



## Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan Questions and Answers

### What are the goals of the 2019 Land Management Plan?

The 2019 land management plan provides strategic guidance for managing cultural and natural resources for the 5.4 million acres of public land within the Chugach National Forest for approximately the next 15 years. The land management plan uses three broad goals to focus direction:

#### 1) Foster Collaborative Relationships

The Forest Service builds strong relationships; improves communication; expands volunteer capacity; increases youth engagement; develops shared land stewardship options and strategies; and collaborates with Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, State of Alaska, other federal agencies, adjacent landowners, communities, and nongovernmental organizations.

#### 2) Contribute to Social and Economic Sustainability

The Chugach National Forest contributes to the social and economic sustainability of communities within the plan area by maintaining intact, resilient ecosystems and their associated services, benefits, and multiple uses and sustained yields. These ecosystem services, benefits, and multiple uses and sustained yields contribute to rural Alaskan lifestyles; support rural economies both locally and regionally; and enhance the quality of life for present and future generations.

#### 3) Provide for Ecological Sustainability

Healthy watersheds of the Chugach National Forest provide for ecological integrity of aquatic, riparian and terrestrial ecosystems necessary to sustain a diversity of vegetation, fish, and wildlife communities, including the persistence of native species.

### How was the 2019 Land Management Plan developed?

The 2019 land management plan was developed by a team of natural resource specialists who coordinated with the public, other agencies, and local, state, and tribal government officials. The Forest Service used a broad range of public involvement methods during plan revision. Pre-assessment public workshops and meetings provided information on public uses and values. Assessment and preliminary need for change findings were shared through additional public meetings. Individual meetings and consultations were conducted with representatives of the State of Alaska, Alaska Native Tribes, and Alaska Native Corporations, and have been ongoing. The Forest Supervisor met regularly with the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council and consulted with the Council on plan components for lands acquired with Trustee Council funds. Planning team members met with organizations and gave presentations upon request. Thousands of public comments were received during two formal comment periods. All of the information generated through public involvement was considered in development of the land management plan.

### How will the 2019 Land Management Plan be different from the 2002 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan?

Although much of the management direction in the 2002 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan was adequate to provide sustainable, integrated resource management, several emphasis areas of management direction needed to be updated. New plan components were developed to strengthen relationships regarding mutual and shared interests (such as land ownership and entitlements, traditional uses, statutory rights including access to inholdings, and working agreements). Key changes in the plan include:





- Management Areas - The plan consolidates the 21 management areas from the 2002 plan into eight management areas. This makes the plan simpler and easier to use.
- Collaborative Relationships – The plan better integrates the interests of Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations and the State of Alaska.
- Wilderness Study Area Management - The approximately 1.9 million acre Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area is managed to preserve the area’s presently existing character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- Sustainable Recreation - The plan includes components to ensure that recreation sites and trail systems are ecologically, economically and socially sustainable, are supported by communities and partners, and reflect current and future public needs and demand, commensurate with Forest Service financial capabilities.
- Recreation Opportunity Spectrum – Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes were adjusted to better align with desired conditions and visitor use patterns. A diverse range of recreation opportunity spectrum classes across the national forest provides flexibility to address new uses and activities over the plan period.
- At-Risk Species – In accordance with the 2012 Planning Rule, the 2019 Land Management Plan replaces the former sensitive species list with plan components that support habitats for two species of conservation concern identified by the Regional Forester: the Dusky Canada Goose and Aleutian cress, and provides for the persistence of the federally endangered Steller sea lion and federally endangered Cook Inlet beluga whale.

## ALTERNATIVES

### How were alternatives from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluated?

Alternatives were analyzed in the draft environmental impact statement to determine how each would affect or impact social interests and cultural and natural resources within the planning area. Four alternatives were considered in detail. Alternative A is the no-action alternative, the 2002 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan. Alternative B is the 2015 draft land management plan released for public scoping. Alternatives C and D respond to the two significant issues identified during scoping. The two significant issues identified during scoping are: 1) Wilderness Area recommendations - of concern is how much area should be recommended for wilderness area designation in the National Wilderness Preservation System and 2) Recreation Opportunity Spectrum - some people want to maximize protections of the existing wilderness character within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area by increasing the amount of the primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class assigned to the study area; while others are concerned that such an increase could limit opportunities for outfitters and guides and other permitted uses. Alternatives C and D use the same draft land management plan but respond differently to the significant issues, and have different wilderness recommendations and recreation opportunity spectrum class maps. A comparison of the alternatives can be found in Chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement.

