

Kevin and Erin J. Knotek  
P.O. Box 83  
Moose Pass, Alaska 99631  
October 22, 2002

Regional Forester  
USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region  
P.O. Box 21628  
Juneau, AK 99801-1628

Dear USDA Forest Service:

Enclosed please find a copy of our Appeal of the Preferred Alternative as described by the FEIS and the resulting Revised Forest Plan for the Chugach National Forest Record of Decision, R10 MB-480b.

As long time residents of Alaska living within the Chugach National Forest, we have been directly and negatively impacted by this decision. We have a long tradition of involvement in our National Forest management through the comment and planning process.... On this and many other issues. In the past, whether we agreed or not with forest management issues in our area, we always felt included in the process. However, this decision seems to have been formulated with the intent to disregard and even avoid the input of potentially effected groups and individuals.

The areas listed for closure to snow machine use will greatly reduce our quality of life here in the Moose Pass area. The traditional use of snow machines has long been established and is now being taken away arbitrarily. Such uses include travel between homes, personal use firewood gathering, transporting children to recreation area, grooming of ski trails, hunting, and fishing.

In addition, the impact these closures will have on the local winter economy is devastating. We all chose to live this rural lifestyle knowing the hardships. Through years of hard work we have established a viable year round community. This decision will have the effect of destroying that viability. Many of us will have to leave.

I do not believe this to be the goal of the Revised Forest Plan, but it will surely be the result.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Kevin and Erin J. Knotek. The signature for Kevin is on the left and for Erin is on the right, both in cursive.

Kevin and Erin J. Knotek  
(907) 288-3674

i) Demographic trends... ii) Employment, income, and other economic trends;... 2) Analyze community or region risk and vulnerability..." These requirements have not been met in regard to the winter months, the time of year most effected by this decision.

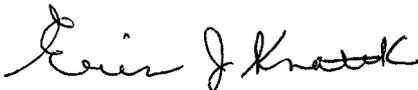
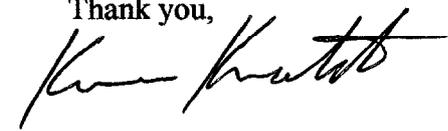
The decision also contradicts the stated fact in EIS 3-518 "for many Alaskans, proximity and access to natural environments and the various activities these environments support is a major amenity and fundamental reason for their choice to live where they do. This becomes another important way in which the Chugach National Forest can contribute to local economies within the planning area."

**For the reasons we have listed we feel the current decision is arbitrary and capricious, and we are seeking relief.**

To bring this decision in compliance with the Code of Federal Regulation and the stated goals of the Environmental Impact Statement the following actions must be taken:

- 1) Leave open the winter motorized use the four currently popular snow machine areas of Tern Lake West and North, Crescent and Carter Lakes, Trail River Campground, and Summit Lake North excepting Manitoba Mountain.
- 2) Perform the required Economic Impact Study with the emphasis on the local winter recreation economy and the inclusion local business owners. Consideration must be given to the fact that the communities most effected by the Decision (Moose Pass, Cooper Landing) are designated as "distressed communities" by the U. S. Congress under the Historically Underutilized Business Zone Act of 1997 (county code 122, qualified census tract 9543.00).
- 3) Place more consideration on the topographic features of any non-motorized areas considered as alternatives to the four areas listed above. The terrain must be suitable for skiing for a non-motorized area to achieve an appropriate level of utilization. Areas considered for non-motorized use could include the Sunrise Inn Area (Cooper Landing) and Mt. Alice (Seward).

Thank you,



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meaningfully in planning taking into account the diverse roles, jurisdictions, and responsibilities of interested and affected organizations, groups, and individuals.” It also goes against EIS 3-508 where it states, “The opinions of potentially affected residents are an important consideration in the planning decision.”

- 2) The areas closed for winter motorized use for the entire winter in the final decisions are not shown in any of the alternatives nor in the Draft Preferred Alternative that the public reviewed.

