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Service

Alaska Region

P.O. Box 21628  
Juneau, AK 99802-1628

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Subject: Initial Decision Criteria for the Chugach Forest Plan Revision

To: Forest Supervisor, Chugach National Forest

Enclosed are my revised set of initial decision criteria for the Chugach Forest Plan Revision. These decision criteria will be evaluated throughout the Forest Plan Revision process - a necessary and valuable first evaluation step was the public IDT session held on November 23, 1998. I have rewritten some criteria and provided more explanation of others based on our interactions at that meeting.

The criteria will be subject to change after analysis of public comment on the Draft Revised Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The decision criteria are one of several important considerations in the preparation of draft alternatives. Resolution of issues and management concerns are also key considerations. Some features of the Plan, such as fire protection of communities, are expected to vary little among alternatives and thus are not considered decision criteria.

JAMES A. CAPLAN  
Acting Regional Forester

Enclosure



## Regional Forester's Initial Decision Criteria for the Chugach Forest Plan Revision

My overall goal is to maintain the essentially wild character of the Chugach while providing for human use and enjoyment of its resources within the context of the USDA Forest Service Natural Resource Agenda. I also have a goal to aid rural communities located within or near the Forest in achieving self-described social and economic goals consistent with the Forest plan direction.

I will prefer alternatives that:

### *For Watershed Health and Restoration*

- Sustain biodiversity - alternatives will be evaluated based on a professionally recognized set of criteria and indices as described by the Society of American Foresters<sup>1</sup>.
- Promote restoration of impacted ecosystems to a condition that is within the range of natural variation at the watershed scale.
- Provide sufficient brown bear habitat on the Kenai Peninsula to support population objectives for brown bears mutually agreed to by the Forest Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.
- Maintain a high probability of providing habitat for viable populations of all species of fish and wildlife well distributed across the Forest, while maintaining habitat for sustainable populations of those species that are commonly hunted, trapped, or fished. Alternatives will be evaluated based on attainment of habitat objectives for management indicator species.

### *For Sustainable Forest Management*

- Encourage the emergence of new economic opportunities that are consistent with the wild character of the Chugach. "Wild character" here refers to the generally undeveloped qualities of the Chugach; this is not intended to prevent economic development but rather to support development with the lightest possible impacts on the land.
- Emphasize extraction and harvest of natural resource products in ways that are consistent with the wild character of the Chugach – support for environmentally sensitive mining or other development is part of this criterion – people can expect full access to their private properties.

### *For Roads*

- Concentrate on any new roads in areas that are contiguous to currently roaded areas and maximize non-roaded areas elsewhere.

### *For Recreation*

- Support water- and land-based recreation and tourism activities consistent with the wild character of the Chugach.

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<sup>1</sup> Biodiversity and sustainable forest management will be evaluated using the Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (C&I) as published in the Journal of Forestry, Vol. 93, No. 4, April 1995.