December 4, 2003

To: U.S. Forest Service, Glacier Ranger District

RE: Iditarod National Historic Trail

I support prohibiting motorized access on Iditarod Trail segments in the Girdwood area. I highly value natural quiet and clean air. I recreate outdoors an average of at least one hour per day, 5 days per week in the Girdwood area. Whether summer or winter, I prefer the wooded trails for hiking or skiing. I often take my children and out of town guests on the Winner Creek Trail and on the Crow Pass Trail. Motorized use of these trails would severely diminish the quality experience these trails afford.

Not only would motorized vehicles trample the trails, exhaust and noise levels associated with snowmachines would prevent me from using these areas. These trails are currently excellent for hiking, skiing, birding, plant identification, painting/drawing - activities that are quiet and low impact. Opening these trail segments to motorized use would be a severe detriment to resource values in our community. Our most valuable resource is the natural environment; it's why most of us live here.

Motorized use of these trails would very much change the local community character. The 1995 Girdwood Area Plan listed "preserve Girdwood's natural environment, provide facilities and service to maintain and enhance the quality of community life" as broad goals. The 2001 Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation (CAT) Master Plan listed (p. 13-14) quality of life, environment, and community character as priorities. See Appendix B, p. 1-2 of the CAT plan; nowhere on these pages which describe components and a guiding vision for Girdwood's recreation and tourism economy are motorized uses listed, except for sno-cat skiing. Allowing motorized use along trails in the Girdwood area would greatly alter the status quo, and thus contradict the values outlined in these plans, which engaged many citizens and incorporated significant feedback from local community members throughout lengthy planning processes. That should be respected.

As a member of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors from 1998-2002, I heard extensive testimony concerning snowmobile use in the Girdwood Valley. See the attached letters and resolution that are part of the public record. There was clear opposition to opening Girdwood trails to snowmobile use. I also attended well over fifty meetings concerning another controversial issue – that being the placement of a railroad spur the length of the Girdwood Valley. The majority of community members was opposed to construction of a rail spur, primarily because it would bisect and impact treasured, historical and commonly used cross country ski trails. Concerns expressed were those of noise, pollution, smell, and visible presence of the train and tracks. Presence of snowmobiles would only heighten those concerns.

Thank you for your consideration. Do not allow motorized use of trail segments in the Girdwood area.

Julie Jonas

Julie Jonas

Municipality of Anchorage

Rick Mystrom, Mayor

Department of Public Works

Girdwood Board of Supervisors

P.O. Box 390 • Girdwood, Alaska 99587

January 20, 1999

Fay Von Gemmingen, Chairperson
Municipal Assembly
Municipality of Anchorage
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

Re: AO 98-192

Dear Ms. Von Gemmingen,

Enclosed please find resolution 99-1 adopted by the Girdwood Board of Supervisors at our last regular meeting, January 18, 1999.

As indicated in our earlier letter to you, many people in Girdwood have spoken out about snowmachining. The Trails committee and Land Use committee have both communicated to us strong opposition to opening municipal lands to snowmachining. This is a controversial issue and warrants proper public process.

The GBOS strongly recommends that the Municipal land in Girdwood be excluded from AO 98-192 because we intend to address the issue of snowmachining via our own process which we have begun, and we are concerned that this ordinance will allow the assembly to designate snowmachining areas and trails for us.

Sincerely,

Brooks Chandler

Brooks Chandler
Chair

Municipality of Anchorage

Rick Mystrom, Mayor

Department
Public Wor

Girdwood Board of Supervisors

P.O. Box 390 • Girdwood, Alaska 99587

GBOS RESOLUTION 99-1

The Girdwood Board of Supervisors requests that municipal land in Girdwood valley be excluded from the area affected by AO 98-192

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Assembly is considering AO 98-192 to allow for legal snowmachine use on designated areas, trails and other specifically designated rights-of-way within the Municipality of Anchorage; and

