

Record of Decision
For
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Revised Land and Resource Management Plan
USDA Forest Service
Alaska Region
Chugach National Forest

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I. Introduction and Background

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision for approving the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chugach National Forest (Revised Forest Plan), and the rationale for making that decision. This Revised Forest Plan is contained in the document entitled *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan* and is based on the Preferred Alternative in the *Chugach Land and Resource Management Plan Revision Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)*, with modifications as further explained in this ROD. The maps of record for the Revised Forest Plan are dated May 2002 and labeled “Revised Land and Resource Management Plan,” “Summer Motorized Recreation Access, Chugach National Forest,” and “Winter Motorized Recreation Access, Chugach National Forest” (henceforth, referred to as the Recreation Access Maps).

The Revised Forest Plan is part of the long-range resource-planning framework required by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976. NFMA requires each Forest Supervisor to develop a plan that directs management activities on the Forest. Forest plans are to be revised when conditions have significantly changed, or at least every 10-15 years. The Revised Forest Plan was developed under the direction of 36 CFR Part 219 (1982, as amended). The Revised Forest Plan and this ROD will guide the management of the Forest for the next 10 to 15 years.

This ROD incorporates by reference the Chugach Revision FEIS and Revised Forest Plan, including their respective appendices, all material cited in these documents, and any additional material included in the Chugach Plan Revision planning record. All public comments and documentation of public participation activities are a part of this record.

A primary goal of the Revised Forest Plan is to provide for the sustainability of the resources of the Chugach National Forest, while directing the coordination of multiple uses, such as outdoor recreation, timber, wildlife, fish, water, wilderness, and minerals. To accomplish this goal, the Revised Forest Plan utilizes an array of land allocations ranging from allowing no resource development to allowing substantial resource development. It establishes a set of standards and guidelines that ensure that management objectives for these land allocations are met. Recognizing that conditions on the Forest do not remain static, the Revised Forest Plan contains a monitoring and evaluation plan and identifies additional information needs.

Figure 1



Forest Setting

The planning area encompasses the entire 5.5 million acre Chugach National Forest located in Southcentral Alaska (see Figure 1). The Forest is the second largest in the National Forest System and is subdivided into three administrative units: the Glacier, Seward, and Cordova Ranger Districts. The Forest has three distinct geographic areas: the Kenai Peninsula, Prince William Sound, and the Copper River Delta. After reviewing public comments, listening at the public meetings, and talking to the people involved in our planning process over the years, it became apparent that it made sense to look at these three geographic areas as distinct components requiring different management strategies. A brief description of each follows; they are fully discussed throughout the document:

- The Kenai Peninsula. The Kenai Peninsula portion of the Chugach National Forest encompasses 1,172,750 acres (21 percent of the Forest). Its forested lands, mountains and rivers receive the most human use, including recreational and timber harvesting, of the three geographic areas.
- Prince William Sound. Prince William Sound encompasses 2,625,140 acres (48 percent of the Forest). It is an area of forested islands, intricate coastline and glaciers, with portions still recovering from the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill (EVOS) of 1989. Lands in the western portion were designated as the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in Section 704 of Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980.
- The Copper River Delta. The Copper River Delta encompasses 1,693,690 acres (31 percent of the Forest). The Delta is known for its vast wetland wildlife habitats, mountains and glaciers. As prescribed by Section 501(b) of ANILCA, the Copper River Delta is to be managed for the primary purpose of conserving fish and wildlife and their habitat.

1984 Forest Plan

The previous Chugach Forest Plan was completed in 1984. It provided a mix of active and natural processes to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat, and a mix of motorized and nonmotorized recreational activities, facilities, and settings. The 1984 Forest Plan provided for a variety of natural resource products including timber and minerals. It recommended Wilderness for portions of the Forest, and a network of Research Natural Areas (RNAs). One area, the Green Island RNA, was formally established in 1997. Neither Wild and Scenic Rivers nor subsistence activities were addressed in the 1984 Plan.

II. Decision and Rationale

A. Introduction

The decision I am making is to select the Preferred Alternative as described in the FEIS and the resulting Revised Forest Plan, including areas available for motorized and nonmotorized activities, with modifications as further described in this ROD. The appendices of this ROD describe two components of the Revised Forest Plan in more detail.

The Chugach National Forest was created in 1907 by presidential proclamation. Over the century of its existence, the Forest has provided outstanding fish and wildlife habitat and, more recently, world-class recreation and tourism opportunities. Fish, wildlife, and recreation/tourism continue to be the major resources and uses of the Forest and represent its greatest potential for beneficial future management. Therefore, I have chosen an alternative that emphasizes protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat along with maintaining and enhancing high quality recreation and tourism opportunities.

We consistently heard from the public an overwhelming desire to keep the Forest as it is today – wild in character, and sustaining the ecosystems and human uses of the Forest. At the same time, natural processes are continuing to change the Forest. The management goals under the Revised Forest Plan will be to appropriately react to natural changes, maintain the wild character, and provide for sustainable human use of the Forest.

In keeping with the spirit of the open public process, my decision criteria for a Revised Forest Plan has been shared with those interested in the development of the plan revision, and have been modified slightly over time. These criteria are very similar to the desires expressed by the majority of the commenting public. My final decision criteria are for a plan that:

- Uses the best available scientific information;
- Sustains human uses and ecosystems;
- Meets legal requirements; and,
- Incorporates, to the best of our ability, public input.

In addition, the plan must provide for a range of multiple-use opportunities consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1964 and NFMA. I conclude that this Revised Forest Plan meets all these criteria.

The decision does not directly authorize any new ground disturbing activities or projects, but rather ground disturbing activities and projects will be subject to additional site-specific environmental analysis that will tier to the FEIS for the Revised Forest Plan.

The key elements of this decision are described below and the details of the decision are found in the Revised Forest Plan. The decision was heavily influenced by the extraordinary public involvement and openness in the Forest Plan revision process. I made my decision after careful review of public comments, analysis of effects in the FEIS, and considering the range of alternatives. Science assessments prepared as part of the Chugach planning process and used in the FEIS analysis were independently peer reviewed and found consistent with current scientific knowledge. I considered all new information provided by the public, state, and other federal agencies during the revision process. The Revised Forest Plan provides a beneficial mix of resource uses and opportunities that provide for public needs and desires within the framework of existing laws, regulations, policies, and capabilities of the land.

B. Required Plan Decisions

Components of my decision include the following items required by laws and regulations governing forest planning:

- The goals and objectives that describe the long-term and short-term conditions to be achieved on the Forest (refer to Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 3).
- Forestwide standards and guidelines that will guide the attainment of the objectives (refer to Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 3).
- Management Area prescriptions, including the management intent and specific standards and guidelines for each geographic area (refer to Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 4).
- Identification of the amount of land suitable for timber production and the establishment of an allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the amount of timber that can be sold commercially in the first decade (refer to FEIS, Chapter 3, and Appendix B).
- A monitoring plan that ensures quality control and feedback during Forest Plan implementation (refer to Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 5).
- Recommendations for special management areas, such as Wilderness and Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers; and establishment of Research Natural Areas (refer to Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 4, and map of record, labeled Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Chugach National Forest, May 2002).

1. Goals and Objectives

I am adopting the Goals and Objectives described in Chapter 3 of the Revised Forest Plan. The Forest multiple-use goals and objectives described in Chapter 3 reflect my goals and objectives for the Forest, which are to sustain both the human uses and enjoyment of forest resources and the wild character of the Chugach. “Wild character” refers to the generally undeveloped quality of the Forest, which is currently about 99 percent unroaded. The goals and objectives will guide the overall management for the Forest and describe the mosaic of land and resource conditions desired in the future, including social, economic, and subsistence opportunities, to fulfill the requirements of 36 CFR 219.11(b).

The emphasis in goals varies across the different geographic areas of the Forest. On the Kenai Peninsula, the focus will be on active management; in Prince William Sound, the focus will be on wilderness and dispersed recreational values; and, on the Copper River Delta, the focus will be on the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitat. In all three areas, the focus will not be on exclusive use or management, as other multiple use activities will continue, consistent with the management area prescriptions.

These goals are developed to adapt the Forest Service’s national goals of sustainable forest management and multiple use management to local conditions and concerns, and in response to interests raised by the public. Full attainment of these goals and objectives can be influenced by congressional budget allocations, changed circumstances, or new information.

2. Standards and Guidelines

I am adopting the Standards and Guidelines described in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Revised Forest Plan. Standards and guidelines govern resource management activities. Some standards and guidelines apply forestwide (Chapter 3), others to specific Management Area Prescriptions (Chapter 4). Standards are actions to be followed, or that limit activities, in order to achieve Forest goals. Deviations from standards will be analyzed and documented in Forest Plan amendments. Guidelines are courses of action that are normally expected to be followed. Deviations from guidelines will be analyzed during project-level analysis and documented in project decisions, but do not require a Forest Plan amendment.

Both Forestwide and Management Area Prescription standards and guidelines are applied to the planning and implementation of site-specific projects or other activities that occur on the Chugach National Forest. These standards and guidelines are written to meet, at a minimum, all requirements of applicable laws, regulations, and state standards; however, existing laws and regulations were not repeated in the Forest Plan. Most standards and guidelines serve as mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate adverse effects. Singularly and collectively, they avoid, rectify, reduce, or eliminate the potential negative environmental impacts of forest management activities.

There are basically three types of standards and guidelines: the forestwide standards and guidelines (Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 3), the Management Area Prescription standards and guidelines (Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 4), and the provisions for

motorized recreation access (Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 4; Revised Forest Plan, Appendix B; and Appendix B of this ROD). Requirements of the Management Area Prescriptions are described in the next section. I will also discuss the provisions for recreation access.

Forestwide standards and guidelines apply across all Management Area Prescriptions, as applicable, and are designed to reduce or eliminate any potential negative effects to forest resources. The resources they apply to include (but are not limited to) air quality, soils, water, fish, wildlife, heritage resources, and fire and fuels.

The provisions for managing recreation access are found in the direction for “Motorized Recreation Access” (Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 4; Revised Forest Plan; Appendix B; and Appendix B of this ROD). This provides direction for winter and summer public use of specific portions of the Chugach National Forest (as identified on the Recreation Access Maps), with the goal of allowing certain types of seasonal motorized uses while minimizing impacts to resources and to nonmotorized users. Based on the analysis in the FEIS, which incorporated historic patterns of use and comments by the public, the general philosophy used in allocating motorized and nonmotorized recreation access was for the summer, motorized use is restricted to designated open roads, trails, and areas; and for winter, the Forest is generally open to motorized activity unless specifically designated closed. I will manage access for motorized and non-motorized recreation on the Chugach National Forest as follows:

- On the Kenai Peninsula, maintain current road access and maintain and increase trail access. Emphasize nonmotorized uses on roads and trails in the summer and motorized uses in the winter. Establish specific areas for nonmotorized winter activities. Establish areas for helicopter use in winter and summer to minimize conflicts with other uses.
- In Prince William Sound, emphasize nonmotorized activities, allowing for motorized uses provided for in ANILCA. Identify specific areas for summer and winter motorized uses.
- On the Copper River Delta, maintain current road and trail access. Allow winter-motorized access across most of the Copper River Delta. Identify specific areas for summer motorized uses. Establish areas for helicopter use in winter and summer to minimize conflicts with other uses.

3. Management Area Prescriptions and Rationale

I am adopting the Management Area Prescriptions displayed in Table 1 of this ROD, which are fully described in Chapter 4 of the Revised Forest Plan. The Forest’s three distinct geographic areas were described briefly above. Each area is distinctive in its physical and biological characteristics, resources, and human uses. I gave the distinct nature of each area strong consideration in my decision. Table 1 displays the distribution and acreages of the Management Area Prescriptions for the three geographic areas. This is followed by a narrative description of the rationale for these land use allocations. Prescriptions that apply to special designations – recommended Wilderness, recommended Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers, and Research Natural

Areas, are discussed under subsection 6 below. Not all prescriptions are discussed for each geographic area, particularly if the acreage is small.

Table 1: Application of management area prescriptions to the three geographic areas of the Chugach National Forest.

Presc. Number	Prescription Name	Kenai Peninsula (Acres)	Prince William Sound (Acres)	Copper River Delta (Acres)	Total (Acres)
111	Primitive	0	0	11,750	11,750
131	Recommended Wilderness	0	1,412,230	0	1,412,230
132	Wild River (Recommended)	8,710	**3,470	0	**12,180
135	501(b)-1	0	0	413,970	413,970
141	Research Natural Area	6,010	***16,200	1,520	***23,730
210	Backcountry	816,740	916,600	96,570	1,829,910
213	501(b)-2	0	90	1,134,510	1,134,600
221	EVOS Acquired Lands	0	84,550	17,520	102,070
231	Scenic River (Recommended)	14,270	0	0	14,270
241	Municipal Watershed	0	0	970	970
242	Brown Bear Core	70,360	0	0	70,360
244	Fish and Wildlife Conservation	64,240	196,400	0	260,640
312	Fish, Wildlife and Recreation	*154,270	5,510	40	159,820
314	Forest Restoration	20,770	0	0	20,770
321	501(b)-3	0	0	15,380	15,380
331	Recreational River (Recommended)	6,080	0	0	6,080
441	Developed Recreation Complexes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
521	Minerals	6,860	0	0	6,860
522	Transportation/Utility Systems	4,440	0	1,460	5,900
	Total	1,172,750	2,625,140	1,693,690	5,491,580

* Includes approximately 203 acres of EVOS acquired land near Grouse Lake.

** 3,470 acres included in the Recommended Wilderness prescription so not additive to total below.

*** 6,440 acres included in the Recommended Wilderness prescription so not additive to total below.

a. Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area

I applied the Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation prescription along the road corridors of the Kenai Peninsula, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Brown Bear Core, and Backcountry prescriptions to most of the area outside of existing road corridors. This combination of prescriptions provides for a mix of more intensive management adjacent to roads and less intensive management in unroaded areas.

Along the road corridors, the emphasis includes management for a variety of wildlife habitats and developed recreation opportunities. The Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation prescription and the Forest Restoration prescription provide the flexibility for treating

forested areas damaged by spruce bark beetle, using methods such as small salvage timber sales along the road system. With most developed campgrounds and trailheads located in this prescription, forest restoration activities will help reduce fire hazards, as well as revegetating these sites to improved ecological and visual condition over time.

The Backcountry prescription provides natural settings, with dispersed developed recreation sites, for summer and winter recreation. Specific areas have been identified for winter motorized and nonmotorized recreation activities (see the Recreation Access maps; Appendix B to this ROD; Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 4; and Revised Forest Plan, Appendix B). These land allocations are greatly influenced by extensive input by members of the public who care deeply about this issue. I carefully considered all interests in my search for a reasonable balance among competing interests.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation prescription is focused on fish and wildlife habitat needs, and I selected it for areas of special fish or wildlife importance. The Brown Bear Core prescription is assigned to six percent of the Kenai Peninsula geographic area. This prescription emphasizes reducing human-bear conflicts and protecting brown bear habitat. It is therefore used where high levels of human use occur in important brown bear concentration areas.

In a modification to the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS, I have decided to allow for the location of new utility system corridors in the Brown Bear Core prescription. Currently, there are few utility system corridors on the Kenai Peninsula. Although there are no utility system proposals pending for the area, there may be a future need for new utility systems to meet the needs of growing communities. Therefore, I have decided the Revised Forest Plan will allow utility system corridors to be located in the Brown Bear Core prescription. However, only temporary roads needed to facilitate the development of the system will be allowed and any temporary roads will be rehabilitated and then closed to further use after completion of construction of the utility system. Any future utility system or corridor maintenance would have to be done without roads. Therefore, potential effects from the development of utility corridors are expected to be short term. A specific Transportation/Utility Systems (522) prescription was developed in the revision process and applied to existing and foreseeable corridors.

In summary, for the Kenai Peninsula, I focused on more active management, to allow for a broad range of recreation opportunities on the Peninsula, and to allow for continuing mineral exploration and possible development. All the prescriptions (except for rivers recommended for Wild designation) allow for mineral exploration and possible development, whereas Congressional Wilderness designation would withdraw the area from mineral entry. I also assigned the Minerals prescription to almost 7,000 acres of areas with active mineral interest.

b. Prince William Sound Geographic Area

I made my decision on future management of Prince William Sound in part on the lingering significant impacts from the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. My overall goal is to manage the affected lands within Prince William Sound to maintain their wild character and provide unique dispersed recreation opportunities, and to provide for the continued

recovery, restoration, protection, and enhancement of wildlife, fish, and other injured resources.

