

A NEW ALTERNATIVE

Supplement to the Kenai Winter Access Draft EIS

Chugach National Forest, Seward Ranger District

OCTOBER 2006

For more information and to comment on this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement:

Forest Supervisor

Joe Meade, Chugach National Forest

Information Contacts

Sharon Randall, Chugach National Forest
3301 C Street, Suite 300, Anchorage, AK
99503, (907) 743-9497.

Karen Kromrey, Seward Ranger District,
Chugach National Forest, 334 4th Avenue
P.O. Box 390, Seward, AK 99664,
(907)-224-3374.

Mail Comments to

Chugach National Forest Attn: Kenai Winter
Access 3301 C Street,
Suite 300 Anchorage, AK 99503.

E-mail Comments to

comments-alaska-chugach@fs.fed.us.

Please put "kenai winter access" in the subject line.

The Preferred Alternative

Dateline: Seward

Last spring the Chugach National Forest held a series of collaborative workshops to discuss the different alternatives detailed in the Kenai Winter Access draft Environmental Impact Statement. The public's comments on the DEIS, gathered from these meetings, were used to create a new "preferred" alternative. This alternative has been added as an option to the DEIS.

The paper you are holding in your hand is the official supplement to the DEIS. It serves as an important update for all who expressed interest and participated in this effort. Because the new Preferred Alternative includes elements that were not fully analyzed in the draft EIS the Forest Service is required under NEPA to produce this supplement. It is published here as an addition to the alternatives presented in the DEIS and explains the differences in the Preferred Alternative.

What to expect next:

The publication of this Supplement in the Federal Register (expected October 20, 2006) begins a new 45 day comment period. We look forward to hearing any additional comments. Comments provided previously during this two-year process will continue to be used in this analysis. After the comment period an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) will review all the comments and prepare the Final EIS. All comments will be considered in determining modifications to the proposal, performing more analysis, or providing additional information on developing a selected alternative for the Final EIS.

Usually when the Final EIS is published, a Record of the Decision (ROD) will be issued documenting the selected alternative and providing rationale for the decision. The Forest Service expects to publish the ROD and Final EIS in March 2007.

Public Involvement Summary

January 2003

The Regional Forester withdrew the part of the 2002 Revised Chugach Forest Plan decision closing the Carter-Crescent Lakes area to winter motorized use.

February 2004

The Chugach National Forest began a site-specific analysis for the Carter-Crescent Lakes Area.

March 2004

CNF hosted a series of open-house / listening sessions attended by over 80 people.

February 2005

A series of 3-hour collaborative workshops held in Moose Pass, Seward, Soldotna, and Anchorage.

March and April, 2005

Over 100 people participated in a second series of 6-hour collaborative workshops held in Soldotna, Anchorage, and Seward.

April 23, 2005

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to publish an EIS was published in the Federal Register, generating over 300 comments.

