

SAR - DEIS - Chapter 3 - Uses - Recreation and Tourism

Comment # Comment

0027589-010 2.15. Recreation & Tourism. Allow for future recreational mining, guided fishing and commercial (tourist) oriented gold panning operations throughout the Forest where applicable.

0028504-019 INADEQUACIES OF THE DEIS
Recreation Information (Resource Assessment):

We have maintained throughout our dialogue with the Forest Service regarding commercial helicopter uses on the forest and throughout the Forest Planning process that the Forest Service has not done adequate research to understand past, current and projected future levels of recreational uses on the forest. We have requested that the Forest Service undertake a scientifically credible survey of current uses and future desired uses of the forest regarding recreation. Thus far, the Forest Service has not responded to our request. Thus we believe that the Resource Assessment regarding recreation and tourism on the forest is incomplete and inadequate. Further, we do not believe that the Forest Service has adequate information to make sound management decisions which will adequately protect fish and wildlife habitat and species on the forest and meet the desires and needs of recreationists. Therefore, we believe the DEIS is inadequate, and violates the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

0029059-012 Comment #13: Regarding Recreation and Tourism Groups, the Semi-primitive Groups category includes motorboats etc. Maximum party size is limited to a group of 100, Table 2-6, p. 2-18. This level appears to be adequate to accommodate the small cruise ships presently plying the Sound area that may do occasional bow landings to put tourists ashore for temporary day trip activities. This party size should not be reduced.

0029120-001

1. On Page 3-439, Line 704 of the draft EIS it is noted that recreation and tourism employment in the region is projected to increase at the same rate in all alternatives over the next ten years. What is the rate of growth in recreation and tourism employment you are using and what, specifically, are those projections?
2. On Page 3-442, Line 823 of the draft EIS it is noted that recreation and tourism is projected to increase at the same rate in all alternatives over the next ten years and that the demand for dispersed recreation over the next ten years will be met in all alternatives, but that demand for developed recreation will not. Again, what are the specific projections and rate used to calculate changes in the demand for recreation and tourism in general, and specifically for dispersed and developed recreation?
3. As noted in the previous paragraph, the plan will provide a ten-year supply of opportunities for dispersed recreation. However, since this plan has a 10-15 year planning horizon and it has been at least 16 years since the last plan update, will there be an opportunity in 2010 to update the plan to reevaluate and amend the supply of opportunities for dispersed recreation to meet continued demand?

Comment # Comment

0029063-018

Page 2-3. Recreation and Tourism The objective (last bullet) that provides for interpretive and ~ ~ (^O conservation education should specifically mention minimizing disturbance to wildlife in conjunction with recreational activities. This would include avoidance of marine mammal / (c4/ interactions in conjunction with use of coastal areas.

Page 2-9, Last Paragraph We concur with your guidelines to avoid disturbing important wildlife areas when designmg and locating facilities and to apply seasonal restrictions when necessary. In ~ ~ addition to incorporating seasonal restrictions on human activities, this guideline should include 54 tO incorporating (where possible) information regarding minimizing human wildlife (e.g., marine

mammals, nesting shorebirds) interactions (i.e., through interpretive signs, educational material / ~1

included with use permits, etc.).

0029063-038

The Draft EIS states on page 3-258 that most recreation and tourism OCCQrS in valleys with roads and trails, and along shorelines and concentrated uses in these areas are expected. Under the Preferred Alternative, total recreation visits are expected to be 7.2 million per year. Over a 10year period of this Forest Plan, that equates to 72 million visits. Demand for services will most likely increase. Both highway and campground constmction, including picnic areas, parking lots, and visitor centers could present threats to the marbled murrelet through loss of habitat, nest disturbamce, and/or increasing potential predation ffrom corvids associated with human activities. A better understanding of USFS activities and effects, as they relate to this species, is essential to ensure its long-temm viability.

Adult mortality ffrom both natural causes and human activities occurs in the marine envirovment. Marbled murrelets are adversely affected by oil and other pollutant spills. Although these spills undoubtedly harm the marbled murrelet prey base, their principal adverse affect is the death of the bird in the area of the event. Smaller incidents of oil discharge, such as cleaning bilge pumps, can cumulatively result in mortality of the birds. Net fisheries can lead to significant increases in mortality to adults, subadults, and juveniles. During a 1990-91 FWS marine mammal survey, an estimated 300-1000 marbled murrelets were recorded as being taken by nets (pers. com. K. Kuletz). We recommend the Final EIS should more thoroughly assess the shortand long-temm direct, secondary, and cumulative affects on marbled murrelet populations as a-/-4 result of increased recreational activities in PWS.