I am recommending approximately 1,412,230 acres of the Wilderness Study Area (WSA) to be designated as Wilderness, as discussed under subsection 6, below. I am also applying a variant of the Backcountry prescription to two specific locations. This variant is the Backcountry Groups prescription (not listed in Table 1 – the acreages, which are quite small, are included with the Backcountry prescription), which was developed in response to some tourism industry operators who would like the opportunity to bring large groups into a wild setting in Prince William Sound. Accommodating groups of up to one hundred people would require facility development to prevent damage to soil and vegetation. The two group sites are located on Port Wells north of the entrance to Esther Passage, and on the south shore of Growler Bay on Glacier Island. Two conditions would have to be met before any development would be allowed at the sites: First, congressional action on Wilderness designation would have to be completed. Second, there would have to be no opportunity for similar development on private or other public lands. Until Congress acts on the Wilderness recommendation, the entire WSA will be managed using the Wilderness Study Area prescription. However, to show my management intent for areas not recommended for Wilderness within the WSA, I have applied prescriptions to those areas. In the event that Congress releases the Wilderness Study Area, I will be applying the Backcountry Management Area near Whittier to accommodate anticipated increases in recreation use, while maintaining the generally undeveloped character.

Outside of the Wilderness Study Area, I am applying the Backcountry prescription to lands in eastern Prince William Sound, on Hawkins Island, and on Hinchinbrook Island, primarily for dispersed recreation use with selected locations available for summer motorized access for hunting. I am applying the Fish and Wildlife Conservation prescription for Montague Island to provide management emphasis on the northern end of the island for migratory birds, and in consideration of the need to actively manage the brown bear habitat on the island. All of these areas remain open to mineral entry.

There has been interest expressed in pursuing commercial timber opportunities on South Montague Island; however, at this time I am deciding not to allow commercial timber harvest there. I want to focus management on the continued recovery, restoration, protection, and enhancement of wildlife, fish, and other injured resources and services of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill. In the future, if the timber industry requests the Forest reexamine the commercial timber situation on the island, and there is sufficient industry capacity, and market conditions for timber products have improved, and all injured resources and services of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill have recovered, the Forest will analyze amending the Revised Forest Plan to allow commercial timber harvest on National Forest lands on the southern portion of Montague Island (map polygons P517, P519, P520, P528, P529, P530, P531, P584).

Finally, I am applying the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill (EVOS) Acquired Lands Prescription to all lands acquired by EVOS Trustees. This prescription incorporates the legally binding direction contained in the purchase agreements for these lands and partial interests, including provisions for access to the privately owned mineral estates.

c. Copper River Delta Geographic Area

The Copper River Delta has been identified as a hemispheric site in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve network. I want to recognize the unique international ecological role of the Delta, which provides habitat for migratory waterfowl and other unique wildlife such as trumpeter swans, while allowing management activities that contribute to or are compatible with this uniqueness. The lands of the Copper River Delta will be managed for the primary purpose of conserving fish and wildlife and their habitat, consistent with ANILCA Section 501(b). Almost the entire Copper River Delta geographic area is designated 501(b) in ANILCA. I have applied only 501(b) management area prescriptions to lands so designated in ANILCA. The three 501(b) prescriptions included in my decision all emphasize fish and wildlife habitat conservation, but differ in the extent to which other activities, primarily recreation, resource development, and access, are allowed.

Access will remain almost exclusively by boat or aircraft, with the exception of the Copper River Highway corridor and existing road easements. The Eyak Corporation will be allowed to cross National Forest System lands to access to their property near Nelson Bay consistent with ANILCA Section 1110(b), Section 1323 (a) and (b), and the EVOS purchase agreements.

In considering motorized and nonmotorized recreation, I want to maintain existing recreational opportunities in both the winter and the summer, to the extent possible, given the ANILCA 501(b) direction for the Delta. Specific areas have been designated for motorized and nonmotorized uses, during both winter and summer. Consult the Recreation Access Maps to see the area-specific direction (also see Appendix B to this ROD).

The Copper River Delta is one of the largest wetlands in North America and is of international importance. I will discuss my decision in terms of the road corridors, and the western and eastern halves of the Delta (essentially as divided by the Copper River).

Road Corridors. The Copper River Highway corridor and Carbon Mountain Road easement will be managed under the 501(b)-3 prescription, which provides for uses associated with road access. This prescription is very similar to the Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation prescription used along road corridors on the Kenai Peninsula. It differs by identifying the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats as the primary purpose of 501(b) designated lands.

A road from Carbon Mountain to Katalla is identified in the Revised Forest Plan to reflect the 1982 Chugach Settlement Agreement (also known as the 1982 CNI Settlement Agreement). Upon initiation of an application for identification of the route described in paragraph 8(A)(2) of the Settlement Agreement, the 501(b)-3 prescription shall be applied to the proposed routes and to ¼ mile on either side of the proposed routes. Upon granting of the easement, the road and ¼ mile on either side will be assigned the 501(b)-3 prescription. The routes not selected for use will revert back to the underlying (initial) prescription.

Western Delta. I have applied management prescription 501(b)-2 to the lands covered by ANILCA Section 501(b) to the west of the Copper River exclusive of the Copper River Highway and private lands. This prescription emphasizes conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats, while allowing a variety of recreation opportunities in natural settings, the potential for development of future compatible recreation facilities, and opportunities for mineral exploration and development. Under the 501(b)-2 prescription, reasonable access as defined in ANILCA, Section 1323(a) will be allowed to private lands and reasonable access, including roads, for conducting mineral operations will be approved under a plan of operations.

A portion of the western Delta lies outside the ANILCA 501(b) area. This includes lands to the north and south of the community of Cordova. For the majority of this area, I am applying the Backcountry prescription to provide both motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities in natural settings, and to maintain the wild, unroaded character of most of the area as was requested by the majority of the citizens of Cordova.

In the Power Creek area north of Cordova, I am applying the Primitive Management Area prescription, in response to individuals from the community who expressed an interest in having an area with only nonmotorized primitive recreation opportunities. This Primitive prescription does not include the area of the power plant. It is the only Primitive prescription applied on the Forest and requires that no motorized travel be allowed in the area. This area restriction was developed during several meetings with Cordova residents and no impact on subsistence users was identified. The Power Creek area has a low capacity for motorized subsistence use due to safety and environmental concerns. The area encompasses 11,750 acres out of 5.5 million acres, or approximately 0.2 percent of the Forest. When I look at this area in the context of the greater area, restricting motorized access activities in the Power Creek area is not expected to have a significant affect on subsistence resource activities. Nonetheless, the Power Creek area will not be closed to motorized subsistence use until a public hearing is held in Cordova and a determination is made that the closure would not significantly restrict subsistence uses. That hearing is scheduled in Cordova on October 10, 2002.

Eastern Delta. How to manage the area east of the Copper River was a difficult decision. The majority of public comment supported a Wilderness recommendation for the entire eastern area. However, many local citizens, the Cordova city council, local and regional fishing groups and processors, the local Native Corporation, and resource management agencies commented that Wilderness designation may be detrimental to meeting the intent of ANILCA direction for this area over the long-term. Wilderness management requirements could limit or preclude wildlife habitat improvement activities. For example, vegetation treatments to improve habitat for moose, an important subsistence and sport species not originally native to the Copper River Delta, might be precluded by Wilderness designation. Lastly, there is a concern from the commercial fishing community that designation as Wilderness could preclude participation in the high-value Copper River Delta commercial fishery.

I am not willing to compromise the Copper River Delta's outstanding and unique wildlife and fish resources, nor the way people traditionally use the area by recommending that Congress change its direction for management to wilderness designation for the Eastern Delta. I believe that Congress' existing direction is appropriate and that the primary purpose of management of the Copper River Delta should continue to be the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitat. Therefore, in response to the above stated comments and concerns received after the DEIS was released for comment, a new prescription, 501(b)-1, was developed that protects the area's values while allowing more flexibility to manage the outstanding wildlife and fish resources, continue existing recreational opportunities, and allow for mineral exploration and development. I am applying the 501(b)-1 prescription to the southern half of the Eastern Delta, with the exceptions noted in the following paragraph. The 501(b)-1 is slightly more restrictive than the 501(b)-2 prescription in that it limits new developed recreation facilities and prohibits commercial forest product uses. Under the 501(b)-1 prescription, reasonable access as defined in ANILCA, Section 1323(a) will be allowed to private lands and reasonable access, including roads, for conducting mineral operations will be approved under a plan of operations.

In a modification to the FEIS Preferred Alternative, interest in lands conveyed to the Chugach Alaska Corporation in Interim Conveyance #939 (Controller Bay) and Interim Conveyance 1350 (Katalla Oil and Gas Zone 1) are changed from the 501(b)-1 prescription to the 501(b)-2 prescription, to provide a more compatible management prescription between surface and subsurface ownerships and rights.

The FEIS Preferred Alternative recommended the northern half of the Eastern Delta for wilderness designation. In another modification to the FEIS Preferred Alternative, I have decided to apply management prescription 501(b)-2 to this area. This prescription emphasizes conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats, while allowing a variety of recreation opportunities in natural settings, the potential for development of future compatible recreation facilities, and opportunities for mineral exploration and possible development. Under the 501(b)-2 prescription, reasonable access as defined in ANILCA, Section 1323(a) will be allowed to private lands and reasonable access, including roads, for conducting mineral operations will be approved under a plan of operations. See the discussion in subsection 6 below for my rationale in making this modification.

One portion of the southern half of the Eastern Copper River Delta geographic area has potential for oil and gas deposits. The Forest is divided into four zones for allocation purposes (FEIS, Chapter 3). Zone 1 is available for oil and gas development by Chugach Alaska Corporation until their oil and gas rights terminate (1982 Chugach Settlement Agreement). Zone 2 is available to Chugach Alaska Corporation for oil and gas development under the exchange rights in the Settlement Agreement. Zone 3 is low in oil and gas potential and Zone 4 has no oil and gas potential (FEIS, Chapter 3) and I am making them unavailable for leasing (36 CFR 228.102 (d)).

If an oil or gas well capable of producing in paying quantities is completed as per paragraph 6 of the Settlement Agreement, then the 521 Minerals Prescription will immediately be applicable to the Katalla Exchange Preference Area (Zone 2) as

identified in paragraph 7 of the Settlement Agreement. In addition, the Minerals Prescription shall be applied to all other surface occupancy rights in support of oil and gas operations in Zone 1 as per paragraph 6 of the Settlement Agreement.

The management prescriptions applied to the Eastern Delta are consistent with the terms and conditions of the 1982 Chugach Settlement Agreement and allow Chugach Alaska Corporation to exercise their rights to manage their lands, access their land holdings, and conduct exploration and development of their oil and gas rights.

4. Timber Suitability and the Allowable Sale Quantity

The Revised Forest Plan classifies lands suitable for timber production and determines where on those lands timber harvesting would be allowed, in accordance with NFMA and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR 219.14. Chapter 3 of the FEIS and Appendix B of the FEIS detail the criteria and process used to determine the forest lands tentatively suitable for timber production. These are lands capable of producing commercial volumes of timber on a sustained-yield basis, where regularly scheduled timber harvest may occur. Areas legislatively withdrawn from timber harvest are not included. I have determined that under the Preferred Alternative, no lands are suitable for commercial timber production. Consequently, the Revised Forest Plan does not have an allowable sale quantity for a sustained output of volume for commercial timber sales. Although the preliminary land suitability analysis identified 282,610 acres of tentatively suitable forestland, those lands will be managed for resource uses other than commercial timber production.

Demand for timber from the Forest is low. Over the past twenty years (1980 through 2000), an annual average of only 1.8 million board feet has been removed from the National Forest in about an even mix of timber sales and personal use. With the current depressed timber market, the lack of local manufacturing facilities dependent on National Forest timber, the effects of spruce bark beetle infestations in lowering commercial timber quality, and the high cost of logging and transportation, the demand for Chugach National Forest timber is anticipated to remain at this same low level or be even lower over the next 10 to 15 years.

Forested lands will continue to be managed for forest stewardship purposes. The Forest will meet estimated current demand for wood products by maintaining a projected noncommercial timber harvest of slightly more than one million board feet annually, which has been the average annual harvest for the past five years. Harvesting will consist of personal use of wood products, such as firewood and house logs, and for resource management purposes such as habitat improvement, insect and disease suppression, and fuels reduction near developed sites and communities, with the projected sale of logs in decks from these activities.

There has been interest expressed in pursuing commercial timber opportunities on South Montague Island; however, at this time I am deciding not to allow commercial timber harvest there. I want to focus management on the continued recovery, restoration, protection, and enhancement of wildlife, fish, and other injured resources and services of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill. In the future, if the timber industry requests the Forest reexamine the commercial timber situation on the island, and there is

sufficient industry capacity, and market conditions for timber products have improved, and all injured resources and services of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill have recovered, the Forest will analyze amending the Revised Forest Plan to allow commercial timber harvest on National Forest lands on the southern portion of Montague Island (map polygons P517, P519, P520, P528, P529, P530, P531, P584).

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

I am adopting the monitoring plan described in Chapter 5 of the Revised Forest Plan. It provides for three types of monitoring: 1) implementation monitoring to determine if the direction in the Revised Forest Plan is being followed; 2) effectiveness monitoring to verify if standards and guidelines are achieving the desired results; and 3) validation monitoring to determine if underlying assumptions remain valid. The monitoring plan also provides for the collection of information as needed to improve the base of information for future planning efforts.

Monitoring items are prioritized to focus on Forest Plan standards and guidelines for which the Forest Service has the primary responsibility. Each monitoring item is linked to a specific part of the Revised Forest Plan. There is a particular concern with obtaining more information about the effects of winter snow machine use on ungulates and bears. This information will be used to inform future decisions on resource protection. The data gathered under the monitoring plan will be used to improve future mitigation measures (standards and guidelines), assess the need to amend or revise the Forest Plan, and as noted above, update or add to resource inventories.

6. Special Management Area Designations

a. Wilderness Recommendations

As part of the forest planning process, including forest plan revisions; the Forest Service evaluates lands for their suitability to be designated as Wilderness. This suitability analysis begins with an inventory of roadless areas. I have reviewed the process used to inventory the roadless areas of the Forest (see Chapter 3 and Appendix C of the FEIS). I concur with the process and agree with the findings that roughly 99 percent of the Forest, or approximately 5,434,710 acres, are roadless.

Almost all of the Chugach National Forest land is wild, remote and untrammled, and it will continue to be so. My decision recommends that 1,412,230 acres (25 percent of the Forest) be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System (see Table 2).

My Wilderness recommendations for these roadless areas were a difficult decision, due to the controversy surrounding wilderness recommendation and designation. I listened carefully to both advocates and opponents of Wilderness designation to better understand the interests they are seeking to protect. These interests are strongly held and often mutually exclusive. Yet I also heard many interests common to both groups. Communities and people within or adjacent to the Chugach National Forest desire that the Forest remain much the way it currently is – in a wild and natural state. After 100 years of multiple-use management and in the absence of any Wilderness designations,

the Forest is still the least-roaded Forest in the National Forest System. I believe that many wilderness-like interests can continue to be realized without congressionally designated Wilderness.

In making my decision, I looked at each roadless area, and considered many factors: their physical characteristics, current activities, mineral potential, and potential future uses; public comments; and their potential contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System. I considered how designation of an area as Wilderness would affect access to private lands. I considered that the Forest is almost surrounded by land that is managed for its wilderness or roadless values, including the Chugach State Park, Kenai Fjords National Park, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, and Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park and Preserve. I also considered that there is currently no designated Wilderness on the Forest.

Wilderness is a land management designation made by Congress pursuant to the Wilderness Act that requires the Forest Service to manage the designated land to preserve its primeval character and natural condition, without permanent improvements or motorized activities. When Congress previously designated Wilderness in Alaska it included provisions allowing access for traditional activities. The areas I am recommending for wilderness complement and enhance Wilderness areas on adjacent public lands. They also represent several important ecosystems and unique areas of the Forest.

Table 2: Summary of Recommended Wilderness by Geographic Area of the Forest

Geographic Area	Recommended Wilderness	Not recommended for Wilderness	Total Acres
Kenai Peninsula	0	1,172,750	1,172,750
Prince William Sound	1,412,230	1,212,910	2,625,140
Copper River Delta	0	1,693,690	1,693,690
Total	1,412,230	4,079,350	5,491,580

All of the 1,412,230 acres I am recommending for Wilderness designation are within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area (WSA), which is within the Prince William Sound geographic area. The 1984 Forest Plan recommended 1,589,000 acres for wilderness, virtually all of which was in the WSA.

My reasons for this recommendation include the overall wilderness character of the area, current and projected public use through Whittier, and opinions expressed by the public. I also considered the area's mineral potential, and past and present mining activity. I am not recommending the entire WSA for Wilderness designation for the specific reasons discussed below.