May 2005

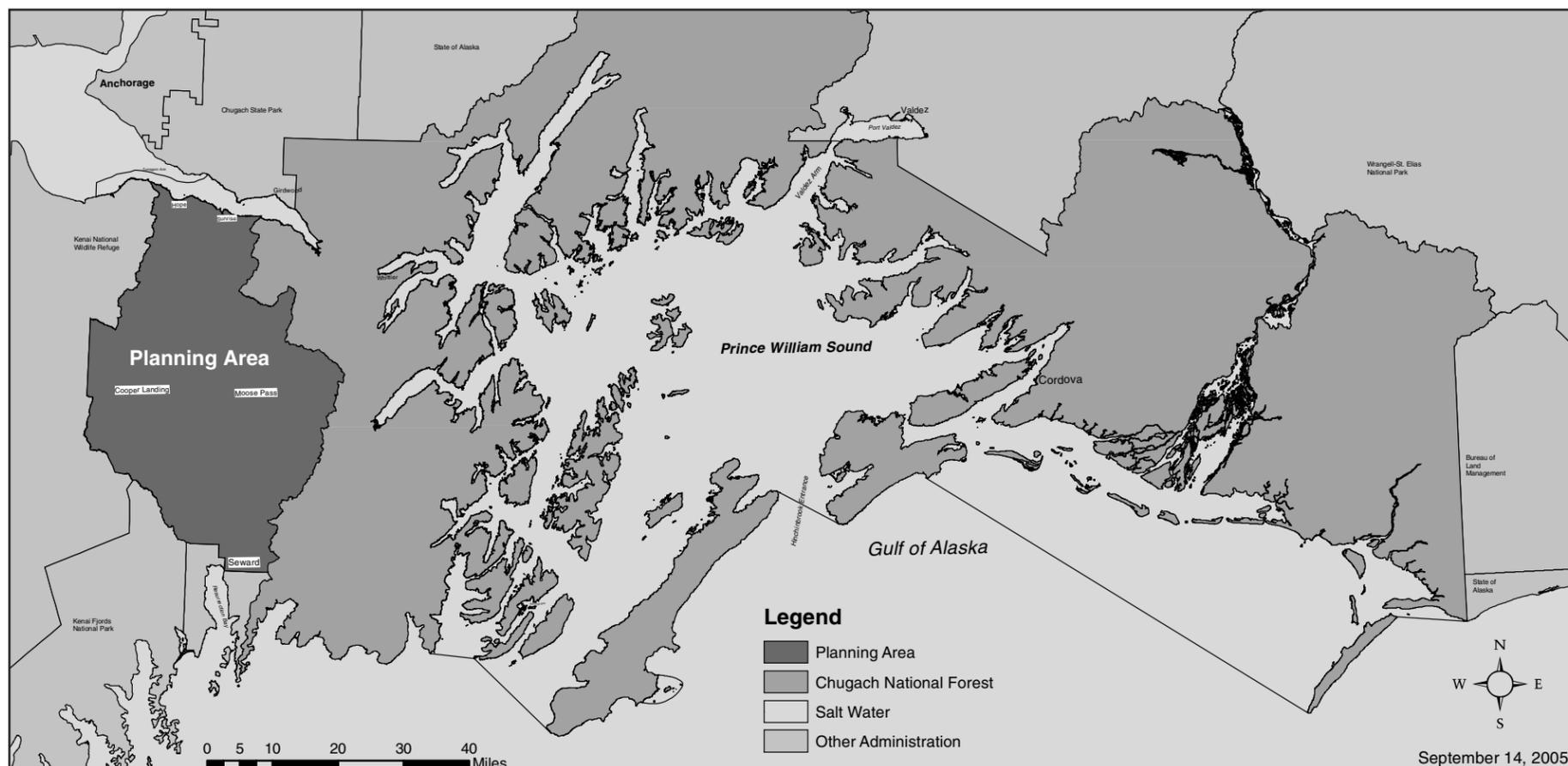
Open houses were held in Anchorage, Seward, Girdwood, Moose Pass, Cooper Landing, and Soldotna to provide an update on the progress of the project.

April-May 2006

The DEIS is published in April. During the month of May, over 60 people participated in collaborative workshops in Anchorage, Moose Pass, Soldotna, and Cooper Landing to review the DEIS.

