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Comments:

Public comment: Chugach National Forest

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have spent time in the Chugach and Prince William Sound since first moving to Alaska 26 years ago. My first kayak trip was in the Culross area and I've had many trips to PWS since then. I provide the following comment:

1. Put the word "wilderness" back in the Plan language as it has been in the 1984 and 2002 forest plans. This proposed Plan changes "maintain presently existing wilderness character" to "maintain presently existing character." Omitting the word "wilderness" creates confusion and undermines management of the WSA. Restore the 1984 and 2002 forest plan language to maintain "wilderness character" of the WSA.

2. Restore to the Forest Monitoring Program the monitoring of conditions in the WSA. Monitoring specific to the WSA is necessary to inform the USFS of how best to manage this area for wilderness characteristics, ensuring that these wilderness characteristics are adequately maintained. I'm very concerned at the ways in which the WSA has been allowed to be degraded over the past 30 years with increased use from the oil spill and the Whittier tunnel; the WSA should be managed as wilderness and monitoring is crucial to that goal.

3. Add a Forest Order to clearly deny use of chainsaws except for subsistence purposes. I have personally witnessed how chainsaw vandalism is destroying scenic beaches and camping areas. It's unnecessary and a travesty to a place so many of us wish to enjoy.

4. Include within the WSA the Chenega EVOS-acquired lands around Jackpot Bay, Paddy Bay, Hogan Bay, and Junction Island. Restore these lands to the MA1 designation. These acquired lands are important for the restoration of the Sound. Please note that wilderness is still listed as an injured resource. Protecting these lands also is required by the 1997 purchase agreements of these lands.

5. Choose Alternative D Wilderness Recommendation, with the addition of the Nellie Juan Lake area-one of the most wild and remote places in the Chugach Forest-and USFS land on Elrington Island, and the EVOS-acquired lands around Jackpot Bay, Paddy Bay, Hogan Bay, and Junction Island. This alternative, with these additions, will uphold the EVOS purchase agreements and best supports a healthy, vibrant ecosystem and the human interests of this area.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to comment one last time. I also offer my full support for the more detailed comments provided by the Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation. The Chugach National Forest, Prince William Sound, and in particular the WSA, is in dire need of a strong management plan that will guide managers toward keeping it as wild as possible-for it's that wildness, and the concurrent fish and wildlife and scenery, that people flock to experience, and that we as humans need.

Sincerely,
Jill Wittenbrader
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