

SAR - Forest Plan - Chapter 3 - 212

Comment # Comment

0021020-001 I have just reviewed the map of the CLMP Preferred Alternative Working Draft and I wanted to give you some site specific comments on the Spencer Area of the Placer River Valley at about milepost 54 of the Alaska Railroad.

Comment #1: The Spencer pit and quarry sites are classified as 'Back Country Motorized Prescription'. This appears to be an oversight, because although material sites may be conditionally approved under the prescription, the Standards and Guidelines for the prescription imply that the mineral material sites in this prescription will be kept small and will be only developed to support trail or recreation facility development.

In 1997 the Forest Supervisor requested the withdrawal of 600 acres of the site from mineral entry 'in order to make high quality rock and gravel materials available to nearby communities for private and public works projects.' The intent of the mineral withdrawal was to make the mineral materials available for export on the Alaska Railroad in large quantities under a long term material contract. The Spencer material source is important for regional projects throughout South Central Alaska and the rail corridor. The 'Back Country Motorized Prescription' appears to be in conflict with this goal and the rationale for the mineral withdrawal.

I request that you reconsider this prescription for the material site area and instead recommend the 'Resource Development Management Area Prescription.' The resource development designation is in accordance with the rationale for the mineral withdrawal, and will facilitate the development of this important mineral resource, There do not appear to be any areas in the CLMP Forest Plan which have received the 'Resource Development Management Area Prescription', but Spencer is an ideal candidate for that designation. The area is compact and has large proven reserves.

This would help the National Forest System fulfill its role as a multiple use resource area that provides key resources for the benefit of the public. The forest contains abundant public recreation opportunities, however areas with proven mineral potential are very site specific and should be conserved for that use until the resource is depleted.

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0027583-001

I am writing to issue my strong protest over the proposed change in horse use season on trails. Currently, the trails are open beginning July 1.

Under new regulations found in the Preferred Alternative, trails would be open to horse use starting June 1 instead of the current July 1. In my opinion, this is irresponsible land management as the trails are FAR TOO WET at this early time of year.

There is NO valid reason to allow horses on trails while they still are very wet, soils are unstable and the trails are still covered with patches of snow in many places.

Beginning as a seasonal USFS Trail Ranger in 1978, I have hiked these Chugach Trails for 22 years now, in all seasons. I have endured trails badly damaged by heavy horse use during hunting season for years now by what I consider to be irresponsible over allocation of permitted use days to Guide Outfitters.

I cannot sit back any longer and not speak out. In the strongest terms possible, I AM AGAINST EXPANDING THE SEASON TO HORSE USERS... PERIOD. They have proved time and time again they cannot practice restraint by staying off trails voluntarily during rainy stretches. Why would we want to expand their use periods??

They should instead be banned from more trails as the damage they create with the poor soils we have on Peninsula trails is appalling in places, especially Devil's Pass and Carter Lake Trail.

Comment # Comment

0034555-001

We would like to comment on Winter and Summer Motorized (helicopter, fixed wing, and snowmachine) Access to Remote Areas in the Chugach National Forest surrounding Valdez and Cordova. It is of paramount importance that these areas obtain the 212 - Back Country Winter and Summer Motorized prescription to provide for a range of recreation opportunities, group sizes and settings to meet current and future demands and to adhere to the Forest Service goal of caring for the land and serving the people.

Areas that necessitate Motorized Access because of their Remote nature, with suggested Prescription:

- P 244, High Alpine Region North of Port Fidalgo Bay, 212 - Backcountry Summer and Winter Motorized Allowed
- P 318, High Alpine Region North of Port Gravina Bay, 212 - Backcountry Summer and Winter Motorized Allowed
- P 200, High Alpine Region North of Sheep Bay, 212 - Backcountry Summer and Winter Motorized Allowed
- P 335, High Alpine Region North of Simpson Bay, 212 - Backcountry Summer and Winter Motorized Allowed
- P 108, North East Fork of the Columbia Glacier, 212 - Backcountry Summer and Winter Motorized Allowed
- P 107, Main Fork of the Columbia Glacier, 212 - Backcountry Summer and Winter Motorized Allowed

Facts:

- The Forest Service has completed a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for Commercially Guided Helicopter Skiing on the Glacier and Seward Ranger districts. This Decision is based on environmental analysis documented in a 1999 Environmental Assessment.
- Helicopter skiing is not a category identified by the Alaska Division of Governmental Coordination as affecting the coastal zone.
- Heli-skiing has No Significant Impact on backcountry lands and animal populations.
- Our aircraft land on rock, snow, and ice, leaving no permanent indication of their presence.
- Well run heli skiing operations can bring great benefits to communities like Valdez. As a year round company in Valdez, H2O provides services and jobs to contribute to the local economy with minimal adverse social, economic, and environmental affects.
- The majority of our activity occurs in late winter and early springtime when tourism, a mainstay of the Alaskan economy, has traditionally been non-existent.
- Heli-skiing and Heli-hiking would take place in the High Alpine, therefore not encroaching upon the coastal and river valley ecosystems.
- Heli-ski operators have created a new industry that has brought millions of

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dollars and new jobs to Alaska.

With a 1999 EA in the Glacier Ranger District, and the Goal of the Forest Service to disperse recreation opportunities, we feel that these areas would be best prescribed 212 - Backcountry Summer and Winter Motorized Allowed.

0034929-014

The Back Country Motorized prescription, from which it is derived, has generally been reserved by the Forest Service for the areas of the Chugach most heavily used by snowmachines, helicopters, and other motorized recreationists. Because of their ecological significance and fragility, much of the Delta's vast wetlands are now closed yearlong to motor vehicles including snow machines.

0035999-001

We would like to comment on Winter and Summer Motorized (helicopter, fixed wing, and snowmachine) Access to Remote Areas in the Chugach National Forest surrounding Valdez and Cordova. It is of paramount importance that these areas obtain the 212 - Back Country Winter and Summer Motorized prescription to provide for a range of recreation opportunities, group sizes and settings to meet current and future demands and to adhere to the Forest Service goal of caring for the land and serving the people. Without Motorized Access to these Remote Regions, 99.9% of the people who enjoy recreating in the backcountry would not get the chance to see and enjoy these lands.

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