May-June 2006

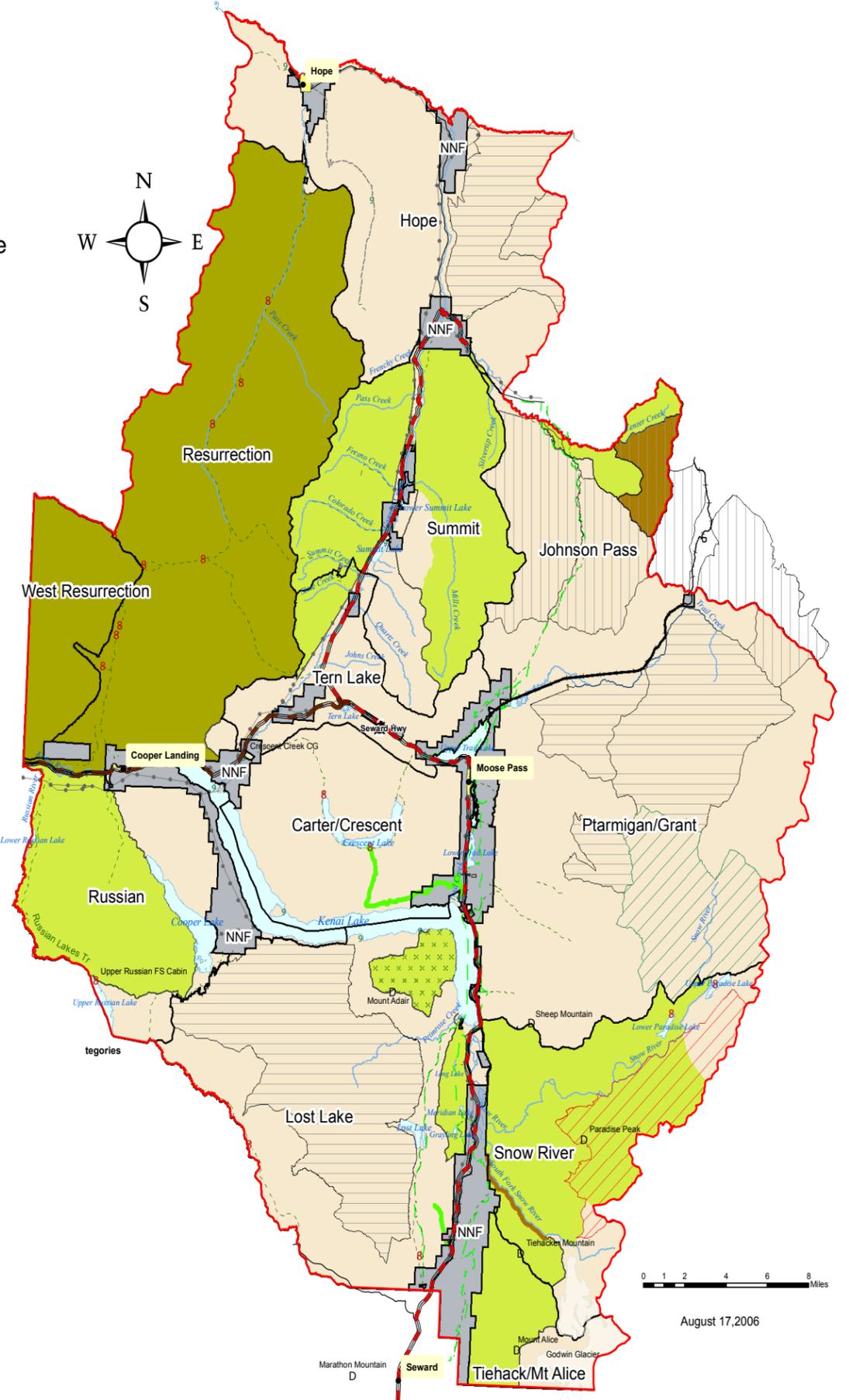
Over 170 comments were received from individuals and organizations. An additional 1000 form letters were received.



Kenai Winter Access EIS Planning Area

Map of Preferred Alternative

-  Open to All Motorized Use
-  Open to Helicopters; Closed to Snowmachines
-  Season On / Season Off Alternating Year Use
-  Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence
-  Other Ownership
-  Water
-  Research Natural Area - Black Mountain Closed to Motorized Use
-  District and Project Area Boundary
-  Forest Service Campgrounds
-  Forest Service Cabins
-  Area Permitted for Commercially Guided Helicopter Skiing
-  Exploratory Area Under Limited One-Year Permit for Guided Helicopter Skiing
-  Exploratory Area Cleared for Guided Helicopter Skiing, but Permitting Deferred
-  Exploratory Area Cleared but Permit not to be Issued for Guided Helicopter Skiing
-  Proposed Access Corridor: Open to Motorized Use
-  Proposed Access Corridor: Closed to Motorized Use
-  Proposed Access Corridor: Easement Required
-  Seward Highway
-  Sterling Highway
-  Railroad
-  Powerlines
-  Trails
-  Proposed Iditarod National Historic Trail