Comment # Comment

0028328-032 Recreation/Tourism

We commend the USDA's Forest Service for taking strong strides to move away from commercial logging, mining, and tax-payer subsidized road building. Prioritizing the importance stewardship and ecology, recreation and tourism, is the future of the National Forest system. According to a USFS commissioned survey of mostly Chugach communities, residents most favor managing the Forest for fish and wildlife habitat (1988 Summary Results, Alaska Pacific University survey of Alaska Residents, Planning for the Future of the Chugach National Forest, prepared by Greg Brown). Therefore, careful management of both recreation and tourism is critical to maintain the ecological, social and cultural values of this Chugach National Forest. Increased public access to the Western Sound through the Whittier tunnel, growing cruise ship industry pressures across the forest, and additional pressures to develop wild lands with destination lodges, "hut to hut" projects, and helicopter tourism threatens to destroy the fragile ecology of this rich landscape. The Alaska Center for the Environment supports tourism and recreation businesses which are locally-based and demonstrate good stewardship to the land and waters of the Chugach. Since the commercial cruise ship industry has failed to show good stewardship for the pristine waters and coastline of Alaska, it has no place in the Chugach National Forest. Some whale studies in Glacier Bay are beginning to show that underwater noise from cruise ships have proven whales inability to communicate to one another. This is particularly concern for Prince William Sound species, please see further discussion under Wildlife.

Capacity and Allocation Recommendation: We question the carrying capacity numbers and levels of acceptable change in the DEIS. It has been pointed out to the Planning Team and throughout the revision planning process that the numbers used for carrying capacity are outrageously high because they are from Lower 48 forests. In order to adequately protect the resource, carrying capacity numbers must reflect the numbers appropriate for Alaska-specific forests. There are no permanent protections in place to prevent population pressures on the Forest—notably regions like the Kenai Peninsula. The Forest Service absolutely must get the levels of current and projected use on the forest by conducting a carrying capacity study to adequately address cumulative impacts immediately, beginning in 2001.

Without adequately researched levels and types of recreation currently on the forest, we do not feel that the Forest Service has information to do sequential analysis of past, present and predictable future conditions regarding recreation on the forest. With this data, matched with baseline studies on the impacts to wildlife of recreation activities, the Forest Service would have the scientific information necessary to determine permitting decisions, closures, and restrictions to recreation and tourism levels.

To reiterate, the Chugach National Forest lands have no permanent protections in place. Sound carrying capacity numbers and adequate recreation and wildlife data will greatly reduce the risk of jeopardizing irreversible impacts, such as losing more effective brown bear habitat and cause a direct downward spin in population numbers.

As required in CFR Sec. 219.21 (e), Recreation resource, "formulation and evaluation of alternatives shall be coordinated with recent and proposed recreation activities of local and state land use or recreation plans". The DEIS does not reflect this level of coordination with regard to recreation and /or tourism activities on State or private lands.

0034891-005

5. Recreation and Tourism. The Cumulative Effects section on inventoried Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is inadequate. The analysis is contained in a single sentence: 'In specific locations, where new facilities, increases in use levels, or change in recreation activities are proposed, the inventoried ROS may change.' (p. 3-285) The Forest Service is aware that the cumulative effects of increased recreation and tourism on the Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound are important public issues.

0036324-019

Comment #13: Regarding Recreation and Tourism Groups, the Semi-primitive Groups category includes motorboats etc. Maximum party size is limited to a group of 100, Table 2-6, p. 2-18. This level appears to be adequate to accommodate the small cruise ships presently plying the Sound area that may do occasional bow landings to put tourists ashore for temporary day trip activities. This party size should not be reduced.

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0036573-006 Please also evaluate the cumulative impacts of commercial ventures in the waters of Prince William Sound, like the proposed mobile gas stations, restaurants, lodges, etc. The direct and cumulative impacts of all these activities have not been adequately considered in the EIS.