Until Congress acts on this Wilderness recommendation, the entire WSA will be managed using the Wilderness Study Area prescription. However, to show my management intent for areas not recommended for Wilderness within the WSA, I have applied prescriptions to those areas (see Table 3). In the event that Congress releases the Wilderness Study Area, I will be applying the Backcountry Management Area prescription to most areas not recommended for Wilderness within the WSA. It is used primarily for lands within a day-use radius from Whittier to allow for more intensive recreation and tourism use than would be appropriate in Wilderness. Outside a day-use radius around Whittier, it will be applied to: 1) the area around Main Bay in recognition of the existing fish hatchery and set net activity in that area; 2) Knight Island because of the mineral potential of the island and the existing private ownership of lands and mineral rights in several locations; 3) Evans and Elrington Islands in response to the Village of Chenega Bay; 4) the northern portion of Columbia Glacier to allow for heli-skiing and hiking in the vicinity of Valdez; and, 5) Glacier Island in response to the Village of Tatitlek since this is an important subsistence area. Areas managed under the Backcountry Management Area prescription are open for mineral exploration and possible development. Under the Backcountry prescription, reasonable access as defined in ANILCA, Section 1323(a) will be allowed to private lands and reasonable access, including roads, for conducting mineral operations will be approved under a plan of operations.

Table 3. Recommended Management Area Prescriptions in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area.

Prescription Number	Prescription Name	Acres
131	Recommended Wilderness	1,412,230
132	Wild River (Recommended)*	3,470
141	Research Natural Area**	6,960
210	Backcountry	534,360
221	EVOS Acquired Lands	21,620
312	Fish, Wildlife and Recreation	140
Total	Wilderness Study Area***	1,968,730

Note: The entire WSA will be managed under the Wilderness Study Area prescription until Congress acts.

* 3,470 acres included in the Recommended Wilderness prescription so not additive to total.

** 6,440 acres included in the Recommended Wilderness prescription so not additive to total.

*** The Wilderness Study Area also includes an additional 206,890 acres of private/non-national forest lands and 22,550 acres of Forest Service public easements, for a total of 2,198,170 acres.

In a modification to the FEIS Preferred Alternative, I have decided to change the recommended wilderness boundary to follow the eastern boundary of map polygon P590, located roughly 15 air miles west of the community of Valdez. I made this 11,000 acre modification to ensure an area, having most favorable mineral potential, is available for exploration and potential development. The Backcountry prescription will be applied to all of map polygon 591.

As previously noted, in another modification to the FEIS Preferred Alternative, I have decided the northern half of the Eastern Copper River Delta should be assigned to the ANILCA 501(b)-2 prescription, rather than being recommended for wilderness. In making this decision, I considered the outstanding resource values in the Delta and the desires of many local residents, fishermen, and tribal officials who asked that it not be recommended for wilderness. The 501(b)-2 prescription will continue to implement Congressional direction for the Copper River Delta to conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats. As noted earlier, many believe that Wilderness designation may be detrimental to meeting the intent of ANILCA for management of fish and wildlife in the area because Wilderness management requirements could limit or preclude wildlife habitat improvement projects. I believe the current Congressional direction to manage the area for the primary purpose of the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitat is appropriate and I am not willing to limit opportunities for improving wildlife habitat; therefore, I assigned the area to the 501(b)-2 prescription.

In making my recommendations for Wilderness designation, I carefully considered the mineral potential of the recommended areas. If Congress designates Wilderness, one of the consequences is that the area is withdrawn from mineral entry, subject to valid existing rights. Thus, Wilderness recommendations may lead to foregone mineral development. Currently, virtually all lands on the Forest are open to mineral entry either through the 1872 Mining Law, or the Mineral Leasing Act of 1917 in the case of hardrock minerals in the Copper River Addition. The mineral potential of areas recommended for Wilderness is displayed in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

In the Prince William Sound area, I am recommending 1,412,230 acres for Wilderness designation. I recognize that if Congress acts on the recommendation and designates those areas as Wilderness, they would be withdrawn from mineral entry, subject to valid existing rights. The U.S. Geological Survey has identified roughly 1% of the area recommended for wilderness as containing identified mineral resources with most favorable mineral potential. An additional 10% of the recommended areas are identified as moderately favorable; 23% as undiscovered, most favorable; 43% as under-evaluated/unevaluable; and 23% as unidentified or low potential. Given the remoteness of many of those areas, the extremely rugged and inaccessible terrain, glacial cover, and the relative lack of mineral exploration activity, I am willing to forego the potential mineral opportunities associated with the areas recommended for wilderness. I specifically excluded areas from my Wilderness recommendations with known and historic mineral values, such as on the Kenai Peninsula, Knight Island, and Port Wells.

With the 1,412,230 acres of recommended wilderness, I recognize that I am forgoing timber harvest opportunities associated with the 34,200 acres of tentatively suitable timberlands located in those recommended areas. Timber harvest is not consistent with the management objectives of the recommended Wilderness prescription and therefore, is not allowed. Given the current depressed timber markets, the lack of local manufacturing facilities dependent on National Forest timber, the high cost of logging and transportation, and extremely rugged and inaccessible terrain, I am willing to forgo the timber harvest opportunities associated with those 34,200 tentatively suitable acres.

As described earlier, I am recommending 1.4 million acres within the Wilderness Study Area for wilderness designation. The Secretary of Agriculture, through the Administration, will prepare a report to Congress, supporting the wilderness recommendation in accordance with ANILCA, Section 704. Because Congress has the authority to make final decisions on Wilderness designation, my Wilderness recommendations are not appealable under the Forest Service's administrative appeal procedures. The lands recommended for Wilderness will remain open for mineral entry until Congress acts on the Wilderness recommendations.

b. Wild and Scenic Rivers

Appendix D of the FEIS reflects the comprehensive eligibility and suitability analysis of rivers or river segments of the Forest. I have reviewed this analysis and concur that 23 rivers (352.9 miles), in whole or in part, are eligible for designation as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The rivers on the Chugach National Forest are highly productive and free flowing, and they will continue to be so under the Revised Plan. My rationale for recommending or not recommending eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System is in Appendix A of this ROD. I am recommending to the Chief of the Forest Service nine eligible river segments as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, a total of 82.4 miles (see Table 4). This preliminary administrative recommendation for river designation will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service and Secretary of Agriculture. Congress has the authority to make final decisions on designations of rivers of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Until Congress acts on this recommendation, the outstandingly remarkable values, the free-flowing conditions, and classification eligibility of the rivers or river segments will be maintained within existing authorities of the Forest Service.

Table 4: Rivers Recommended for Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Designation.

River Segment	Miles	Classification
East Fork Sixmile Creek	5.6	Scenic
Sixmile Creek	5.7	Recreational
Portage Creek	6.2	Recreational
Twentymile River	14.2	Scenic
Russian River – lower	4.9	Recreational
Russian River – upper	12.4	Wild
Snow River – lower	9.1	Scenic
Snow River – upper	14.7	Wild
Nellie Juan River* – lower	9.6	Wild
Total	82.4	

*River is within recommended Wilderness.

As discussed in the FEIS Chapter 3, the river segments I am recommending for designation are representative of the biology and geography of the Chugach National Forest and complement management on adjacent federal and private lands. In coming to this recommendation, outstandingly remarkable river values were analyzed to identify those rivers most worthy of representation, consistent with the overall management goals of the three geographic areas of the Forest, as well as, existing and anticipated future uses of the rivers.

For each individual river, I was concerned with the effects that long-term management would have on the outstandingly remarkable values if the river were not designated. Outstanding recreational, scenic, and fishery values were the values most often represented by the rivers recommended for designation. I was also concerned with resource tradeoffs and potential conflicts with other uses, as well as, maintaining access to private lands, such as Chugach Alaska Corporation lands near the Nellie Juan River. In that instance, only the segment downstream from the Chugach Alaska Corporation land holdings is recommended for designation. On the Kenai Peninsula, the Department of Interior specifically requested a management area prescription in which natural processes predominate be applied to National Forest lands adjacent to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. To meet that request, the Upper Russian River is recommended for Wild River designation. These considerations were important in arriving at my selection of recommended rivers.

I am recommending three river segments for designation as Wild Rivers. I recognize that if Congress acts on the recommendation and designates those areas as Wild Rivers, they would be withdrawn from mineral entry, subject to valid existing rights. The U.S. Geological Survey has identified roughly 19% of the area recommended for Wild Rivers as containing identified mineral resources as moderately favorable; 11% as undiscovered, most favorable; 12% as under-evaluated/unevaluable; and 58% as unidentified or low potential. Given the remoteness of many of those areas, difficult terrain, and relative lack of mineral exploration activity, I am willing to forego the potential mineral opportunities associated with those areas recommended for Wild River designation.

With regard to the remaining eligible rivers that I am not recommending for designation, the majority of their eligible corridors are within management area prescriptions where there would be very little, if any, development over the next 10-15 years. Appendix A of this ROD contains the rationale for finding these river segments not suitable for designation.

c. Research Natural Areas

The identification of potential Research Natural Areas (RNA) is discussed in Chapter 3 of the FEIS. My primary reasons for designating new RNAs are to maintain a representative sample of natural conditions across the forest by allowing ecological processes to prevail with minimal human intervention, and to provide opportunities for research to increase understanding of natural ecosystem processes and sustainability. RNAs form a long-term network of ecological reserves administratively designated for non-manipulative research, monitoring, and education, and for the maintenance of natural diversity. I have decided that the existing Green Island RNA will continue to be a component of the national RNA system. Out of seven potential areas, I have selected the following four RNAs for designation.

Kenai Lake/Black Mountain. I am designating the 3,800-acre Kenai Lake/Black Mountain area as a RNA to maintain and conserve a representative range of Sitka spruce-white spruce-Lutz spruce forest and the diversity of vegetation types present. The area will be a valuable reference area for the study of both short and long-term ecological change such as spruce bark beetles and as a reference area for determining the effects of resource management activities applied to similar ecosystems outside the area.

Wolverine Glacier. I am designating the 7,000-acre Wolverine Glacier area as a RNA. This area represents a mid-elevation glacier with a diversity of tundra plant communities. Extensive glaciology research has occurred at the site since the mid-1960s. It is the only high elevation area with continuous high quality meteorological data in Southcentral Alaska. This area is within recommended Wilderness.

Olsen Creek. I am designating the 6,700-acre Olsen Creek area as a RNA primarily due to the extensive non-manipulative anadromous fisheries research conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the State of Alaska for over 50 years. The area also contains a wide diversity of lower and upper vegetation types and landforms.

Copper Sands. I am designating the 1,500-acre Copper Sands area as a RNA. This area is a barrier island (including breakwater sandbars). It is a site of active vegetation succession on sand dunes due to the uplift associated with the 1964 earthquake.

The determination whether or not withdraw any RNAs from mineral entry under the Mining Law of 1872, to maintain natural ecological processes or for other reasons, will be addressed in the Establishment Record for each of the four RNAs designated by this decision. Completion of an Establishment Record is the last administrative step in the process of adding these areas to the national RNA system.

7. Other Decision Factors

a. National Policy Considerations

Under the Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA), the Forest Service prepares a long-term strategic plan, referred to as the RPA Recommended Program, and updates that program every five years. The most recent update is the draft 1995 RPA Program, which was not finalized due to a variety of factors, including extensive congressional interest. Work on the update was largely superseded by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA).

GPRA requires all government agencies to develop a strategic plan that covers a three to five year time horizon. To satisfy these requirements, the Forest Service completed its Strategic Plan in 1997, and completed the 2000 Revision of that Plan in October 2000. The goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan (2000 Revision) will guide future actions of the agency, much the way the RPA Program did before this program was effectively superseded by GPRA. The four goals of the 2000 Revision are to:

1) promote ecosystem health and conservation; 2) provide multiple benefits to people within the capability of sustainable ecosystems; 3) develop and use the best scientific information available to deliver technical and community assistance; and 4) promote effective public service. The Revised Forest Plan responds to all of these goals in varying degrees, as appropriate to forest planning.

1. Promote ecosystem health and conservation. “Ecological Systems Management” was identified as a key situation statement to be addressed throughout the revision process. As such, ecosystem health and conservation is a component of goals, objectives, management area prescriptions and the forest-monitoring program.

2. Provide multiple benefits to people within the capability of sustainable ecosystems. The Revised Forest Plan provides for a variety of multiple-use benefits to the public while sustaining ecosystems. It provides for forest products (small timber sales, house logs, firewood), mineral exploration and development, recreation facilities and trails, clean air and water, healthy fish and wildlife habitat, motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities, and a limited road system. The plan also provides vast roadless areas, almost 1.4 million acres of recommended Wilderness, and recommendations for Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers.

3. Develop and use best scientific information to deliver assistance. The FEIS makes the best use of available scientific information, and has received an in-depth science consistency review. Part of this information was newly developed for the Forest, such as the assessment of Kenai Forest Vegetation, and will have broader application for all the communities and ownerships of the Kenai Peninsula. Other information has been developed in conjunction with other agencies and organizations, including the Interagency Brown Bear Study Team and scientific studies related to the Copper River Delta.

4. Promote effective public service. The major emphasis of this fourth goal, fiscal accountability and efficiency, is not directly relevant to forest planning. The analysis of environmental justice and civil rights later on in this ROD speaks to equal opportunities for access to forest programs and the effects of forest programs on communities.

b. Situation Statements

As explained in Chapter 1 of the FEIS, situation statements (or issues) represent public interests that are in conflict and where there is significant disagreement on a solution, or where existing conditions could be improved by changing the 1984 Forest Plan. Six situation statements were the focus of the Forest Plan revision. Here I briefly address my rationale for selection of the Revised Forest Plan (the FEIS Preferred Alternative with modifications as described earlier in this ROD) in providing resolution for each situation statement. Much of the detailed rationale has already been provided and will not be repeated here.

Situation Statement 1 – Ecological Systems Management

The Revised Forest Plan provides a mix of active management and natural processes, depending on the geographic location, with an emphasis on the latter in most areas. On the Kenai Peninsula, management area prescriptions along the road system allow for the reduction of the fuels buildup caused by spruce bark beetle mortality through prescribed fire and mechanical treatment, but otherwise the Backcountry prescription predominates. In Prince William Sound, natural processes are emphasized by use of the Recommended Wilderness and Backcountry prescriptions. In the Copper River Delta area, the focus is on the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats, with other compatible activities and uses permitted to varying degrees.

Situation Statement 2 – Habitat for Fish and Wildlife

The Revised Forest Plan strikes a balance between active management and natural processes. Road construction is allowed in only a very few areas on the Forest. On the Kenai Peninsula, the Brown Bear Core prescription is designated to provide for brown bear and public use, with the intent to minimize bear/human interactions. Brown bears on the Kenai Peninsula will be a priority in important habitat areas and monitoring of impacts on brown bears will continue. The Revised Forest Plan incorporates the findings where appropriate, and is consistent with, the Conservation Assessment of the Interagency Brown Bear Study Team.

Prescriptions with low intensity management are located in watersheds that support salmon and other aquatic organisms. In Prince William Sound, prescriptions allow for the restoration of *Exxon Valdez* oil spill-affected fish and wildlife habitats and include EVOS Acquired Lands, Wilderness or Backcountry Management Area prescriptions. The entire Copper River Delta is managed to emphasize fish and wildlife habitat and continue the traditional uses of this area through ANILCA 501(b) prescriptions.

Fish habitat projects throughout the Forest will emphasize recovery of impacted native populations or improve habitat values for subsistence, personal use, commercial fisheries or sport fishing opportunities. The Revised Forest Plan will not impact

commercial fishing opportunities. The protection of freshwater fish habitat is one of the primary goals of the Plan.

Situation Statement 3 – Resource Development: Minerals and Forest Products

Although the Revised Forest Plan has no lands designated as suitable for commercial timber production, the actual level of noncommercial timber harvest activity will remain about the same as the past five years. Harvest will occur along the existing road system on the Kenai Peninsula, with easy access to the higher concentrations of spruce bark beetle infested stands through the Forest Restoration and Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescriptions.

ANILCA Section 1110(b), and Section 1323(a)(b) authorize access to private land inholdings to exercise valid existing rights, and where other private property rights exist within the Forest. This authorization is consistent with Forestwide and management area direction.

The interests expressed in exploration and production of locatable, leasable and saleable minerals were wide and varied. In response to this issue, I developed the Minerals Management Area Prescription, and took mineral potential into account in my recommendations for special management areas that would result in mineral withdrawals. For example, parts of the Kenai Peninsula, northern Knight Island, western Port Wells, Valdez Mining Subdistrict, and mountainous area of the western Upper Copper River are locations where mineral potential was an important consideration in not recommending those areas for wilderness. Most lands on the Forest have been open and will remain open to mineral exploration and possible development. Lands recommended for designation as Wilderness or Wild River will be open to mineral entry until Congress acts on the recommendations.

In their comments on the DEIS, the Alaska Miners Association stated their belief there was a lack of detailed mineral information available for the Forest. The US Geological Survey (USGS) conducted the mineral resource assessments used in the forest planning process in 1984 and 2000. Those assessments were based on geologic maps, geochemical data and mine/prospect records. In the USGS assessments, some areas of the forest were identified as under evaluated for their mineral resource potential because geologic data was lacking due to rugged topography and/or glacial cover. Considering the remoteness of those areas, the difficult terrain, glacial cover, and lack of mineral exploration activity, I believe the available information was sufficient to allow me to make a reasonable and informed decision regarding potential impacts on mineral development opportunities from my selection of the Preferred Alternative.

