. The intent underlying the purchase of these lands was to restore and maintain their wilderness character. Including them in the MA6 area would weaken their protection and violate the intent of the 1997 purchase.

(5) I strongly support the Alternative D Wilderness Recommendation. But I believe it is critical to include the Nellie Juan Lake area and USFS land on Elrington Island, as well as the the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill-acquired lands around Jackpot Bay, Paddy Bay, Hogan Bay, and Junction Island. These additions are necessary to uphold the EVOS purchase agreements and to support the important ecosystem and recreational interests of this area.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.