### Which Alternative was chosen for the 2019 Land Management Plan and why?

The selected alternative is a modified version of Alternative C. This decision was based on the environmental analysis in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the planning record, comments from stakeholders and the public, and consideration of how the revised plan responds to the needs for change. This decision will help to guide future projects, activities, practices, uses, and protection measures to assure sustainable multiple-use management on the Chugach National Forest for approximately the next 15 years. This decision also reflects input from Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, State of Alaska, local governments, other federal agencies and the public, while providing for management activities that maintain or move the plan area towards desired conditions.





## STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS

### How were threatened or endangered species considered in this process?

The Chugach National Forest addressed effects of the selected alternative on federally listed species and their critical habitat. There are four federally listed species—the fin whale, Cook Inlet beluga whale, humpback whale and the Steller sea lion—known to occur within the Chugach National Forest Plan area which fall under the jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

The NMFS concurs with the Forest Service final determination for all four species that the selected alternative may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, these species or their critical habitat. Species specific plan components are included to address NMFS concerns and meet NMFS species recovery plans. There are no federally listed species within the Chugach National Forest Plan area that fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The final land management plan is fully compliant with the Endangered Species Act.

### Does the 2019 Land Management Plan recommend wilderness?

Based on analyses and input from local governments, Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and the public, 1,387,510 acres of the approximately 1.9 million acre Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area are recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The 2019 Land Management Plan recommendation for designated Wilderness is not changed from the 2002 Plan, except for those lands that have been conveyed to the State of Alaska or to Alaska Native Corporations and shoreline changes due to receding tidewater glaciers. Per regional policy, the Wilderness Study Area must be managed to maintain its presently existing character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The entire Wilderness Study Area remains open to snow machine access for traditional activities per the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

### Will the 2019 Land Management Plan change access for subsistence and traditional activities?

The land management plan does not change access for subsistence uses as defined by Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Title VIII or for traditional activities and access to inholdings as defined in Section 1110 of the Act. The plan recognizes the importance of these resources and includes plan components that will continue to provide wild renewable resources for subsistence uses.

### Does the 2019 Land Management Plan provide opportunities for outfitter and guide special use permits?

The land management plan provides for diverse recreation opportunities in cooperation with partners, including outfitters and guides. The plan removes outfitter and guide capacity allocations by management area in order to provide more diverse recreation opportunities on the ground. The plan also provides increased flexibility for management of outfitter and guides in the west Copper River Delta.

### How does the 2019 Land Management Plan provide for access to mining claims?

The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes individuals to enter public lands in order to search for, develop, and produce valuable minerals. The regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228 subpart A dictate how the Forest Service manages the surface impacts associated with those activities. Unless lands have been withdrawn from operating under the mining laws, they are open to miners, and the Forest Service cannot prohibit access. A mining claim is not legally required in order to have access to lands not withdrawn from the mining laws for the purposes of prospecting for minerals. The 2019 land management plan provides plan components for how lands are to be managed but does not inhibit or preclude access to prospectors or operators.





## How does the 2019 Land Management Plan address the need for fuelwood and house logs?

The plan includes components for the management of timber and wood products. Fuelwood from the national forest is important to many communities, and the Chugach National Forest will continue to offer small commercial sales for both timber and fuelwood as part of integrated vegetation management. The Chugach National Forest will also continue to provide opportunities for free use timber and fuelwood per 36 CFR 223.10 and 36 CFR 223.5.

## How does the 2019 Land Management Plan address travel management and access?

Site-specific travel management direction was removed from the 2019 land management plan to be consistent with the directives associated with the 2005 Travel Management Rule. Land management plans are strategic in nature, and by design they do not authorize site-specific activities or uses. Decisions on motorized use that were made in the 2002 plan or later, such as in the Kenai Winter Access decision made in 2007, remain in place. New decisions for non-motorized and motorized uses on trails and roads will be made on a project-level basis. The authorized routes open and closed to motor vehicle use are displayed on the Chugach National Forest's Motor Vehicle Use Map, which is updated when needed. Similarly, routes and areas closed to winter motorized use are displayed on maps associated with Forest Orders and in the future will be displayed on an Over Snow Vehicle Use Map.