On page 29 of The Record of Decision it states, “The Preferred Alternative was constructed primarily by considering Alternatives A through F of the DEIS and combining components of each.” But in none of the alternatives or in the Draft Preferred Alternative are any of the currently popular snow machine areas closed in a winter long closure. The most restrictive closure in any of the alternative is having areas open for motorized use from December 1 through February 15.

The decision is to close four major popular snow machine areas year round for motorized use. These areas are Carter/Crescent Lake, Lower Russian Lakes, Tern Lake West and North, and Summit Lake. There is no way this decision can be considered a component of any of the alternatives.

In the EIS Chapter 2-19, it states, “Some changes have been made in the Preferred Alternative in the final EIS, in response to public comment and ID Team review (see preface, summary of Changes in the FEIS Preferred Alternative). However, these changes did not significantly affect outputs or the effects analysis.” The public did not get a chance to comment on the areas closed to winter motorized use all winter because they were not in the Draft Preferred Alternative or in any alternative. These changes are broad in nature and have a large impact on the surrounding communities.

- 3) Our final objection is the fact that the economic analysis does not reflect any economic data or analysis of how snow machine closures will impact local businesses during the winter months. The area businesses (Trail Lake Lodge, Summit Lake Lodge, local restaurants, and bed and breakfasts) were never contacted about the impact the closures would have on their ability to remain open year round.

The economic effects section starting on page 3-545 of the EIS only shows a “qualitative” analysis of the effects of each alternative. The content of this analysis is clearly lacking when in each alternative, only one sentence addresses the motorized vs. non-motorized winter recreation economic effects.

36 CFR 219.21 states in part “responsible official involves interested and effected people in planning for National Forest system lands, provides for the development and consideration of relevant social and economic information and analysis.” It also states that “the responsible official must develop or supplement the information and analysis related to the following: 1) Describe and analyze , as appropriate, the following:

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This letter is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR part 217, page 46 in the Record of Decision.

The decision we are appealing is the Preferred Alternative as described in the FEIS and the resulting Revised Forest Plan, specifically areas available for motorized and non-motorized winter activities, with modifications as further described in the ROD, as stated on page 3 of the ROD.

The document in which the decision is contained is the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan of the Chugach National Forest Record of Decision, R10 MB-480b. The date of the decision was May 31, 2002 and the Deciding Officer is Regional Forester Dennis E. Bschor.

The specific portions of the document to which we object are the closing to all winter motorized use of areas along the Seward and Sterling Highways from Moose Pass to Summit Lake and Cooper Landing; the closing of the Crescent Lake/ Carter Lake area to all winter motorized use; the closing of the Trail River Campground to all winter motorized use and the closing of Russian Lakes Trail to Aspen Flats Cabin to all winter motorized use.

Our reasons for these objections are as follows:

- 1) The public was not involved at key points in the environmental analysis process. Specifically, the communities most affected by the major changes in winter motorized use closed areas proposed in March 2001 were not directly involved in the final stages of the Revision process.

In the final EIS, chapter six/page 2 it states where the ID Team held its follow-up meetings. Missing from this list are the highly impacted communities of Moose Pass and Cooper Landing. The meeting in Seward was poorly advertised and not well attended. The public had no other way to find out that major changes were being proposed nor were there any further drafts released for formal comment.

This is a violation of 36 CFR 219.12 which states, "The responsible official must provide early and frequent opportunities for people to participate openly and

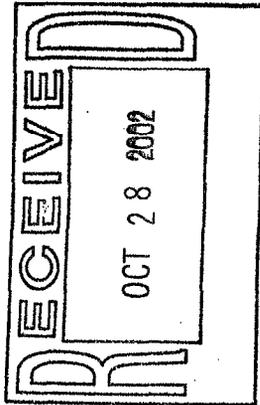
**CERTIFIED MAIL**

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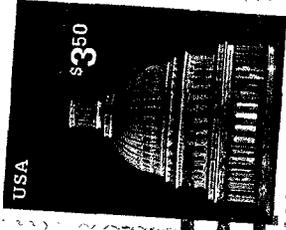
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*[Faint, illegible text from the reverse side of the envelope, likely a return receipt or address label.]*