Although geophysical and geochemical survey and mapping are the responsibility of other federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management and USGS) the Forest Service will support the efforts of the Alaska Interagency Mineral Coordination Group to validate the need for those surveys on the forest and will continue to gather information on the mineral resources.

Situation Statement 4 – Recreation and Tourism

The Revised Forest Plan emphasizes recreation and tourism opportunities across the Forest. In selecting the Preferred Alternative I wanted to provide a range of opportunities consistent with the emphasis I have identified for the three geographic areas. On the Kenai Peninsula, I anticipate increased recreation pressures especially along the road corridors. The Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescription along the road corridors will allow for recreation and tourism development in response to increased demand. For Prince William Sound, I want to maintain the very wild and undeveloped character while accommodating increased dispersed recreation uses originating from Whittier. I also want to provide selected opportunities for large group development, but only after all options on other public or private lands have been considered. To accomplish this, a mix of Backcountry, Recommended Wilderness, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Management Area prescriptions are used. On the Copper River Delta, I want to maintain the current levels and intensity of recreation and tourism use. Increases in recreation use can be accommodated along the Copper River Highway corridor, with the remainder of the Delta emphasizing a wild, undeveloped character.

For the Recreation and Tourism Situation, winter recreational motorized and nonmotorized access was controversial, especially on the Kenai Peninsula. See the Recreation Access Maps, Appendix B of this ROD, and the Access Management Plan in Appendix B of the Revised Forest Plan for the specific decisions regarding winter and summer motorized recreation access. Based on the analysis in the FEIS, which incorporate historic patterns of use and comments by the public, the general philosophy used in allocating motorized and nonmotorized recreation access was for the summer, motorized use is restricted to designated open roads, trails, and areas and in the winter, the Forest is generally open to motorized activities, unless specifically designated closed.

On the Kenai Peninsula, I wanted to maintain key winter motorized access where it is currently occurring while specifically identifying areas for winter nonmotorized opportunities. Additionally, I wanted to identify areas in which heli-skiing opportunities could be provided. Across the remainder of the Forest, I wanted to maintain existing winter motorized and nonmotorized opportunities. For summer-motorized access, most of the Chugach National Forest is not appropriate for off-highway motorized activities; however, selected areas have been identified for motorized activities.

Situation Statement 5 – Special Designations

Public interest in special designations such as Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Research Natural Areas is strong. The Revised Forest Plan emphasizes generally high levels of naturalness while allowing human uses. It preserves unique wilderness ecosystem resources by recommending two areas for wilderness designation totaling 1,412,230 acres (25 percent of the Forest). I am recommending nine segments of Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers for designation that are representative of the full range of biology and geography of the Chugach. Through the Revised Forest Plan I am also providing five representative ecological types (with four new RNAs designated) to contribute to the National Research Natural Area network.

Situation Statement 6 – Subsistence

ANILCA requires the Forest Service to consider the effect of any management proposals on subsistence uses. I designed the land allocations in the Revised Forest Plan to cause few if any effects on subsistence. Specific emphases include: proposed fish habitat projects adjacent to the Seward, Sterling and Copper River highways; allowance for traditional motorized access for subsistence uses; providing for personal use forest products such as house logs and firewood; and the continuation of the policy not to issue outfitting and guiding special use permits for fishing and hunting in the western Copper River Delta.

Subsistence uses will be protected as the emphasis on fish and wildlife habitat will help maintain plentiful resources. Access for subsistence is maintained. The Preferred Alternative has one small area adjacent to the community of Cordova with a motorized subsistence restriction, known as the Power Creek area. This area restriction was developed during several meetings with Cordova residents and no impact on subsistence users was identified. The Power Creek area has a low capacity for motorized subsistence use due to safety and environmental concerns. The area encompasses 11,750 acres out of 5.5 million acres, or approximately 0.2 percent of the Forest. When I look at this area in the context of the greater area, restricting motorized access activities in the Power Creek area is not expected to have a significant affect on subsistence resource activities. Nonetheless, the Power Creek area will not be closed to motorized subsistence use until a public hearing is held in Cordova and a determination is made that the closure would not significantly restrict subsistence uses. That hearing is scheduled in Cordova on October 10, 2002.

c. Roadless Areas and Roads Analysis

The Forest Service is re-evaluating its Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294), and is currently enjoined from implementing all aspects of the rule by the U.S. District Court, District of Idaho. The Forest Service issued new interim direction for Roadless Area Protection in 2001. The Revised Chugach Forest Plan has considered the protection and management of inventoried roadless areas as discussed in Interim Directive ID 1920-2001-1 and Forest Service Manual 1923. The Chugach National Forest will manage inventoried roadless areas consistent with all related interim direction and the disposition of the final rule.

The Forest is currently 99 percent roadless, the most unroaded national forest in the Nation, and it will continue to be so. A very small portion of the Forest contiguous with existing roads may be developed for more intensive recreation, timber harvest, fuels reduction, and personal use firewood access, but the overall character of the Forest will not change. The vast expanse of roadless areas will continue to provide quality habitat for fish, wildlife, subsistence uses, hunting and fishing, and maintain the generally wild character of the Forest.

A Forest-scale roads analysis, as required by FSM 7710, Interim Directive 7710-2001-3, has been completed to determine within the context of current and likely funding levels, the minimum transportation facilities needed for public and agency access to achieve forest management goals and transportation system needs and to safeguard ecosystem

health. That forest-scale roads analysis is contained in Appendix B of the Revised Forest Plan and was part of my considerations in selecting the Preferred Alternative.

III. Issues and Alternatives Considered

A. Public Involvement

A Notice of Intent to revise the Forest Plan was published in the Federal Register on April 21, 1997, beginning the formal public comment and involvement period. A newsletter soliciting public comment on preliminary revision topics was distributed to the public. Public collaborative learning workshops (see next paragraph) were held in various communities in and around the Forest to obtain input. Approximately 3,000 comments were received during the initial public comment period. These helped define the public interest and situation statements (issues).

At key steps in the process, collaborative learning workshops were held in communities in Southcentral Alaska. They were designed for the public to interact with both the planning team and other members of the public, and for Forest Service personnel to gain information and identify topics to be addressed during the revision process. Collaborative learning workshops were announced in the newspaper and held in the following communities: Whittier, Hope, Seward, Cordova, Valdez, Girdwood, Cooper Landing, Kenai, Chenega Bay, Tatitlek, Eyak, and Anchorage.

Newsletters were used throughout the process to keep the public and employees informed on revision progress. The newsletters provided information on the revision schedule, public participation opportunities, situation identification, and alternative development. Opportunities were provided for the public to write opinion sections on topics of interest. The mailing list grew to over 2,000 organizations and individuals and became a particularly good method for informing local and national citizens.

All interdisciplinary meetings were open for public attendance and participation. Open meetings provided an opportunity for timely input from the public at all stages of the planning process. There were numerous open meetings, with total attendance in the hundreds. The meetings were held in communities in and around the Forest, at different times of the day and sometimes on weekends. Goals and objectives, management area prescriptions, standards and guidelines, alternatives and the monitoring and evaluation section were all developed in open meetings. The Forest Leadership Team meeting discussions pertaining to Forest Plan Revision topics were also open for the public to listen to and participate in the deliberations.

The planning team and members of the Forest Leadership Team made presentations to groups and individuals regarding the Forest Plan Revision and also participated in public discussions about the Forest Plan revision.

A Forest Plan Revision website enabled people to review revision schedules and meeting dates, and download draft revision documents and maps. Based on feedback from the public, a "Current Events" section was constructed. This provided information on current decisions, processes, and upcoming events.

The DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan were released for a 90-day formal public review and comment period on September 14, 2000. Over 33,000 comments were received. Concerns about the situation statements and many other issues of interest were raised in the public comments, with the two most commonly mentioned concerns being the proposed Wilderness on the eastern Copper River Delta, and snow machine use on the Kenai Peninsula. I have reviewed public comments on the DEIS and responses to those comments presented in Appendix K of the FEIS.

After the public comment period, the planning team revisited five communities on the Kenai Peninsula to discuss options received during the comment period concerning motorized and nonmotorized prescriptions.

B. Alternative Development

As noted above, the initial stages of public involvement helped identify public interest and situation statements. There were 24 primary interests defined for the Forest. For many of the interests there was little disagreement over a solution, and these solutions became the basis for goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines. For those interests where a solution was not apparent, situation statements (more commonly known as issues) were developed. Situation statements were discussed previously in this ROD.

The planning team then identified activities (management actions, public uses or activities) for each interest associated with each situation statement. Examples of activities include: soil and watershed projects, off-highway vehicle use, and personal use timber harvest. The matrix of activities is included in the Revised Forest Plan, Appendix F. Definitions of each of the activities are included in the Glossary in the FEIS.

Then the various activities were combined into management area prescriptions to address the situation statements. Management area prescriptions are various ways of managing an area of land, similar to city or borough zoning. Management area prescriptions are designed to respond to different situations and interests. For example, the Backcountry Management Area Prescription includes a group of activities that will result in wild and generally undeveloped and roadless settings with opportunities for rustic recreation facilities and fish and wildlife habitat improvements.

Alternatives were developed in open interdisciplinary team meetings, “collaborative learning” workshops, and community gatherings held throughout Southcentral Alaska, and also by individuals on their own. The public was furnished instructions for formulating useful alternatives. The alternatives were developed through the application of management area prescriptions in response to the situation statements. Over thirty alternatives were developed (see FEIS, Chapter 2). The 30 plus alternatives were then placed into one of six groups using a technique called cluster analysis. Upon further review, two of the original 30 plus alternatives were determined to be unique and were removed from their associated groups. These two alternatives focused primarily on either resource development or wilderness designations.

Once alternatives were clustered by similarity into groups, the planning team, alternative authors, and other members of the public worked together to find common ground and produce one composite alternative for each clustered group. Resource information was also reviewed to ensure that all alternatives could produce the resources desired (e.g., suitable timberlands were present in areas identified for timber resource development). Six composite alternatives were finally developed from the six groups, identified as Alternatives A through F in the DEIS. A detailed description of each alternative is available in Appendix H of the FEIS.

The six composite alternatives and the two separate alternatives were presented to the Forest Supervisor. The two separate alternatives were eliminated from detailed analysis because those alternatives were too focused on single-purpose uses. All original alternatives used to develop the composites were also eliminated. The composite alternatives were felt to represent an adequate range of how each of the grouped alternatives addressed the situation statements (or “significant issues”).

As discussed below, two other alternatives were developed. One represented the current (1984) Forest Plan, and the other, developed after public comment on the DEIS, became the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS.

C. Descriptions of Alternatives Considered in Detail

The alternatives analyzed in detail represent a wide range of management options for the Forest. The alternatives share a set of basic goals, and standards and guidelines, which protect Forest resources while allowing for multiple-use activities and ensuring compliance with applicable laws. The FEIS, Chapter 2, provides a detailed description of each of these alternatives. The following is a description of the alternatives I considered in detail and a brief summary of my selection rationale:

1. No Action

The No Action Alternative represents no change to current management and is the 1984 Forest Plan including the results of the Forest Plan Appeal Settlement Agreement signed in 1986, expressed in the management area prescriptions used in this revision effort. This translation enables the 1984 Forest Plan to be compared with other alternatives using the same terms and outputs. The primary theme of this alternative is a mix of recreational opportunities, Wilderness recommendations, wildlife and fish habitat, minerals development, and forest products.

The No Action Alternative provides a mix of active and natural processes to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat. It also provides a mix of motorized/nonmotorized recreational activities, facilities, and recreational settings. The No Action Alternative provides a variety of natural resource products including forest products and minerals. It provides a decadal allowable sale quantity of 74.9 million board feet. It recommends Wilderness in portions of the Forest. A network of Research Natural Areas is recommended. Subsistence activities and wild and scenic rivers were not addressed in this Alternative.

I did not select this alternative because it did not include recommendations on Wild and Scenic Rivers, it was too general in its management direction with much of the management direction out of date, and it was not responsive to current public situation statements expressed through the revision process. Some elements of this alternative were incorporated into the Preferred Alternative.

2. Preferred Alternative

This alternative was identified in the FEIS as the Forest Supervisor's Preferred Alternative. The primary theme of this alternative is providing subsistence opportunities while conserving fish and wildlife habitat, providing recreational opportunities and some development.

The Preferred Alternative emphasizes natural processes across most of the Forest with active management (actual scheduled or potential projects or activities to bring about change) in selected locations to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat. It emphasizes winter motorized recreation, summer nonmotorized recreation, recreation facilities adjacent to existing roads and some marine waters, undeveloped recreation settings across the rest of the Forest, and forest restoration on the Kenai Peninsula through timber harvest and other fuels reduction treatment methods. The Preferred Alternative provides personal use/free use and small-scale commercial forest products and mineral opportunities in most areas with moderate to high mineral potential; however, there is no allowable sale quantity associated with this alternative. It recommends Wilderness designations in selected areas. It also reserves representative ecological types within a Research Natural Area network and recommends rivers for designation as Wild, Scenic, and Recreational in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Reasonable access to subsistence resources is ensured under the Preferred Alternative, as required by ANILCA, Section 811 (a).

The Preferred Alternative was constructed primarily by considering Alternatives A through F of the DEIS and combining components of each. Alternatives A through F were constructed according to one theme that was consistently applied across the entire Forest. The Preferred Alternative was constructed according to three different themes that were applied to the three different geographic areas on the Forest. The theme applied to the Kenai Peninsula is Active Management; the management area prescription allocations of Alternative C were used for this area as being closest to achieving this theme. The theme applied to Prince William Sound area emphasizes Wilderness values and dispersed recreation, and the theme applied to the Copper River Delta focuses on the "Conservation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Values." A blend of management area prescription allocations of Alternatives C and D were used for these areas as being closest to achieving these themes in Prince William Sound and the Copper River Delta.

After analyzing the more than 30,000 public comments on the DEIS and proposed Revised Forest Plan, the Preferred Alternative was modified in response to public comment and the review of the Planning Team. One of the changes in the Preferred Alternative from the DEIS to the FEIS was the development of a new prescription ANILCA 501(b)-1 for the southern portion of the Eastern Copper River Delta.

A few notable changes made in response to extensive public comment on areas proposed in the DEIS for motorized and nonmotorized activities include: closing the lower four miles of Twentymile River drainage to winter motorized activities, except for a designated corridor providing motorized access to the upper valley; opening the Seattle Creek area to winter motorized activities, closing the Crescent/Carter Lake area to all motorized activities, and opening the Lost Lake area to winter motorized activities all season.

As discussed earlier in this ROD, with my decision, I am making a number of modifications to the Preferred Alternative as displayed in the FEIS. Those modifications include:

- Changing the management area prescription in the northern portion of the Eastern Copper River Delta to 501(b)-2 from the Recommended Wilderness prescription (as in Alternative B);
- Modifying map polygon 591 so it is entirely allocated to the Backcountry prescription, to accommodate an area of most favorable mineral potential (as in Alternatives A, B, and E);
- Allocating the proposed routes of the Katalla to Carbon Mountain road corridor to the 501(b)-3 prescription, to provide for activities and uses associated with road corridors (as in Alternative A);
- Changing interest in lands conveyed to Chugach Alaska Corporation in Controller Bay and Katalla Oil and Gas Zone 1 to 501(b)-2 prescription to provide a more compatible management prescription between surface and subsurface ownerships and rights (as in the No Action Alternative and Alternatives B and C); and
- Allowing the development of future utility systems in the Brown Bear Core Area prescription, (as in the DEIS Preferred Alternative).

My decision on these modifications does not alter the effects analysis portrayed in the NEPA documents in any meaningful way. To reach my decision, I relied on management area allocations and standards and guidelines that have been analyzed and disclosed in the NEPA documents and have been available to the public for review and comment.

3. Alternative A

The primary theme of this alternative emphasizes active management and production of forest products, minerals, timber, recreation, etc., while maintaining a predominately undeveloped setting across most of the Forest.

Alternative A emphasizes active management to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat. It emphasizes motorized recreation (primarily winter), developed recreation facilities, and a variety of recreational settings. Alternative A emphasizes

personal use/free use and commercial forest products. It includes a decadal allowable sale quantity of 162.9 million board feet. It also emphasizes mineral opportunities across the Forest.

The Resource Development prescription is generally applied in areas with known mineral potential and areas with significant amounts of potential commercial timber. The Backcountry prescription is applied in areas some distance from existing roads that are not planned for resource development. The Recreation, Fish and Wildlife prescription is generally applied to allow a variety of multiple use activities including developed recreation facilities and settings. Implementing “time-sharing” use seasons would mitigate conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized recreation users. No Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers or new Research Natural Areas are recommended. Reasonable access to subsistence resources is ensured under Alternative A, as required by ANILCA, Section 811 (a).