Comparison of Alternatives in the Kenai Winter Access Draft EIS

	No Action Alternative	Supplemental EIS Preferred Alternative	Draft EIS Proposed Action	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Annual Swap Resurrection and West Resurrection	Yes	None	None	None	None
Season A/Season B Scenario	None	Resurrection and West Resurrection Season A/Season B annually between motorized and non-motorized	Resurrection and West Resurrection Season A/Season B annually between motorized and non-motorized	Resurrection alternates (Season A/Season B) with Carter-Crescent	Resurrection and West Resurrection Season A/Season B with Russian, Carter-Crescent, and a portion of Snow River
Designated Access Corridors	None	2 non-motorized (1 in Lost Lake and 1 in Carter-Crescent) 1 motorized in the Snow River unit	2 non-motorized (1 in Lost Lake and 1 in Carter-Crescent) 1 motorized in the Snow River unit	None	2 in Lost Lake (1 motorized and 1 non-motorized)
Trail River Campground	Non-motorized	Motorized	Motorized	Non-motorized	Motorized
Motorized Corridors	No designated corridors	Cooper Landing to Sterling Y to Moose Pass. Also Sterling Y to Hope Y	Cooper Landing to Sterling Y to Moose Pass. Also Sterling Y to Hope Y	Cooper Landing to Sterling Y to Moose Pass. Also Sterling Y to Lower Summit Lake (east and west side of hwy).	Cooper Landing to Sterling Y to Moose Pass. Also Sterling Y to Lower Summit Lake (east side of hwy only).
Helicopter skiing Ptarmigan/ Grant and Snow River	Yes – Pt/Grant No – Snow River	Yes – Pt/Grant No – Snow River	No – Pt/Grant Yes – Snow River	Yes – Pt/Grant Yes – Snow River	Yes – Pt/Grant No – Snow River
Snow River Unit		All of North Fork and Lower South Fork closed to Motorized	The southern slopes of the South Fork of the Snow River would be non-motorized. The rest of the Snow River unit would be motorized.	Lower North Fork and Lower South Fork closed to Motorized	North Fork in closed to Motorized in Season B with Carter/Crescent and Russian

How your ideas were used in the Preferred Alternative

In the Summit area, the non-motorized boundary on the east side of the Summit unit has moved to the top of the ridge between Mills Creek and The Summit Lakes.

The entire west side of the Summit unit is now designated as non-motorized (except for narrow strips of land along the highway corridor between the power line and the Seward Highway).

Most of the Snow River Unit is now designated as non-motorized (with the exception of a corridor along the South Fork of the Snow River to provide motorized access to the Nellie Juan area).

The Johnson Pass Trail and Trail Creek would also provide a winter route for motorized access to the Nellie Juan area. The Snow River Unit would be closed to helicopter-guided skiing. Permitted helicopter-guided skiing would be permitted in the deferred exploratory area of the Ptarmigan/Grant Unit. The General Operating Requirements from the Commercially Guided Helicopter Skiing Record of Decision, regarding helicopter travel over non-motorized areas, would apply in all areas.

The Carter-Crescent unit would remain motorized at all times and at the same time the size of the non-motorized areas in the Summit, Russian, Snow River, and Tiehack/Mt Alice units would be increased.

The Russian Lakes Trail in the Russian Unit would be open for winter-motorized use and would serve as the boundary between motorized and non-motorized sections of the area.

The existing non-motorized area in Lost Lake was expanded slightly to provide additional non-motorized opportunities and the Trail River Campground was opened for winter-motorized use.

Finally, we addressed the safety concerns brought up regarding multiple-use trails by proposing non-motorized access corridors in the Lost Lake and Carter-Crescent units.

What about Cabin Availability

Motorized users would have access to 13 cabins in Season A and 4 cabins in Season B. Non-motorized users would have exclusive access to 4 cabins in Season A and 13 in Season B.

Get your copy of the original Draft EIS

To request your copy of the DEIS on hardcopy or cd, call 743-9500, email mailroom r10 chugach@fs.fed.us. or go to www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/ to download it in PDF format.