## NEXT STEPS

### What are the next steps for the 2019 Land Management Plan?

The publication of a legal notice in the *Anchorage Daily News*, announcing the release of the draft record of decision, land management plan, and final environmental impact statement, initiates a 60 day objection period. A courtesy copy of the notice will also be placed in the *Cordova Times*. The objection process gives stakeholders a chance to bring forward any unresolved concerns shared during formal comment periods or concerns related to information not yet available during those comment periods. Individuals or entities who submitted substantive formal comments related to the land management plan revision during the opportunities for public comment may file objections during the 60 day objection period for Forest Service review prior to the approval of the final record of decision. The land management plan becomes effective 30 calendar days after publication of notice of its approval in the *Anchorage Daily News*.

### How do I file an objection?

The 60-day objection filing period is not the same as a formal comment period. The objection process provides individuals and groups an opportunity to bring forward any unresolved concerns before final approval of a revised land management plan. Objections must be based on previously submitted comments unless there is an issue that arose after formal comment opportunities.

Objections must be submitted to the Objection Reviewing Officer by one of the following methods:

- Electronically to the Objection Reviewing Officer via the CARA objection web form: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=40816>. Electronic submissions must be submitted in a format (Word, PDF, or Rich Text) that is readable and searchable with optical character recognition software. An automated response will confirm that the electronic objection was received.
- Via regular mail, carrier, or hand delivery to the following address: USDA Forest Service, Attn: Objection Reviewing Officer, Alaska Region, 709 W. 9th Street, Juneau, AK 99801, or P.O. Box 21628, Juneau, AK 99801. Note that the office hours for submitting a hand-delivered objection are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Alaska Time, Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays.
- Via fax to (907) 586-7840. Faxes must be addressed to "Objection Reviewing Officer." The fax coversheet should specify the number of pages being submitted.





Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday.

### What must an objection include?

An objection must include the following (36 CFR 219.54(c)):

1. The objector's name and address along with a telephone number or email address, if available - in cases where no identifiable name is attached to an objection, the Forest Service will attempt to verify the identity of the objector to confirm objection eligibility;
2. Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the objection);
3. Identification of the lead objector, when multiple names are listed on an objection. The Forest Service will communicate to all parties to an objection through the lead objector. Verification of the identity of the lead objector must also be provided if requested;
4. The name of the forest plan revision or Regional Forester's list of species of conservation concern being objected to, and the name and title of the responsible official;
5. A statement of the issues and/or parts of the forest plan revision or Regional Forester's list of species of conservation concern to which the objection applies;
6. A concise statement explaining the objection and suggesting how the draft record of decision may be improved. If the objector believes that the plan revision or Regional Forester's list of species of conservation concern is inconsistent with law, regulation, or policy, an explanation should be included;
7. A statement that demonstrates the link between the objector's prior substantive formal comments and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities for formal comment; and
8. Including documents by reference is not allowed, except for the following list of items that may be referenced by including the name, date, page number (where applicable), and relevant section of the cited document. All other documents or Web links to those documents, or both must be included with the objection, if referenced in the objection.
  - a. All or any part of a Federal law or regulation,
  - b. Forest Service Directive System documents and land management plans or other published Forest Service documents,
  - c. Documents referenced by the Forest Service in the planning documentation related to the proposal subject to objection, and
  - d. Formal comments previously provided to the Forest Service by the objector during the plan amendment comment period.

It is the responsibility of the objector to ensure that the reviewing officer receives the objection in a timely manner. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the objection filing period.

### Where can I find the documents and more information?

The draft record of decision, final environmental impact statement, land management plan, and the Regional Forester's list of species of concern are available as electronic copies for review at the project web page:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=40816> . To view these and related documents, and for more information on the objection process, you can also visit the Chugach National Forest website at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/chugach/planrevision>.





Copies of the documents can also be obtained at the Chugach National Forest Supervisor's Office, 161 E. 1st Ave, Door 8, Anchorage, AK 99501, Phone: (907) 743-9500.

For further information, contact: Chugach National Forest's Revision Team Planner, David Fitz-Enz at (907) 743-9595 or [david.fitz-enz@usda.gov](mailto:david.fitz-enz@usda.gov). Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

## MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

### How does the Plan address Inventoried Roadless Areas?

Management of Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Chugach National Forest will remain consistent with the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The land management plan revision process is separate from the ongoing Alaska Roadless Rulemaking process.