I did not select this alternative because it does not address the full range of situation statements, but instead places too much emphasis on resource development across the Forest. I want to manage the Chugach in a variety of ways, more tailored to the three geographic areas of the Forest, the Kenai Peninsula, Prince William Sound and the Copper River Delta, as is done in the Preferred Alternative. Some elements of this alternative were incorporated into the Preferred Alternative.

4. Alternative B

The primary theme of this alternative is conserving fish and wildlife habitat while providing opportunities for active management (forest products, minerals, recreation, etc.).

Alternative B emphasizes active management to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat. It emphasizes motorized recreation (both summer and winter), developed facilities, and a variety of recreational settings. Alternative B emphasizes personal use/free use and commercial forest products to meet forest stewardship objectives and includes a decadal allowable sale quantity of 61.1 million board feet. It provides mineral opportunities across most of the Forest. Some Wilderness, Research Natural Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers are recommended. Reasonable access to subsistence resources is ensured under Alternative B, as required by ANILCA, Section 811 (a).

The Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescription is applied over large areas on the Forest to provide a variety of multiple-use activities. This prescription will allow for an emphasis on developed settings and facilities to meet recreation and tourism demand. The Backcountry Motorized prescription is applied over large areas to emphasize motorized opportunities. Prescriptions are applied to provide for mineral development in areas of known favorable mineral potential.

I did not select this alternative because, like Alternative A, it does not address the full range of situation statements, giving too great an emphasis on resource development across the Forest. Although Alternative B has somewhat less resource development than Alternative A, it still falls short of recognizing many of the important resources of

the three geographic areas of the Forest, the Kenai Peninsula, Prince William Sound and the Copper River Delta, as is done in the Preferred Alternative. Some elements of this alternative were incorporated into the Preferred Alternative.

5. Alternative C

The primary theme of this alternative is conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats, and recreation opportunities.

Alternative C provides a mix of active management and natural processes to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat. It also emphasizes winter and summer motorized recreation, recreational facilities adjacent to existing roads and marine waters, and undeveloped recreation settings across most of the Forest. Alternative C provides personal use/free use and small-scale commercial forest products to meet forest stewardship objectives; however, there is no allowable sale quantity associated with this alternative. It provides mineral opportunities in most areas with moderate to high mineral potential. It provides Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, and Research Natural Area recommendations. Reasonable access to subsistence resources is ensured under Alternative C, as required by ANILCA, Section 811 (a).

The Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescription is applied adjacent to existing roads to provide opportunities for personal and commercial uses of forest products. The Forest Restoration prescription is applied on the Kenai Peninsula in selected areas where high levels of spruce bark beetle damaged timber exists. The Backcountry prescription is applied to areas located some distance from roads on the Kenai Peninsula and in Prince William Sound. The Primitive prescription is applied to the Power Creek area. In the Copper River Delta, ANILCA prescription 501(b)-3 is used near the Copper River road and 501(b)-2 is used on all but the northeast portion of the Delta. The Recommended Wilderness prescription, 501(b), is applied to the northeast portion of the Delta.

I did not select this alternative because it emphasized developed recreation and timber salvage opportunities Forestwide and was not fully responsive to public input. While this is compatible with the desired management of the Kenai Peninsula, I felt it did not offer the desired level of resource protection and recognition of natural values that are found in other alternatives including the Preferred Alternative for the remainder of the Forest. Some elements of this alternative were incorporated into the Preferred Alternative.

6. Alternative D

The primary theme of this alternative is nonmotorized opportunities, natural quiet, the continuation of natural processes, minimal recreational facilities, and undeveloped recreational settings.

Alternative D emphasizes natural processes to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat. This alternative emphasizes nonmotorized activities and natural quiet. It also emphasizes minimal recreation facilities. It emphasizes undeveloped recreational settings. Alternative D provides personal use/free use forest products and

small-scale forest products to meet forest stewardship objectives; however, there is no allowable sale quantity associated with this alternative. It emphasizes Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, and Research Natural Area recommendations. Reasonable access to subsistence resources is ensured under Alternative D, as required by ANILCA, Section 811 (a).

The Recommended Wilderness prescription is applied on several portions of the Kenai Peninsula including Twentymile River, Seattle Creek, Resurrection Creek, Resurrection River and the Russian River. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation prescription is applied through the central portions of the Kenai Peninsula to emphasize protection of fish and wildlife habitat values, particularly brown bear, in this bear/human interface zone. Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized prescriptions are applied to the balance of the Kenai Peninsula to provide semi primitive-motorized and nonmotorized recreation experiences.

The Recommended Wilderness prescription is also applied in Prince William Sound to Hinchinbrook Island and on the Copper River Delta (prescription 501(b)). In Prince William Sound, the Backcountry prescription is applied in the Passage Canal area, and upper Harvard, Yale, and Columbia Glaciers to provide access to backcountry recreation opportunities near Valdez. It is applied on Montague and Hawkins Islands and on the east side of Valdez Arm to Nelson Bay. The Primitive prescription is applied to St. Mathews Bay, Bear Trap Bay and Gravina River. In the southwest portion of the Copper River Delta, the 501(b)-2 prescription is applied.

I did not select this alternative because it was not responsive to the full range of public values expressed through the revision process. In comparison to the Preferred Alternative, it does not allow enough opportunity or flexibility for motorized uses and moderate development-type activities in the Kenai Peninsula, and would unduly restrict the Forest's ability to manage for fish and wildlife habitat conservation in the Copper River Delta. It would allow little opportunity for mineral exploration and development on the Forest. Some elements of this alternative were incorporated into the Preferred Alternative.

7. Alternative E

The primary theme of this alternative is the continuation of natural processes, nonmotorized recreational activities, minimal recreational facilities, and undeveloped recreational settings.

Alternative E provides natural processes to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat. It emphasizes nonmotorized recreational activities (except for the traditional motorized activities allowed by ANILCA). It also emphasizes minimal recreational facilities and undeveloped recreational settings. Alternative E emphasizes personal use/free use forest products and small-scale forest products to meet forest stewardship objectives; however, there is no allowable sale quantity associated with this alternative. It emphasizes Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, and Research Natural Area recommendations. Reasonable access to subsistence resources is ensured under Alternative E, as required by ANILCA, Section 811 (a).

The Recommended Wilderness prescription is applied to several portions of the Kenai Peninsula including Twentymile River, Seattle Creek, Resurrection Creek, Resurrection River and the Russian River. The Recommended Wilderness prescription is also applied in Prince William Sound to Hinchinbrook Island and on the Copper River Delta. The 501(b), Recommended Wilderness, prescription is applied to most of the Copper River Delta except for the southwest portion. On the southwest section of the Delta the 501(b)-2 prescription is applied.

The Primitive prescription is applied to St. Mathews Bay, Bear Trap Bay and Gravina River. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation prescription is applied through the central portions of the Kenai Peninsula to emphasize protection of fish and wildlife habitat values, particularly brown bear, in this bear/human interface zone.

Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized prescriptions are applied to the balance of the Kenai Peninsula to provide semi-primitive motorized and nonmotorized recreation experiences. In Prince William Sound, the Backcountry prescription is applied in the Passage Canal area, and upper Harvard, Yale, and Columbia Glaciers to provide access to backcountry recreation opportunities near Valdez. It is applied on Montague and Hawkins Islands and on the east side of Valdez Arm to Nelson Bay.

I did not select this alternative because it was not responsive to the full range of public situation statements expressed through the revision process, and would place too many restrictions on management activities. In comparison to the Preferred Alternative, it does not allow enough opportunity or flexibility for motorized uses and moderate development-type activities in the Kenai Peninsula, and would unduly restrict the Forest's ability to manage for fish and wildlife habitat conservation in the Copper River Delta and in Prince William Sound. It would allow for little opportunity for mineral exploration and development on the Forest. Some elements of this alternative were incorporated into the Preferred Alternative.

8. Alternative F

Similar to Alternative E, the primary theme of this alternative is the continuation of natural processes, nonmotorized recreational activities, minimal recreational facilities, and undeveloped recreational settings. It differs from Alternative E in how some of the management area prescriptions are allocated to achieve this theme, as discussed above and below.

Alternative F emphasizes natural processes to sustain ecological systems and fish and wildlife habitat. It emphasizes nonmotorized recreational activities (except for the traditional motorized activities allowed by ANILCA). It also emphasizes minimal recreational facilities and undeveloped recreational settings. Alternative F provides personal use/free use forest products to meet forest stewardship objectives; however, there is no allowable sale quantity associated with this alternative. It emphasizes Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, and Research Natural Area recommendations. Reasonable access to subsistence resources is ensured under Alternative F, as required by ANILCA, Section 811 (a).

The Recommended Wilderness prescription is applied almost exclusively in this alternative. Most eligible areas are recommended for Wilderness designation. These areas embody wilderness related values such as natural quiet, subsistence resources, spiritual opportunities, scenic integrity, air and water quality, primitive recreation opportunities, local desires for wild and pristine settings, and the economic diversification derived from Wilderness.

I did not select this alternative because it was not responsive to the full range of public situation statements expressed through the revision process, and would place even more restrictions on management activities than Alternative E. Like Alternative E, in comparison to the Preferred Alternative, it does not allow enough opportunity or flexibility for motorized uses and moderate development-type activities in the Kenai Peninsula, and would unduly restrict the Forest's ability to manage for fish and wildlife habitat conservation in the Copper River Delta and in Prince William Sound. It would allow for little opportunity for mineral exploration and development on the Forest. Some elements of this alternative were incorporated into the Preferred Alternative.

D. The Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA require that the ROD specify "the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). This is generally considered to be the alternative that causes the least potential damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources (CEQ's "Forty Most-Asked Questions," 46 Federal Register, 18026, March 23, 1981). Alternative F of the FEIS is the environmentally preferable alternative because it has the least likely adverse effects to the physical and biological environments. Alternative F would allow the smallest amount of direct human-induced effects on the human environment. It has little roading, the least amount of timber harvesting, and would exclude intensive management over most of the Forest.

E. Comparison by Present Net Value

An economic analysis and comparison of the plan alternatives is required by 36 CFR 219.12(g). The most common economic measure used is present net value (PNV). The FEIS, Chapter 3 (Economic Effects) discusses limitations on the practicality and usefulness of PNV (or any other single methodology) as a measure for comparing forest plan alternatives. Because, in the current planning effort, the available data and/or methodologies were not adequate to support PNV estimates for non-timber forest outputs (recreation, commercial fishing, mining) and for non-use values (such as, "existence values"), this analysis was not attempted. To provide PNV estimates for these outputs and values under these circumstances could indicate a false sense of accuracy, and even with additional resources, PNV estimates for certain non-market values would potentially include large errors and would likely remain quite controversial.

In addition, recreation use is a major output of the Chugach National Forest, but due primarily to external factors it is not substantially projected to vary across the planning alternatives in the foreseeable future. Consequently, a major component of the total value of the forest would remain the same in any PNV analysis of the alternatives.

Therefore, PNV estimates have only been provided for those alternatives with a commercial timber program, and were provided for that program only. Of these, Alternative A has the highest PNV, estimated at \$16.4 million. Alternative B, and the No Action Alternative, total \$5.8 million and \$6.7 million, respectively. Since timber is a relatively minor output for the Forest, these PNV estimates have little value in any overall comparison of alternatives, or with the other, unquantified economic values associated with the Forest, especially those associated with recreation use. Consequently, comparisons of timber PNV estimates, which only apply to three alternatives, have little meaning in relation to the overall economic efficiency of the alternatives.

IV. Means to Avoid Environmental Harm

Extensive measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted in the Revised Forest Plan. These measures have been discussed previously, and include Forestwide standards and guidelines as well as standards and guidelines specific to prescriptions. Both Forestwide and prescription standards and guidelines are applied to the planning and implementation of site-specific projects or other activities that occur on the Chugach National Forest. These standards and guidelines are written to meet, at a minimum, all requirements of applicable laws, regulations, and state standards. Most standards and guidelines serve as mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate adverse effects. Singularly and collectively, they avoid, rectify, reduce, or eliminate the potential negative environmental impacts of forest management activities.

The Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 5 includes a monitoring and evaluation strategy (previously discussed) that will provide an ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the Revised Forest Plan. The results of monitoring will be used to evaluate the assumptions used in developing the Revised Forest Plan, and may be the basis for amendments or revisions through the process of adaptive management. The Revised Forest Plan may be amended at any time if changes are needed. Monitoring will also ensure that management area prescriptions and standards and guidelines are being correctly applied and that local, state and federal legal requirements are met. Monitoring results will be used to evaluate progress toward achieving Revised Forest Plan goals, objectives and desired conditions. Accordingly, monitoring and evaluation will be a high priority for funding under the Revised Forest Plan.

V. Findings Required by Other Laws and Authorities

The Forest Service manages the Chugach National Forest in conformance with many federal laws. In this section I consider each of the major laws involved in this programmatic-level decision.

A. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)

The NEPA requires that federal agencies prepare detailed statements on proposed actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. NEPA's requirement is designed to serve two major functions:

1. To provide decision makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of a proposed action prior to its adoptions; and
2. To inform the public of, and allow comment on, such efforts.

The Forest has compiled and generated an enormous amount of information relevant to the effects of each of the alternatives considered in the FEIS. Such information builds on the data, analysis, science assessments, and public involvement set forth in the documents prior to this FEIS, which include the 1998 Analysis of the Management Situation.

I find that the environmental analysis and public involvement process complies with each of the major elements of the requirements set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508).

First, the FEIS considered a broad range of reasonable alternatives. The eight alternatives considered in detail in the FEIS represent only part of the total number of alternatives considered over the course of analysis. Additionally, numerous options within alternatives were considered. Alternatives presented in the FEIS encompass a broad range of responses to issues, or as used in this analysis, situation statements. Over the course of the analysis, public involvement was a collaborative effort where people had the opportunity to fully participate and develop alternatives, as well as, give formal comments on the DEIS. Substantive comments made on the DEIS are summarized in Chapter 6 of the FEIS and responded to in Appendix K. Changes made in response to the comments included clarifying explanations in the FEIS, development of a new management area prescription for a particular area of concern, and use of a different mix of management prescriptions in the Revised Forest Plan.

Second, the FEIS discloses cumulative effects of the alternatives by evaluating past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the planning area. Moreover, although non-federal lands are outside the scope of this decision, effects from their use have been considered in the FEIS to a degree appropriate for a programmatic NEPA document at this scale.

Third, the FEIS makes use of the best available scientific information. This use has been reviewed using a science consistency evaluation process that considered the quality of the information used, how the information was used, and whether risk and uncertainty were acknowledged. Application of a geographical information system (GIS) was used to evaluate complex spatial effects resulting from implementation of the alternatives, such as maintenance of connectivity corridors for wildlife and how visual condition could change over time. The available science literature was used to help estimate environmental consequences. Complex wildlife habitat models were employed to better understand the relationships between management actions and potential

impacts to wildlife. Certain key issues or resources were addressed through the use of peer reviews. All of these tools, taken together, constitute use of the best available information.

The decision here does not directly authorize any new ground disturbing activities or projects, but rather ground disturbing activities and projects will be subject to additional site-specific environmental analysis that will tier to the FEIS for the Revised Forest Plan and follow applicable public involvement and appeal procedures.

B. National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

The NFMA implementing regulation specifies a number of requirements that guide Forest Service planning. The Revised Forest Plan complies with each of these management requirements, as explained in this ROD and accompanying FEIS and Appendices. Certain requirements for diversity and species viability are discussed in further detail below.

The implementing regulation calls for fish and wildlife habitat to be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area (36 CFR 219.19). As part of the Chugach Forest Plan revision process, 231 species were evaluated for viability concerns. Additional analyses were performed for species with concerns.

Using a coarse filter approach, land cover classes that contained wildlife habitat were identified and tracked. The magnitude of change in the abundance and quality of habitats due to implementation of the Revised Forest Plan is very small. By far, the most change in the quality and quantity of habitat on the Chugach is due to natural plant succession and natural disturbances. This change is not expected to create viability concerns. Ninety nine percent of the Forest will be managed without Forest Service constructed roads, thereby providing security for wide-ranging species, such as the Brown Bear. The FEIS contains detailed “fine filter” analysis for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species and species of special interest. Standards and guidelines have been developed to conserve habitats, wildlife and minimize impacts from human activities, such as recreation. The Revised Forest Plan has identified management indicator species, as required by the planning regulations, for monitoring the effectiveness of management activities. Analyses presented in the FEIS and appendices have assured me that there is a high likelihood of continued representation of all species and important habitats on the Chugach National Forest in all alternatives.

