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Comments:

Chugach Forest Plan comments

November 1, 2018

Chugach National Forest Management Plan Revision Team:

Greetings and thanks for considering my comments on the proposed Chugach National Forest Plan. I urge you to make sure the Plan provides clear guidance for management of our extraordinary Chugach National Forest and its incomparable Prince William Sound.

Prince William Sound is arguably the finest marine ecosystem in North America. For over 40 years I have been blessed to live in this region with its incredible beauty, extraordinary wildlife and magnificent wilderness. Over four decades I have worked variously as a seasonal Forest Service employee in the Cordova Ranger District, a commercial salmon and herring fisherman, a wilderness guide, a killer and humpback whale researcher with the North Gulf Oceanic Society, and a fish and wildlife habitat conservation activist in the years following the crisis of the 1989 Exxon oil spill.

There is really no place in the world like Prince William Sound and it is still recovering from oil spill injuries. I believe we need to do everything we can to celebrate and protect its extraordinary wilderness values. I hope you'll revise the Plan with the following suggestions:

1. Put the word "wilderness" back in the Plan language as it has been in previous forest plans. The current 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.

1. Restore the monitoring of conditions in the WSA to the Forest Monitoring Program. Monitoring is essential to manage and maintain this area for wilderness characteristics. The WSA has experienced degradation 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 doing that

1. Add a Forest Order to clearly deny use of chainsaws except for subsistence purposes. Chainsaw vandalism has been destroying some scenic beaches and camping areas. It's an unnecessary travesty to a place so many folks wish to enjoy.

1. Include within the WSA the Chenega EVOS-acquired lands around Jackpot Bay, Paddy Bay, Hogan Bay, and Junction Island. These places are significant in helping restore the Sound post oil spill, and protecting these lands is required by the 1997 purchase agreements. Wilderness is still listed as an injured resource, so please restore these lands to the MA1 designation.

1. 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 my thanks to you for consideration of my heartfelt comments. There is no place in the world like Prince William Sound, a crown jewel within the US National Forest system. Let's do all we can to protect its health and vibrant beauty.

Sincerely,

David Lynn Grimes  
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