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First name: Thomas

Last name: Nulle

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 8103 Parkridge Circle

Address2:

City: Anchorage

State:

Province/Region: AK

Zip/Postal Code: 99507

Country: United States

Email: nullet1090@gmail.com

Phone: 9073511281

Comments:

I am writing to express my very serious concern for the future of what I consider a sacred, fundamental right of every American. I'm writing to express my very serious concern for the future of cooperation between user groups that, from this point forward, can either be steered down a path that enshrines and holds dear, or disregards, that fundamental American right: access to our true national and global treasures: public lands. It bothers me to my core that there are groups such as the Sierra Club and Winter Wildlands Alliance that have leveraged their well-financed and politically motivated agendas by use of countless out of state voices that will likely never step foot in Alaska to restrict the access of Alaskans to lands that are rightfully ours, by way of Wilderness designation.

These are lands that provide respite from our already chaotic world, they provide food, they provide education, they provide recreation, and they provide the closest thing I have ever known to a spiritual connection. They also provide a very significant contribution to our economy. an economy that can use all the help in can get in Alaska. This is not to say that I in any way want to see these lands exploited for profit by resource extraction or reduced in any way from their natural splendor. What I am advocating for is simple: Stewardship.

I was very fortunate to be raised in Wyoming climbing, backpacking, skiing, snowboarding, camping, and generally adventuring on public lands. It was instilled in me from a very young age that these places are sacred and they deserve respect. How did I learn that? By accessing them. Then I sought more mountains, and when you come from a place like Wyoming and you want more, you head to Alaska.

It is well understood that Alaska is vast. The Chugach National Forest is vast. It is the second largest National Forest we have. None of my access in Wyoming was motorized, and I appreciated the peacefulness of that. When I moved to Alaska in 2006 my world changed. I have been fortunate enough to see many, many parts of the state through my travels for work as an FAA contractor working on remote communications facilities. Those travels have truly put the vastness of our state in perspective, and there's a point that I realized there's no way to see much more than 30, maybe 50 if you're exceptionally motivated, miles of anything from a roadway without mechanical assistance. The size of the Chugach is also large enough that there are plentiful opportunities for everyone to access these lands in whatever form they like without impinging upon anyone else's right to access how they choose.

My tool of choice these days is a snowmachine. Along with a few groups of people that, through these experiences, have become some of my closest friends, we are able to access snowboarding that I grew up dreaming about. That's just my story, but there are countless others that tell a tale of finding themselves and their strengths, recovering from addiction by connecting with nature, teaching children the joy of the outdoors, providing food for their families, and allowing less able-bodied people access. There's public safety aspects that come with access also. There have been multiple instances of people traveling beyond their abilities or being injured in the backcountry that may not have survived without a lucky encounter with a party on snowmachines. The trails that we establish to Skookum and Spencer glaciers with snowmachines provide a usable path for fat-tire bicycles. I could go on.

I should also say that I agree that there should be places for the public to recreate in areas that they can know there won't be machines, and we already have that. Like any group of humans, we can all benefit from taking constructive criticism, and we have a duty to make sure that our community conducts themselves responsibly

around others as well, whether it's in a parking lot or in the backcountry, we're all responsible for good stewardship of the land and our images.

I believe that good stewardship of our public lands depends on access, and it would be much to its detriment and ours if access is restricted. With the threat of climate change and an increase in the duration and intensity of wildfires, our lands must be managed in a way that best addresses prevention and mitigation of these events. Again, that requires people to be able to access. It is shortsighted and myopic to designate large swaths of these lands as wilderness. Not only will it prevent good stewardship of the lands, but it will prevent our generation's ability to share, inspire, teach, and pass on these values to younger generations, which will end up with the worst outcome possible: nobody having the good fortune to get to know these treasures.

The more motorized access is restricted, the more it will be concentrated, putting more pressure on the areas that do remain open. Spreading out users is good for ALL users of public lands. It's the right thing to do for the lands, for the people, for the vegetation, and the wildlife. As a good friend of mine also wrote "We must hold true to the idea of conservation, and consider the purpose and implications of the ethic of conservation. In contrast, preservation, while it has its place, does not take into consideration the health and welfare of the people, and the human vitality that is sustained when there is ACCESS FOR ALL PEOPLE." Lastly, there is much economic benefit derived from the motorized user groups. Frankly, it takes a lot of money to do some of these activities. The majority of that money goes to local businesses and stays in our communities, which of course helps fund our schools, public infrastructure, and further management of our public lands.

Because of all of this, I write to specifically OPPOSE options C&D, and while I believe that Option B is the best compromise, it is just that: a compromise. I believe that no areas that are currently open to motorized travel shall be further restricted. This includes access to riding areas such as Lost Lake via Snug Harbor Road, Primrose Trail, or Firehouse trail; access to Nellie Juan via the South Fork of the Snow River; Johnson Pass; Turnagain Pass, Placer River and adjacent areas; 20 Mile River; Resurrection Pass should be considered for motorized access any year that there is adequate snow cover to protect underlying vegetation; and I feel very strongly that access to the Whittier area shall not be restricted, largely because it is an area that regularly has sufficient snow to protect underlying vegetation well into May and sometimes into June, then quickly leads to glaciated terrain.

Thank you for your service to these lands, and for taking the time to consider these comments.

Tom Nulle
Anchorage, Alaska