1. Management Indicator Species

The implementing regulation for NFMA prescribes the use of management indicator species (MIS), whose response to land management activities can be used to predict the likely response of other species with similar habitat requirements. Five MIS (Black Oystercatcher, Brown Bear, Dusky Canada Goose, Moose, Mountain Goat) were identified for the Revised Forest Plan. Science consistency reviews examined information in the Revised Forest Plan and FEIS for all MIS species, and concluded those documents incorporated and properly used the best available scientific information.

a. Black Oystercatcher. While the majority of recreation use in Prince William Sound is by kayakers, boaters, and other water born recreationists, some recreation activities on land have the potential for affecting the black oystercatcher. I believe the option to have seasonal use restrictions and buffer zones placed around high concentrations of black oystercatchers in the Revised Forest Plan will mitigate potential effects from dispersed recreational activities within Prince William Sound. In addition, the seabird rookeries and waterfowl and shorebird habitat management guidelines provide for minimum distance buffer area that will help reduce impacts on the oystercatcher. Therefore, I don't expect any major threats to black oystercatcher population viability caused by unregulated activities in Prince William Sound to occur.

b. Brown Bear. The largest potential for impact to brown bears from Forest management and permitted activities is on the Kenai Peninsula. The Revised Forest Plan allocates the second largest number of acres to the Brown Bear Core Management Area among the alternatives. That prescription, which specifically limits human-bear interactions by prescribing a 750 foot buffer to provide cover for brown bears while feeding on key anadromous fish streams, combined with the Forestwide standard to limit the attractiveness of garbage and food to bears will help maintain brown bear viability on the Forest under the Revised Forest Plan. The Revised Forest Plan is consistent with the recommendations of the Interagency Brown Bear Study Team conservation assessment.

c. Dusky Canada Goose. The conservation of fish and wildlife resources are a focus of the prescriptions applied to the Copper River Delta in the Revised Forest Plan. The likelihood of forest management activities affecting the viability of populations of Dusky Canada geese is low due to those prescriptions and the Forestwide standards and guidelines that will be applied to protect nest sites. The Revised Forest Plan will allow activities such as nest island construction to help improve nesting success, and will therefore, help minimize the risk of viability of the Dusky Canada goose.

d. Moose. The quantity and quality of moose winter habitat was a focus of my attention in identifying the Revised Forest Plan. The Revised Forest Plan would have low impacts on moose winter habitat in the Kenai Peninsula and Copper River Delta, while also allowing for wildlife habitat improvement projects. Prescribed burns are planned in areas where winter forage is a limiting factor and there is a high probability of regenerating plant species that moose prefer.

e. Mountain Goat. The quantity and quality of mountain goat winter habitat is thought to be a limiting factor for mountain goats in Southcentral Alaska. Forestwide guidelines identify specific distances to be maintained between activities and goats and their critical habitat. These guidelines and other management direction will minimize the risk of viability effects on mountain goats from heli-recreation. That these guidelines are indeed effective will be addressed through Forest Plan monitoring activities.

I find the combination of Forestwide standards and guidelines, and the specific management area prescriptions represent a balance of conservation measures that consider the best available scientific information and will provide fish and wildlife habitat

to maintain well-distributed viable populations of vertebrate species in the planning areas and maintain the diversity of plants and animals.

2. Sensitive Species

For the 18 sensitive species on the Forest (ten plants and eight vertebrates), a combination of land allocations and Forestwide standards and guidelines will be applied to sustain the species and their habitats. Under the Revised Forest Plan, individuals may be impacted but it is not likely to contribute to the loss of viability neither to the population or species nor to the possible federal listing of any sensitive species.

C. Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)

1. ANILCA, Section 501(b), Copper River Delta

ANILCA Section 501(b) states the primary purpose of management of lands within the Copper River Delta (as designated by the Act) be the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats. I have applied three ANILCA 501(b) prescriptions in the Copper River Delta area, providing for the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats, and a variety of multiple uses. Those three prescriptions are 501(b)-1, 501(b)-2, and 501(b)-3. All three of those 501(b) prescriptions have fish and wildlife conservation as their primary goal. Each prescription also provides for a different mix of multiple use activities consistent with the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitat, as also provided for by ANILCA Section 501(b).

2. ANILCA, Section 810, Subsistence Uses

Subsistence use, evaluation and determination is not required for approval of a Revised Forest Plan. A forest plan is a programmatic-level decision and is not a determination whether to “withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise permit the use, occupancy, or disposition” of National Forest lands. However, a Forestwide evaluation and determination is included for the Forest Plan Revision to facilitate future project-level planning and decision making in compliance with ANILCA Section 810.

Forestwide standards and guidelines (Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 3) and management area prescriptions (Forest Plan, Chapter 4) reflect the policies of Title VIII of ANILCA. Specific public involvement and analysis requirements will be followed to ensure that management activities consider impacts upon residents who are subsistence users. Consultations will occur with the Southcentral Alaska Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council and local rural communities and residents on current and proposed management actions. The Revised Forest Plan will provide for participation by recognized Alaskan tribal governments and subsistence user groups in various matters relating to subsistence.

The Forest Service will evaluate changes in subsistence use patterns and activities by consulting with subsistence user groups and by cooperating with appropriate state and federal agencies in periodic surveys of wildlife populations. Reasonable access to subsistence resources will be maintained and subsistence user needs will be considered in fish and wildlife improvement projects, as well as in access and facilities projects.

Consistent with Section 810 of ANILCA, the Revised Forest Plan has been evaluated for potential effects on subsistence uses and needs. An analysis of direct, indirect and cumulative effects of resource developments on subsistence resources is included in the FEIS (Chapter 3, Subsistence). Based on this analysis, implementation of the Revised Forest Plan will not result in a significant restriction to subsistence use of wild resources, due to the minimal potential effects of projects on the abundance and distribution of these resources and on competition for these resources.

During the alternative development process, people in the community of Cordova proposed that winter motorized access for subsistence uses in the Power Creek area not be allowed because people like to cross country ski in this area. This proposal was discussed many times at public meetings and directly with the people of the Native Village of Eyak who may use the area and no impact on subsistence users was identified. The Native Village of Eyak expressed little concern with restricting winter motorized use in the area. The Preferred Alternative applies the Primitive prescription to Power Creek, a prescription that would not allow motorized access. The Power Creek area has a low capacity for motorized subsistence use due to safety and environmental concerns. The area encompasses 11,750 acres out of 5.5 million acres, or approximately 0.2 percent of the Forest. When I look at this area in the context of the greater area, restricting motorized access activities in the Power Creek area is not expected to have a significant affect on subsistence resource activities. Nonetheless, the Power Creek area will not be closed to motorized subsistence use until a public hearing is held in Cordova and a determination is made that the closure would not significantly restrict subsistence uses. That hearing is scheduled in Cordova on October 10, 2002.

3. ANILCA “No More” Clauses

Public comments have raised concerns that the Revised Forest Plan is not consistent with several provisions of ANILCA commonly referred to as the “no more” clauses:

Sec. 101 (d) - *This Act provides sufficient protection for the national interest in the scenic, natural, cultural, and environmental values on the public lands in Alaska, and at the same time provides adequate opportunity for satisfaction of the economic and social needs of the State of Alaska and its people; accordingly, the designation and disposition of the public lands in Alaska pursuant to this Act are found to represent a proper balance between the reservation of national conservation system units and those public lands necessary and appropriate for more intensive use and disposition, and thus Congress believes that the need for future legislation designating new conservation system units, new conservation areas, or new national recreation areas, has been obviated thereby.*

Sec. 708(b) (3) - *areas reviewed in such Final Environmental Statement and not designated as wilderness or for study by this Act or remaining in further planning upon enactment of this Act need not be managed for the purpose of protecting their suitability for wilderness designation pending revision of the initial plans; and*

(4) - *unless expressly authorized by Congress the Department of Agriculture shall not conduct any further statewide roadless area review and*

evaluation of National Forest System lands in the State of Alaska for the purpose of determining their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Sec. 1326 (b) - *No further studies of Federal lands in the State of Alaska for the single purpose of considering the establishment of a conservation system unit, national recreation area, national conservation area, or for related or similar purposes shall be conducted unless authorized by this Act or further Act of Congress.*

The Revised Forest Plan is consistent with ANILCA, Section 708 (b)(4), because it is a forest-specific plan and not a statewide evaluation. The Revised Forest Plan is consistent with ANILCA, Section 1326 (b), because it is a general land management plan and not a single purpose study. Section 101 of ANILCA provides important congressional determinations, findings and information and was considered in making the final recommendations and decisions.

D. Coastal Zone Management Act

The Revised Forest Plan's Forestwide standards and guidelines include direction for coordinating all projects that affect any land or water use or natural resource of the coastal zone with the State of Alaska, Division of Governmental Coordination. This coordination is done to ensure that activities are consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the enforceable policies of the Alaska Coastal Management Program. For timber harvest and associated road management, providing a level of resource protection no less than that provided by the Alaska Forest Practices and Resources Act ensures that activities are consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the Alaska Coastal Management Program. The standards and guidelines of the Revised Forest Plan, and other applicable direction such as the Best Management Practices contained in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook, provide at least as much resource protection as the standards of the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act and its implementing regulations.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Alaska Region of the Forest Service and the State of Alaska regarding coastal zone management coordination also provides direction for carrying out these responsibilities. Among other things, the MOU identifies the types of Forest Service permits that are expected to affect the coastal zone. Before any such permit is issued, the applicant must certify to the State and gain Alaska Division of Governmental Coordination concurrence that the proposed activity is consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program.

E. Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Consultation requirements under Section 7 of the ESA, as amended, were completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. Both agencies reviewed the Biological Assessment for three threatened and endangered species that occur on the Forest under their regulatory jurisdiction, and concluded that the Revised Forest Plan was "not likely to adversely affect" threatened or endangered species occurring on the Chugach National Forest (see FEIS Appendix G).

F. Clean Water Act

Full implementation of the Revised Forest Plan is expected to maintain and improve water quality and satisfies all State water quality requirements. I base this finding on the extensive standards and guidelines contained in the Revised Forest Plan, the application of state approved “Best Management Practices” specifically designed to protect water quality and the discussion of water quality and beneficial uses contained in the FEIS, Chapter 3. Additionally, project level analysis for subsequent activities under the Revised Forest Plan will be required to demonstrate compliance with the Clean Water Act and state water quality standards.

G. Clean Air Act

At the scale of a programmatic plan such as this, the overall level of activities proposed under this decision is not anticipated to degrade air quality or violate state implementation plans. This finding is based on information presented in the FEIS. Conformity determinations and more detailed air quality impact analyses will be made at subsequent levels of planning and analysis where emissions can be more accurately quantified, reasonably forecasted, and local impacts assessed.

H. Flood Plains and Wetlands (Executive Orders 11988 and 11990)

These Executive Orders require federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, short term and long term effects resulting from the occupancy and modification of flood plains and the modification or destruction of wetlands. Forestwide standards and guidelines for soil and water, wetlands, and riparian areas are designed to minimize effects to flood plains and wetlands. They incorporate the Best Management Practices of the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook.

I. Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations,” requires that Federal agencies make achieving environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low income populations. The issue of environmental justice is analyzed in FEIS Chapter 3, “Social and Economic Elements.” The community assessment section describes the per capita incomes (1990 Census), the population (1995, Alaska Department of Labor), the percent of Natives within the population (1990 Census), and recent trend and economic events for Southcentral Alaska communities.

A qualitative assessment has been conducted of environmental justice considerations based on the information in the FEIS. My conclusion is that the risk of disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations from implementation of the Revised Forest Plan is very low. The FEIS consistently ranks the Preferred Alternative among those with the lowest risk of potential adverse environmental effects from land management activities on wildlife and fish habitat and subsistence resources.

I conclude that the risk of environmental justice issues would be higher under Alternative A and B, due to higher risks of adverse environmental effects on wildlife and fish habitat and subsistence resources under these alternatives, which could disproportionately affect low income or Native populations in Southcentral Alaska.

J. Civil Rights Laws

Civil Rights are defined as “the legal rights of United States citizens to guaranteed equal protection under the law” (USDA Forest Service Manual 1730). Civil rights impact analysis for environmental or natural resource actions is part of the social impact analysis package in a necessary environmental impact statement and is not a separate report (USDA Forest Service Handbook 1709.11). The Forest Service is committed to equal treatment of all individuals and social groups in its management programs in providing services, opportunities and jobs. Because no actual or projected violation of legal rights to equal protection under the law is foreseen under the Revised Forest Plan for any individual or category of people, no civil rights impacts are reported in the FEIS.

K. Accessibility

The Forest Service and its cooperators are required to incorporate access standards into all of the agency’s “Federally Conducted” or “Federally Assisted” facilities, programs, services, or activities. This direction is mandated in the following laws and regulations: Architectural Barriers Act of 1968; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 1978; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title v, section 507) and 7 CFR 15(e). The Chugach National Forest is following the Alaska Region’s Regional Accessibility Strategy for recreational programs and administrative sites/facilities.

L. Tribal Government Consultation (Executive Order 13084)

Tribal representatives of the Alaska Native Villages of Chenega Bay, Eyak, Tatitlek, and the Kenaitze Indian Tribe were involved throughout the Revision process. Prior to the release of the Notice of Intent to revise the Forest Plan, meetings were held with the Alaska Native Tribes to begin to understand their unique issues and concerns. Meetings were held during the scoping period to define the revision issues. The ID Team worked closely with the Native villages to formulate the Management Area Prescriptions in response to their issues. Specifically, the EVOS prescription was formulated in direct response to reserved property rights of Chenega Bay, Eyak, and Tatitlek Native Villages. The EVOS prescription used direction from their purchase agreements in order to clearly display and articulate the management direction applicable to these areas.

Consultation was held with individual Native village counsels in the application of prescriptions to formulate alternatives. In June of 2000, a Government-to-Government meeting was held with the Native Villages of Tatitlek, Eyak, Chenega Bay, and the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. One of the topics was the formulation of the draft Preferred Alternative. Meetings were held with a comprehensive group of Native Tribal representatives during the comment period on the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest

Plan (September 2000). Information from personal meetings, phone calls, and correspondence with tribal representatives was considered in the selection of the Preferred Alternative.

M. Fiscal Year 2002 Appropriations Bill

The Conference Report for the FY 2002 Appropriations Bill instructed the Forest Service to analyze “the impact that restrictions proposed within the (Chugach Forest) Plan regarding mechanical fuel treatment and forest access will have on prescribed burning and the implementation of the National Fire Plan on the Chugach National Forest”. Forest Service staff from the Alaska Regional Office and State and Private Forestry undertook a review of direction in the Revised Chugach Forest Plan in response to that direction.

That review indicated the Revised Chugach Forest Plan is in compliance with the National Fire Plan and no significant restrictions on mechanical fuels treatments and forest access for those treatments are anticipated.

The Revised Forest Plan tiers to and follows the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan, which prioritizes fire suppression activities across all ownerships in the State of Alaska. In addition, the revised forest plan closely follow the fuels reduction guidelines and number of acres to be treated to reduce fuels under the Kenai Peninsula Spruce Bark Beetle Management Strategies, and the 5 Year Action Plan (CNF 1999).

Mechanical treatment of fuels is directed and allowed in most management area prescriptions under the Revised Forest Plan. Most of the high hazard fuels area and areas of high fire risk border the Sterling and Seward Highways in the Kenai Peninsula. Most of that road corridor system falls under the Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation management area prescription. That management area allows for vegetation, fuels, and integrated pest management projects using management ignited prescribed fire, mechanical treatment of fuels, and other methods deemed appropriate. Construction of new Forest Service roads is also permitted in the management area.

N. Submerged Lands

The State of Alaska and the Forest Service do not agree on the ownership of submerged lands. The Forest Service is acceding to state regulation of submerged lands until that disagreement is resolved.

VI. Implementation

The Revised Forest Plan is effective 30 days from the date of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register for the FEIS (36 CFR 219.10).

The Revised Forest Plan does not provide final authorization for any site-specific activity. It provides a programmatic framework within which project-level decisions are considered. Projects must undergo appropriate site-specific analysis, and comply with applicable requirements for public participation, environmental analysis and disclosure, and administrative appeal procedures before final authorization and implementation.

The direction set forth in the Revised Forest Plan will be implemented through specific activities and projects, as well as by annual operations and maintenance activities. Appendix C in the Revised Forest Plan is entitled “Potential Project Implementation Schedules.” This appendix displays potential construction and development projects that might be implemented over the life of the Plan. The appendix includes the name and description of the potential project or activity, the Ranger District where the project would be located, the planned year of implementation, and an estimated cost.

These implementation schedules are dynamic and may be updated frequently, depending upon many factors including funding. The Forest will produce an annually updated display of proposed, authorized, and completed actions designed to achieve the desired conditions and objectives of the Revised Forest Plan, called the “Schedule of Proposed Actions.” Environmental analysis, as appropriate, will be conducted on the projects prior to implementation. The final implementation schedule will depend on a number of factors, including demand, funding, and partnership opportunities. Some of the potential projects listed in Appendix C represent responses to public comments received during the Forest Plan revision process that will occur at a future time. Others are designed to help mitigate user conflicts. For example, bridges may be built in the future across rugged canyons to allow for snow machine access to areas that are currently not accessible. This will help to mitigate the loss of another area that has resulted from motorized closures. New cabins and trails are proposed to help meet the high public demand on the Forest.

