

To the Forest Service,

I am a local Girdwood Community Member and also a very active outdoors person all over the local area and state. I missed the meeting December 4th for public comment and would like to submit this written comment please.

Our state is very lucky to have motivated people who want to preserve a large piece of history such as the Iditarod Trail and also open up access to this route for easier public use. I am supportive of multi use trails and frequent many of them all over the Kenai Peninsula and up north.

When I am on a multi use trail I am aware that there may be other users that are using other forms of travel. I am a non motorized user on whatever trails or non trail land I may recreate on. If and when I am on a multi use trail I am respectful and share the trail with good trail manners and support motorized users if they are also respectful and have proper trail manners. Trails that allow machines have a different air about them, and not just the air that you breathe. There is always the sense or sound of a machine around you if it is busy or even if you are just anticipating a motorized user your awareness is tuned into machines.

When I am on a trail that does not allow motorized vehicles there is a peacefulness and tranquility that the surroundings exude that is very rewarding. There is something to be said about being able to go out into the woods or on a mountain or up a valley and know that machines are not allowed. There is something to be said about just using our own people power to get somewhere to enjoy mother nature. The trail speaks it, the forest speaks it and maybe even the animals speak it.

I would like my comments to pertain to the Iditarod Trail from Seward to Girdwood. I have not been on many miles of the trail going from Seward to Girdwood but have spent many hours and days going through and up and over Girdwood north many times because it is so pleasurable every time. I think it would behoove everyone if there were certain sensitive areas of the south portion of the Trail towards Seward that is saved for non motorized use. This is special and the users will greatly appreciate it. Once machines have access it is difficult to go back. Over time, maybe a certain non motorized area can be reevaluated if machine use is a benefit. I do agree that certain sections should be shared with motorized users, it would be selfish and unfair to claim that machines should not be allowed on any of the trail.

Hope my comments help in the process.

Thanks so much,
Gabrielle Markel