WHEREAS, Girdwood residents in three recent public meetings have expressed a desire that snowmachine use remain illegal on municipal land in all areas of the Girdwood valley except for safety issues and trail grooming; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources has determined that 95.5% of public land in southcentral Alaska is open to legal snowmachine use; and

WHEREAS, the areas of Bird Creek Regional Park, Twenty-Mile River, Placer River, Portage River, and Turnagain Pass are near Girdwood and legal snowmachine use is allowed in those areas; and

WHEREAS, Girdwood valley is one mile wide and six miles long and noise from snowmachine use can easily travel throughout the valley; and

WHEREAS, many trails in Girdwood valley are used for cross country skiing, ski-joring, snowshoeing, and dog mushing, snowmachines are an incompatible use because of safety factors on these trails.

NOW THEREFORE, the Girdwood Board of Supervisors resolves:

That all municipal land in the Girdwood valley be excluded from the designation of legal snowmachine use if the Anchorage Assembly approves AO NO. 98-192, amending AMC 9.42.020.

PASSED AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by the Girdwood Board of Supervisors this 18th Day of January, 1999.

Brooks Chandler

Brooks Chandler, Chair
Girdwood Board of Supervisors

Municipality of Anchorage

Rick Mystrom, Mayor

Department of Public Work

Girdwood Board of Supervisors

P.O. Box 390 • Girdwood, Alaska 99587

December 7, 1998

Larry Houle
Heritage Land Bank
Municipality of Anchorage
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

Dear Larry,

At the regular meeting of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors on October 19, 1998, a motion was passed 4-1 which stated that this letter would be written to communicate to the HLB and the Assembly and related municipal agencies the response of the community to a proposal by Alaska Snowmobile Safaris for a permit from the HLB to operate commercial guided snowmachine tours on municipal lands in Girdwood. In addition to this permit request, there was some discussion by Alaska Snowmobile Safaris before the Assembly that a municipal ordinance should be amended to allow this as well. The representatives of Alaska Snowmobile Safaris (Natasha and Rudi von Imhof) presented their ideas for a 2-3 hour trip in Girdwood to the Land Use Committee, the Trails Committee, and to the GBOS. After hearing the public's concerns, they decided to withdraw their proposal for now because it was apparent that a number of residents were not in favor of any of the options proposed. We commend them for their response after listening to the community.

This proposal generated quite a bit of discussion throughout the community, and the effort put forth by Girdwood residents should be reported to our elected representatives and those responsible for the administration of MOA property in Girdwood.

At the Trails Committee meeting, the nine voting members of the fifteen member committee voted 8-0, with one abstention, to oppose this proposal - primarily to uphold current municipal ordinances #9.42.060 and #9.42.020, A,5. They also felt that the safety of other recreational users would be compromised, and that if the ordinance was changed in this instance, there would be no way to regulate other private or commercial users on the same, or other routes. Further information is included in the Trails Committee report to the GBOS. As reported to the GBOS from the Land Use Committee, two votes taken at the regular Land Use Committee meeting on October 12, 1998 and of 26 people present:

Vote: Should the ordinance be amended to allow snowmachining in Girdwood?
Yes- 0
No - 26

Vote: Should special use permits for commercial or private snowmachine use be allowed in Girdwood?
Yes: - 1
No: - 25

The GBOS also heard testimony at the regular GBOS meetings in September and October regarding the Von Imhof proposal. Several written comments were received, and all of this testimony is a matter of public record, available for review. The majority of this public input reflects opposition to snowmachining in Girdwood.

Therefore, it is the intent of the GBOS to communicate to the HLB, Assembly, and Municipal Parks and Recreation that should another proposal come forward regarding snowmachining, please understand that many people in our community expressed opposition to snowmachining in the valley, and any future proposal's merit should be decided upon by taking into account the great deal of public input noted above that was received as a result of Alaska Snowmobile Safaris' proposal.

Please feel free to contact us if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Brooks Chandler

Brooks Chandler
Chairman

cc: Fay Von Gemmingen
Pat Abney
Bob Bell
Carolyn Bloom