Application to Other Contracts, Permits and Special Use Authorizations

The Revised Forest Plan direction applies to other contracts awarded, and permits and special use authorizations signed, by Forest Service responsible officials on or after the effective date of the Revised Forest Plan. Contracts awarded, permits and special use authorizations signed prior to the effective date shall be reviewed for consistency with the Revised Forest Plan. Any of these instruments which are determined by the responsible official to be inconsistent shall be adjusted as necessary to achieve consistency with the Revised Forest Plan, but only to the extent legal authority exists to make adjustment and subject to valid existing rights. Contracts, permits and special use authorizations, which are determined by the responsible official to be consistent with the Revised Forest Plan, may proceed.

VII. Appeal Rights

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the provision of 36 CFR 217 by filing a written notice of appeal within 90 days of the date specified in the published legal notice of this decision, as provided in 36 CFR 217.5(b) and 217.8(a)(3). The appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer:

USDA Forest Service
Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff, Mail Stop 1104
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

A copy must simultaneously be sent to:
Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region
P.O. Box 21628
Juneau, AK 99801-1628

The notice of appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 217.9). Requests to stay approval of the Revised Forest Plan will not be granted (36 CFR 217.10(b)). For a period not to exceed 20 days following the filing of a Notice of Appeal, the Reviewing Officer shall accept requests to intervene in the appeal from any interested or potentially affected person or organization (36 CFR 217.14(a)).

Decisions on site-specific ground disturbing projects are not made in this document. Schedules of potential resource projects for the first decade are contained in Appendix C of the Revised Forest Plan. Decisions on proposed projects will not be made until completion of environmental analysis and documentation for the specific project, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

I encourage anyone with questions about this decision, the Revised Forest Plan, or the FEIS, to contact the Chugach National Forest Planning Staff Officer in Anchorage, at (907) 743-9500 before submitting an appeal. It may be possible to resolve the concern in a less formal manner.

VIII. Contact

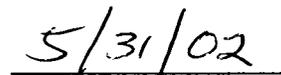
If you would like more information on the Revised Forest Plan or the FEIS, please contact:

Forest Supervisor or Planning Staff Officer
Chugach National Forest
3301 'C' Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-3998
Telephone (907) 743-9500

IX. Signature and Date



DENNIS E. BSCHOR,
Regional Forester



Date

Appendix A – Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Suitability Analysis

Introduction

The final step in the river assessment process is the determination of “suitability.” Suitability represents an assessment or determination as to whether or not eligible river segments should be recommended for inclusion in the National System by Congress. Appendix D in the FEIS has a detailed description of each of the eligible rivers and discusses suitability factors.

The purpose of Appendix A - Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability Analysis is to present a detailed description of the rationale considered as the basis for determining which rivers should be recommended to the National System.

Section A – Rivers Suitable for Designation

Listed below and grouped by Geographical area are the seven rivers (nine individual river segments) recommended for designation to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and the classification recommended (wild, scenic, or recreational). A brief discussion of each river, which highlights its outstandingly remarkable values, and lists the specific rationale for the suitability determination, is included. The reasons some river segments are recommended for classification different than the inventoried classification (eligible for wild designation, recommended for scenic or recreational) is included in the discussion.

Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area (Management Theme - Active Management)

On the Kenai Peninsula I want to emphasize, active management due to the variety of current human uses and projected resource management activities (prescribed fire, bark beetle restoration, minerals, recreation/tourism etc.)

1) East Fork Sixmile Creek

I consider East Fork Sixmile Creek a worthy addition to the National System. Whitewater opportunities on East Fork Sixmile Creek are among the best on the Kenai Peninsula. The creek is popular with many rafters, canoers, and kayakers seeking an easy to moderate boating experience (Class I and II). The eligible segment of the river is 5.6 miles long. Guided float trips along this section of the creek are available.

I am recommending that East Fork Sixmile Creek be added to the National System at the inventoried classification of scenic. My recommendation for the 5.6-mile segment of this river located on federal land is based on the following considerations:

1. The whitewater boating opportunities provided on East Fork Sixmile Creek are among the best on the Kenai Peninsula.

2. Public comments received both during the scoping period and on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed revised Forest Plan were primarily supportive of recommending East Fork Sixmile Creek for designation.
3. Designation of the East Fork Sixmile Creek would not impact future management of winter and summer motorized and nonmotorized recreational activities in the vicinity. It would allow some development of recreation facilities and new trails to accommodate river users.
4. Designation of this River is consistent with the active management theme I envisioned for the Kenai Geographic Area.
5. Designation of the River would not foreclose options for the State of Alaska to manage their lands located downstream from the eligible section on federal land.

2) Sixmile Creek

Sixmile Creek provides a highly scenic, road accessible, Class IV to V whitewater boating experience. Whitewater opportunities on Sixmile are unparalleled on the Kenai Peninsula. State of Alaska lands are located above and below the eligible section of river located on federal land. The eligible river segment on federal land is 5.7-miles long.

Sixmile is renown, regionally, as a high-quality, sustained-difficult whitewater experience. The river is very popular with local expert whitewater boaters, and commercial guiding operations. The Creek flows through three steep-walled segments contributing to the sense of remoteness and whitewater challenge. The 5.7-mile segment is notable for its scenic diversity including canyons, broad valleys, clear to turquoise water, and several sections providing dramatic distant forest views.

I am recommending that Sixmile Creek be added to the National System at the inventoried classification of scenic. My recommendation for the 5.7-mile segment of this river located on federal land is based on the following considerations:

1. The whitewater boating opportunities provided on Sixmile Creek are unparalleled on the Kenai Peninsula.
2. Designation of Sixmile Creek would have a positive affect on the economic interests of commercial guiding operations on the river.
3. Public comments received both during the scoping period and on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed revised Forest Plan were primarily supportive of recommending Sixmile Creek for designation.
4. Designation of Sixmile Creek would not impact future management of winter and summer motorized and nonmotorized recreational activities in the vicinity. It would allow some development of recreation facilities and new trails to accommodate river users.
5. Designation of this River is consistent with the active management theme I envisioned for the Kenai Geographic Area.

6. Designation of the River would not foreclose options for the State of Alaska to manage their lands located above and below the eligible section on federal land.

3) Twentymile River (complex)

The eligible river segment is a 14.2-mile long wetlands complex.

The broad valley bottom of Twentymile River defines a large, remarkably diverse and dynamic wetlands complex, second only to the Copper River Delta on the Chugach National Forest. The wetlands and valley bottom complex within the Twentymile Valley produce outstanding habitat for numerous fish and wildlife species including: three salmon species (sockeye, coho, and king), hooligan, beaver, numerous waterfowl, and moose.

The wetland, lake, and river complex within the Twentymile Valley bottom is the chief outstandingly remarkable river-related value of this river. This valley bottom provides the majority of the outstanding fish and wildlife habitat and associated recreation activity within the Twentymile watershed.

I am recommending that Twentymile River be added to the National System at the classification of scenic. The inventoried classification for Twentymile River is wild. My recommendation for the 14.2-mile segment of this river to be added to the National System is based on the following considerations:

1. Public comments received both during the scoping period and on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed revised Forest Plan were primarily supportive of recommending Twentymile River for scenic classification.
2. Designation of the Twentymile River as scenic would not impact future management of winter and summer motorized and nonmotorized recreational activities in the vicinity. It would allow some development of recreation facilities and new trails to accommodate river users.
3. Designation of this River is consistent with the active management theme I envisioned for the Kenai Geographic Area.
4. Designation of the River would not foreclose options for the Alaska Railroad to manage their lands located at the mouth of the river.

4) Portage Creek

The eligible river segment of Portage Creek is 6.2 miles long.

Portage Creek is a braided glacial stream that flows approximately six miles from Portage Lake and exits the Forest below the bridge across the Seward Highway.

Portage Valley is the number one tourist attraction in the State of Alaska. Portage Valley is approximately two miles wide and comprises a highly scenic corridor with open vistas of rugged and steep narrow side valleys. Because it is a relatively narrow valley, the scenic views are even more dramatic because they are close up.

Portage Creek provides excellent day-use float trips for people in canoes and rafts. The river is popular because it is accessible and has a low difficulty rating (Class II) for floating, however, it can be dangerous because of "sweepers."

I am recommending that Portage Creek be added to the National System at the inventoried classification of recreational. My recommendation for the 6.2-mile segment of this river to be added to the National System is based on the following considerations:

1. Public comments received both during the scoping period and on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed revised Forest Plan were primarily supportive of recommending Portage Creek for scenic classification.
2. Designation of Portage Creek as a Recreational river would not impact future management and would allow some development of recreation facilities and new trails to accommodate river users.
3. Designation of Portage Creek is consistent with the active management theme I envisioned for the Kenai Geographic Area and consistent with the level and intensity of public use that occurs in Portage Valley.
4. Designation of Portage Creek would not foreclose options for the Alaska Railroad to manage their lands located at the mouth of the river.

5) Snow River

Snow River is a dominant feature in the landscape of the southern portion of the Kenai Geographic Area. Traveling through the middle of a classically U-shaped valley, spectacular views of glaciers and mountain peaks line both sides of the valley. From its glacial origins, the river passes through alpine, shrub and forest environments before ending in Kenai Lake. The eligible river segment is 23.8-miles long.

This river (above the railroad bridge) exhibits outstandingly remarkable scenic values. Snow River also possesses a rare and exemplary hydrologic feature, a glacial outburst flood or 'jökulhlaups', adding to the wild and outstandingly remarkable values of this river.

I am recommending that the upper 18.7 miles of Snow River (from the gorge to the headwaters) be added to the National System at the inventoried classification of wild and the lower 5.1 miles (from the gorge to the Alaska Railroad bridge) be added to the National System at the classification of scenic. My recommendation for the two segments of this river to be added to the National System is based on the following considerations:

1. Public comments received both during the scoping period and on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed revised Forest Plan were primarily supportive of recommending Snow River for wild designation.
2. Classification of the lower section of the river as scenic is consistent with the active management theme I envisioned for the Kenai Geographic Area. This would allow for some future increase in recreational use and potential facilities

development in the lower section as necessary. Because the upper section is so remote, I felt it best to recommend that section for a wild designation to protect its wild character.

6) Russian River

The sockeye salmon run in the Russian River is the largest and most dependable run of sockeye within the Southcentral Alaska area. It is remarkable in its availability, as it is the only large run of sockeye salmon readily accessible to the Anchorage urban area. The length of time the fish are available and the relative ease that they are caught also characterize it. This has made the Russian River and its confluence with the Kenai River the personal use fishery for the 60 percent of the Alaska population that resides in the Southcentral Region. The annual angler effort for this fishery exceeds 450,000 hours and annual harvest has ranged as high as 190,000 fish. In addition to the sockeye recreational fishery, a robust fishery exists for rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, pink and coho salmon.

Cultural evidence of prehistoric use, characterized by clusters of fish cache pits, is abundant in several areas near the river. Some sites have been nearly destroyed by visitor foot traffic. The Russian River, including the areas up to the approximate 500-foot contour interval to Lower Russian lake, lies within the proposed revised boundaries of the Sqiilantnu Archaeological District. Significant evidence of river-related occupation or use by Native Americans exists in this area.

I am recommending that the upper 12.4 miles of the Russian River (from the Falls to Russian Lake) be added to the National System at the inventoried classification of wild and the lower 4.9 miles (from the fall to the confluence with the Kenai River) be added to the National System at the classification of recreational. The lower river inventoried classification is scenic. My recommendation for the Russian River to be added to the National System is based on the following considerations:

1. Public comments received both during the scoping period and on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed revised Forest Plan were primarily supportive of recommending the Russian River to be added to the National Rivers System.
2. Classification of the lower portion of the Russian River as recreational is consistent with current and future expected use patterns in the area. A recreational classification would allow some development of recreation facilities and new trails to accommodate river users.
3. Designation of this River is consistent with the Wilderness management objectives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US F&WS), land manager on the west side of the river. Comments on the proposed Revised Forest Plan from the US F&WS requested that the upper portion of the river be recommended as a wild river.

Prince William Sound Geographic Area (Management Theme - Wilderness Values)

I want to emphasize Wilderness values in Western Prince William Sound. I also want to provide for recreation opportunities near Whittier to address the projected increase in recreation demand as a result of the opening of the Whittier road.

7) Nellie Juan River

With headwaters originating at Nellie Juan Lake, Nellie Juan River flows a spectacular 25.1 miles from the alpine of the Kenai Peninsula into Kings Bay of Prince William Sound. The Nellie Juan River lies in a recently deglaciated remote valley. These 25.1 miles of outstandingly remarkable continuous Class V whitewater and spectacular scenery make the Nellie Juan River eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system.

I am recommending that the lower 9.6 miles of the Nellie Juan River be added to the National System at the inventoried classification of wild. I am not recommending the upper 15.5-mile segment of eligible river for designation. My recommendation for Nellie Juan River to be added to the National System is based on the following considerations:

1. Chugach Alaska Corporation (CAC) owns land near the river on the upper 15.5-mile segment of the river. The 9.6-mile segment of river I am recommending for designation is located on the lower section of river, below CAC lands. This recommendation is responsive to their concern with the potential hindrance to future road construction, necessary to access their private lands, which may result from a Wild River designation on the entire river. The entire 25.1-miles of Nellie Juan River is inventoried as wild.
2. Classification of the lower portion of the Nellie Juan River as wild is consistent with the recommended Wilderness prescription applied to adjacent lands in the area.
3. Public comments supported a recommendation to add Nellie Juan River to the National Rivers System.

Section B Rivers Unsuitable for Designation

Sixteen rivers have been determined as non-suitable for wild, scenic or recreational designation. The river related values of these rivers will be protected by the application of other category 1 and 2 Management Area prescriptions. Moreover, the Revised Forest Plan's fish, water and riparian areas standards and guidelines and other direction will adequately protect most of the values of these rivers while allowing other resource management objectives to be met. A brief description of the outstandingly remarkable values of each river and a summary of the rationale for each non-suitability finding is included below.

Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area (Management Theme - Active Management)

On the Kenai Peninsula I wanted to emphasize, active management due to the variety of current human uses and projected resource management activities (prescribed fire, bark beetle restoration, minerals, recreation/tourism etc.)

Bear Creek

Bear Creek has produced some coarse gold nuggets, outstanding within the Kenai Peninsula and Southcentral Alaska. This implies that some unique geologic processes are occurring or have occurred at Bear Creek.

I am not recommending that Bear Creek be added to the National System. My conclusion that Bear Creek is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received several public comments from people who felt that Bear Creek is not a worthy addition to the National Rivers System because of the amount of mining activity that has occurred in the river corridor in the past.
2. Designation as a recreational classified river could hinder the operations of active mining claimants on the river.
3. The spruce bark beetle has heavily damaged timberlands near Bear Creek. Treatment of these stands may not be compatible with a Wild and Scenic River designation.

Canyon Creek

A portion of the river at its confluence with Sixmile and East Fork Sixmile Creeks is located on State of Alaska land. Another segment of this creek is located on Alaska State selected land. The eligible river segment on Forest Service land is 6.8 miles long.

Canyon Creek flows for eight miles through a narrow canyon ranging in depth from 100 to 200 feet or more, extending from its confluence with Mills Creek to some 600 to 800 feet above its confluence with Sixmile Creek. This deep channel is incised into a broader U-shaped glacial valley. The eight-mile canyon is remarkable for both its length and depth and is unrivaled in the region in those respects.

I am not recommending that Canyon Creek be added to the National System. My conclusion that Canyon Creek is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received relatively few comments on Canyon Creek expressing support for or opposition to designation.
2. Designation as a scenic river could hinder the operations of active mining claimants on the river.

3. The creek flows through state owned lands above and below the eligible section of the creek located on Forest Service land. A portion of the section of the creek on federal land is selected for possible conveyance to the state. Designation of the creek may not be compatible with the management objectives for the sections of the creek on state land.

Palmer Creek

The eligible river segment is 10.9 miles long.

From the head of Palmer Valley and flowing for about 11 miles to join Resurrection Creek, Palmer Creek is integral to the outstanding scenic quality of Palmer Creek Valley. The creek combined with the vegetation pattern and strong U-shaped valley creates one of the most scenic road accessible places on the Forest.

I am not recommending that Palmer Creek be added to the National System. My conclusion that Palmer Creek is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received relatively few comments on Palmer Creek expressing support for or opposition to designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would be protected with the application of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation management area prescription.

Portage Lake

The eligible river segment is 2 miles long.