Milly Lindall
Chugach National Forest
3301 C Street, Anchorage, AK 99508
(907) 743-9500

What about new environmental effects in the Preferred Alternative?

You can find effects for most of the features of the Preferred Alternative, which is similar to the Proposed Action in the draft EIS, but here are some items to consider that resulted from the changes that we have described here.

Recreational Opportunities

In the Summit Unit, recreational opportunities for motorized uses would increase. The amount of quality motorized terrain available that is easily accessible from both the state highway and adjacent private lands would increase. The opportunities for non-motorized uses in this Unit would be the same as displayed in the DEIS Proposed Action.

In the Snow River Unit, non-motorized opportunities would be substantially increased by having the majority of the unit managed as non-motorized. A high quality motorized opportunity would still remain with the ability to access Nellie Juan via the South Fork of the Snow River. While opportunities for guided helicopter skiing would no longer exist in this Unit, the effects on recreationists, if any, would be minimal since ample opportunities in similar terrain exist. This alternative would make the Lower Paradise Cabin solely available for non-motorized users while the Upper Paradise Cabin would continue to be managed for multiple user groups. Since the cabins are difficult to access and winter cabin use is extremely low and entirely dependent on winter snow conditions, little or no effect on recreation opportunities is expected.

Shared Use: Potential Encounters

The potential for encounters on the west side of the Summit unit are the same as displayed for the Proposed Action of the DEIS. However, the expansion of the motorized terrain to the east of the Seward Highway provides a much larger area in which encounters could occur. Since the area around Summit Lake is desirable to both groups, it is likely that some conflict may occur. However, clear features to discern boundaries on the east side of the highway should reduce confusion and conflicts between groups.

In the Snow River Unit, the potential for encounters in the North Fork of the Snow River would be eliminated. However, some encounters would occur when snow conditions are favorable along the flat terrain of the South Fork of the Snow River. The expanded terrain for non-motorized uses would provide an opportunity to recreate away from the shared area and experience no encounters. Because the motorized corridor boundary would be the river, confusion and the potential for conflict would be reduced or eliminated.

Opportunity for Quiet

The opportunities for quiet in the Summit Unit would be the same as displayed for the Proposed Action in the DEIS.

Natural quiet in the North Fork of the Snow River would be optimized as a result of no motorized access to the area. Although the upper portion of the North Fork of the Snow River would be open to motorized use, it would minimally affect one's ability to experience natural quiet because most non-motorized use occurs in the lower reaches of the drainage. Natural quiet may not be attainable along the South Fork of the Snow River due to shared access however, opportunities would exist by traveling farther off the motorized corridor to seek natural quiet.

Wildlife

Because the percent of affected habitat for any particular species does not change across alternatives, and the other criteria used to evaluate population effects are not influenced by changes between Preferred Alternative and the Proposed Action, the level of effect and risk to populations for all species is the same as described for the Proposed Action in the DEIS.

Generally, the Proposed Action allows a greater percentage of motorized use than the Preferred Alternative, so will have a greater potential to affect individual animals of most species because both motorized and non-motorized users and effects may be present.

Specifically, the Preferred Alternative would result in a reduction in the percent of habitat affected by motorized use and reduction in potential effects to individuals of the following species: brown bear sows with cubs (-6%) brown bears without cubs (-22%), moose (-22%), wolves (-22%), wolverines (-5%), bald eagles (-7%), black bears (-8%), migratory birds, (-6%), small mammals (-6%), lynx (-9%), and potentially river otters.

There is an increase in the percent of habitat affected by motorized use and a minor increase in potential effects to individuals of the following species in the Preferred Alternative: brown bear denning habitat (1%) and mountain goats (1%).

There is no change in the percent of habitat affected by motorized use and no change in potential effects to individuals of the following species in the Preferred Alternative: brown bear (core areas), northern goshawks, Dall sheep, barren-ground caribou, and marbled murrelet.

In the Snow River unit, cumulative effects resulting from heli-ski operations would be eliminated for all species listed above with the exception of barren-ground caribou and Dall sheep. These species have no existing or potential habitat in the affected area.