Portage Lake is within a highly scenic corridor with open vistas of rugged mountains containing numerous hanging glaciers, waterfalls, steep slopes, steep narrow side valleys, alpine meadows and rock faces. Because it is a relatively narrow valley, the scenic views are even more dramatic because they are close up. Day use activity for picnicking, fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing and sightseeing takes place at several unimproved sites.

The Begich Boggs Visitor Center is located on the shore of Portage Lake and is a major visitor center and attracts nearly a half million people per year. Associated facilities include parking lots, cement walkways, public rest rooms, a concessionaire facility and a tour boat and docking facility. This is the highlight attraction for many visitor tour trips to Alaska.

In summary, the Portage Lake and glacier area is a major recreation/tourism area that is readily accessible to the public.

I am not recommending that Portage Lake be added to the National System. My conclusion that Portage Lake is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received relatively few comments on Portage Lake expressing support for or opposition to designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the Backcountry management area prescription.
3. There is a closure on Portage Lake because of the potential safety hazard of floating icebergs. Operators under special use permit provide commercial tours on Portage Lake.

Portage Glacier

The eligible glacier segment is 4.7 miles long.

Portage Glacier is within a highly scenic corridor with open vistas of rugged mountains containing numerous hanging glaciers, waterfalls, steep slopes, steep narrow side valleys, alpine meadows and rock faces. Because it is a relatively narrow valley, the scenic views are even more dramatic because they are close up. Day use activity for picnicking, fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing and sightseeing takes place at several unimproved sites.

I am not recommending that Portage Glacier be added to the National System. My conclusion that Portage Glacier is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received several comments on the concept of recommending that frozen rivers (glaciers) not be added to the National System. Many people felt that glaciers should not even be considered as eligible for designation. Others felt that although they may be eligible for designation there is little threat to their outstandingly remarkable values and thus do not need to be designated. Generally, there was little public support for recommending any glaciers for designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the Backcountry management area prescription.

Kenai River

The eligible river segment is 5.5 miles long.

Kenai River king salmon are world renowned for their unparalleled size. Numerous seventy and eighty pound fish are caught every year, and a few fish of ninety pounds have been landed. The world record king of 97.4 pounds was caught in 1985. Anglers come from around the world for this remarkable fishing experience.

I am not recommending that the Kenai River be added to the National System. My conclusion that the Kenai River is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. Most of this river is in other ownership. The Forest Service portion of the Kenai watershed that supports the fisheries value is very small. The State of Alaska and other landowners would not support a recommendation for designation. They prefer other methods of protection of the river-related values.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the protections specified in the state area management plans.
3. We received relatively few comments on the Kenai River expressing support for or opposition to designation.

Prince William Sound Geographic Area (Management Theme - Wilderness Values)

I want to emphasize Wilderness values in Western Prince William Sound. I also want to provide for recreation opportunities near Whittier to address the projected increase in recreation demand as a result of the opening of the Whittier road.

Columbia Glacier

The eligible glacier segment is 19 miles long.

Columbia Glacier stretches to nearly 40 miles in length and ranks as the largest tidewater glacier in Prince William Sound. Among the exceptional features associated with the Lower Columbia Glacier are its four glacial-dammed lakes. The two larger lakes, Terentiev and Kadin, lie along its lower west side, while the two remaining lie along the east side. All of the lakes are known or suspected to have outburst events. Due to retreat, Terentiev is now detached from the main body of the glacier and no longer subject to damming and level fluctuations. Kadin is expanding into a larger lake system as the glacier retreats.

I am not recommending that Columbia Glacier be added to the National System. My conclusion that Columbia Glacier is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received several comments on the concept of recommending that frozen rivers (glaciers) not be added to the National Rivers System. Many people felt that glaciers should not even be considered as eligible for designation. Others felt that although they may be eligible for designation there is little threat to their outstandingly remarkable values and thus do not need to be designated. Generally, there was little public support for recommending any glaciers for designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the Wilderness or the Wilderness Study management area prescription.

Coghill River

The eligible river segment is 11.5 miles long and includes Coghill Lake.

Coghill Lake produces the largest sockeye salmon return within the Western Prince William Sound (PWS). The total optimal return of sockeye salmon to Coghill Lake is approximately 200,000 harvestable fish, with another 50,000 escapement to the lake.

Originating from Dartmouth Glacier, Coghill River and Lake are integral to the outstandingly remarkable scenery of the Coghill Drainage. A beautiful glacier blue in color, the waters of Coghill River below Coghill Lake, meander to the ocean and a broad inter-tidal plain. Set against the steep mountains, the lake and river dominate the valley bottom, offering spectacular contrasts and scenic beauty.

I am not recommending that Coghill River be added to the National System. My conclusion that Coghill River is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received relatively few comments on Coghill River expressing support for or opposition to designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the Wilderness or Wilderness Study management area prescription.

Cascade Creek

The eligible river segment is 2 miles long.

The roar of the Cascade Creek Falls dominates as one enters Cascade Bay. Slowly unfolding into view as one floats into the bay, the full impact of the falls does not hit you until you are right in front of the falls. From over 100 feet, Cascade Falls tumbles directly into the ocean. The largest falls in the Sound (volume of water), the falls are an outstandingly remarkable feature of the region, dominating the senses with sound, movement, and scenic beauty.

I am not recommending that Cascade Creek be added to the National System. My conclusion that Cascade Creek is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received relatively few comments on Cascade Creek expressing support for or opposition to designation.

2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the Wilderness or Wilderness Study management area prescription.

Copper River Delta Geographic Area (Management Theme - Conservation of Fish and Wildlife)

On the Copper River Delta, I want to emphasize the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats and provide for multiple-use management opportunities that are consistent with the conservation of fish and wildlife values.

Martin Glacier

The eligible glacier segment is 18 miles long.

The Martin Glacier has a number of outstanding glacial features. A thick surface moraine has developed over the lower portions of the glacier. In some areas, rudimentary soils have developed over the top of the glacier and vegetative communities have sprung up. Shrub communities are pervasive, and along the southwest edge of the glacier, mature spruce forests have actually developed (over ice.) This "glacier forest" is quite unusual on the Chugach.

One of the remarkable features of the Martin Glacier is the huge load of rock and sediment carried down on top of the glacier. This large debris load relates in part to the erodibility and fractured character of the mountains surrounding the glacier. The Glacier's relatively slow movement also gives fallen rock more time to build up on the ice surface as it is transported down valley. Following the March 27, 1964, earthquake, six large rockslides were noted to have spilled down onto the upper portions of the glacier. Together these rockslides amounted to about 24 million cubic meters of rock (equal to 30 square miles, one foot deep.) A combination of numerous rock slides and simple rock falls have built up large quantities of debris on the surface of Martin Glacier.

I am not recommending that Martin Glacier be added to the National System. My conclusion that Martin Glacier is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received several comments on the concept of recommending that frozen rivers (glaciers) not be added to the National System. Many people felt that glaciers should not even be considered as eligible for designation. Others felt that although they may be eligible for designation there is little threat to their outstandingly remarkable values and thus do not need to be designated. Generally, there was little public support for recommending any glaciers for designation.

2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the 501(b)-1 management area prescription.
3. There was considerable opposition to congressional designations in Cordova, because residents felt that future options for management of fish and wildlife habitat may be curtailed with such a designation.

Martin River and Lake

The eligible river segment is 26.3 miles long.

The scenery and visual features of the Martin River are regionally or nationally significant with high relief and steep snowcapped mountains at the headwaters of the river and along sides of this major drainage. Martin River Glacier forms the headwaters of the Martin River and is a high value scenic visual feature. Scenery and visual features are enhanced by a diversity of landforms including broad flat valley bottoms to steep mountains and glaciers. Vegetation types are highly variable. It shows interesting patterns and textures with lush green color combinations in foreground contrast with white snowcapped mountains, glaciers, and blue skies in background. Steep mountains, blue glaciers, and timbered slopes dominate distant scenery.

Recreation values of the area are regionally or nationally significant. The area is popular for moose hunting and a Forest Service cabin is available on Martin Lake. The area is a popular fishing spot for cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden char. It offers a diversity of remote recreation opportunities. The river is long, large, and remote, but accessible via float and wheeled plane or boat. River-related recreation opportunities could include sightseeing, wildlife observation, photography, fishing, hunting, hiking, mountain climbing, backpacking, and camping. The Martin River area is a river of pristine quality.

Fishery values are regionally significant because it has the largest run of anadromous cutthroat trout in the area. There is a possibility of this run being a different genetic stock than others in the region. It is locally significant due to species diversity - all five species of salmon present (sockeye, coho, chinook, steelhead/rainbow, cutthroat, dollies, pink, chum) and production capabilities. It has exceptional overall fisheries habitat quality (on Forest) especially rearing habitat. It is a high value resource to commercial fishermen.

I am not recommending that Martin River and Lake be added to the National System. My conclusion that Martin River and Lake is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the 501(b) – 1 management area prescription.
2. There was considerable opposition to congressional designations in Cordova, because residents felt that future options for management of fish and wildlife habitat may be curtailed with such a designation.

Alaganik Slough and Unnamed Tributary

The eligible river segment is 13 miles long.

The Alaganik Slough has typical scenery of west delta sloughs; however, it is accessible with trails, picnic areas and boat ramps. Alaganik is a thoroughfare for coho and sockeye salmon. West Delta is productive for coho. Productive habitat is ponds and feeder streams into Alaganik. The Copper River Delta provides abundant habitat for various wildlife species.

Adjacent to Alaganik Slough are several significant historical/cultural resources representing Native occupancy, a trading post, a fox farm, and elements of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad. Alaganik Slough passes through the Alaganik Archeological District.

I am not recommending that Alaganik Slough and unnamed tributary be added to the National System. My conclusion that Alaganik Slough and unnamed tributary is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. There was considerable opposition to congressional designations in Cordova, because residents felt that future options for management of fish and wildlife habitat may be curtailed with such a designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the 501(b) – 2 management areas.

Copper River Lower

The eligible river segment is 25.3 miles long.

The Copper River Delta is part of Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. The lower portions of the Delta and mudflats are used by migrating shorebirds. Waterfowl flourish on the Delta; ducks and geese may be seen in nearly every pond.

Common ducks are mallards, pintails, widgeon, and teal. The Delta is the only known breeding area for Dusky Canada Geese. The Delta also supports more than ten percent of the world population of trumpeter swans. During the summer months, many ponds host a stately pair of trumpeter swans raising their young. In the fall, the Delta is a staging area for waterfowl preparing for their flight south; geese and cranes pass overhead in V formation. Shorebirds such as snipe, yellow-legs, dowitchers, sandpipers, and phalaropes nest in the rich wetlands. Four-legged wildlife range from trophy moose browsing on willows; to mighty brown bear and smaller black bear chasing salmon in the spawning streams or feasting on wild berries.

The Copper River Delta complex is bisected by the massive Copper River; and encompasses an area of outstandingly remarkable scenic quality. An area rich in patterns and textures created by the many braided river channels, the Delta is the most unique landscape in the Pacific Gulf Coastal Forest-Meadow Province

The Delta is geologically unique because it is the largest contiguous wetland area remaining on the West Coast of the United States. Fishery values are of national significance due to numbers of chinook and sockeye that use the river as a thoroughfare to the interior of Alaska.

I am not recommending that Copper River Lower be added to the National System. My conclusion that Copper River Lower is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. There was considerable opposition to congressional designations in Cordova, because residents felt that future options for management of fish and wildlife habitat may be curtailed with such a designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the 501(b) – 1 and the 501(b) - 2 management area prescriptions.

Copper River Upper

The eligible river segment is 51.3 miles long. From Chitna to Childs/27 Mile Bridge is a popular recreational float. The Child's Glacier day use area is popular for viewing glacier calving, picnicking. Numerous camping, hunting, fishing, wildlife-viewing opportunities exist in the area. The area has a pristine quality about it. It is generally undeveloped with numerous panoramic, primitive landscapes and beautiful views. It flows through mountains, glaciers, and intercepts other major river systems. It is the longest navigable river in region. It is the third largest river system in Alaska.

Fishery values are of national significance due to the numbers of chinook and sockeye salmon that use the river as a thoroughfare to the interior of Alaska. Streams, ponds, and sloughs provide spawning and rearing habitat for large numbers of sockeye and

coho salmon. Adult sockeye and coho can be seen spawning during the late summer and fall months.

I am not recommending that Copper River Upper be added to the National System. My conclusion that Copper River Upper is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. There was considerable opposition to congressional designations in Cordova, because residents felt that future options for management of fish and wildlife habitat may be curtailed with such a designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the 501(b) – 1 and the 501(b) - 2 management area prescriptions.
3. Only a minor portion of river above the Million Dollar Bridge flows through National Forest System lands, consisting primarily of small islands in the river above Miles Lake, a parcel on the east shore across from Whiting Falls, and two 40-acre parcels by Child's Glacier. The Chugach Alaska Corporation owns the private land in the vicinity. They are opposed to any congressional designations adjacent to their lands.

Bering River and Lake

The eligible river segment is 31.8 miles long.

Distant scenery includes outstanding views of the Wrangle St. Elias Mountain Range and Bering Glacier to the east and the Ragged Mountains to the west. The views of these landscape features provide rich color combinations with stark contrasts with blue skies, snow capped mountains, lush green vegetation in the foreground and White Mountains and glaciers in the background. Other visual features include abundant wildlife viewing opportunities. The still waters of Bering Lake offer scenic reflections of the surrounding landscapes. The presence of panoramic views is common with outstanding scenic quality.

Bering River and Lake is easily navigable with the potential to attract visitors from outside the geographic region. River related opportunities could include sightseeing, wildlife observation, photography, fishing, hunting, and camping. A unique combination of wildlife, fisheries and scenery values, make this area a regionally significant recreation place.

Bering River and Lake has outstandingly remarkable rearing habitat for sockeye and coho. All streams that feed into Bering Lake if viewed as a whole are regionally significant in terms of sockeye habitat. The Bering River is regionally significant up to the mouth of the Gandil as a thoroughfare; beyond that, it is not.

I am not recommending that Bering River be added to the National System. My conclusion that Bering River is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. There was considerable opposition to congressional designations in Cordova, because residents felt that future options for management of fish and wildlife habitat may be curtailed with such a designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the 501(b) – 1 and 501(b) – 2 management area prescriptions and congressional direction in ANILCA.

Katalla River

The eligible river segment is 11.9 miles long.

The Katalla River is unique in this ecological Province, because of its diversity of fish species. All five species of salmon are present, as well as, cutthroat and rainbows/steelhead. It has high quality fisheries habitat with an ideal pool to riffle ratio. Stream flows are based on snowmelt and runoff instead of glacial input that is a unique characteristic for streams in this area. This characteristic results in a more stable channel and more defined floodplain than other rivers in area.

I am not recommending that Katalla River be added to the National System. My conclusion that Katalla River is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. There was considerable opposition to congressional designations in Cordova, because residents felt that future options for management of fish and wildlife habitat may be curtailed with such a designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the 501(b) – 1 and 501(b) – 2 management area prescription.

Nellie Martin River

The eligible river segment is 2 miles long.

The Nellie Martin River is a popular place for sport fishing. Most fishing takes place in uplifted tidelands. The area is accessible by plane or boat. Fishery values of the Nellie Martin River are not typical of island streams; due to its length, coho spawning, and rearing habitat it provides (including Braided Creek). The island populations may evolve differently than mainland populations in terms of the timing of the runs. It is one of the four or five coho runs in Prince William Sound.

I am not recommending that the Nellie Martin River be added to the National System. My conclusion that Nellie Martin River is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received relatively few comments on Nellie Martin River expressing support for or opposition to designation.
2. Its outstandingly remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with the application of the Fish & Wildlife Conservation management area prescription.

Number 1 River

The eligible segment of the river is 6.7 miles long.

Number 1 River is unique in revealing the dramatic recent recession of Columbia Glacier, which uncovered an under ice segment of the river at the southeast toe of the Great Nunatak and made more of the river runnable by raft or kayak. In a short distance, the river travels from high alpine terrain thickly inhabited by mountain goats, to tidewater thick with icebergs, seals and sea otters. In between, the river threads a chain of three lakes and easy whitewater (Class I and II) with short portages of two visually spectacular waterfalls.

It is outstandingly remarkable for geology. Along the perimeter of Columbia Glacier near the terminus, one can observe newly exposed geologic features. The rock is fresh (unweathered) and the clarity and level of detail of small features in the rock is incredible. The sheer scale of the geology, especially at the newly revealed bedrock along side Columbia Glacier is awesome. The opportunity to study the geologic record at such a grand scale and such exquisite level of detail is rare.

I am not recommending that number 1 River be added to the National System. My conclusion that Number 1 River is not suitable for designation is based on the following considerations:

1. We received few comments on Number 1 River expressing support for or opposition to designation.

Its outstanding remarkable values, water quality and free-flow would likely be protected with application of the Wilderness or Wilderness Study management area prescription.

Appendix B - Motorized Recreation Access

The direction for motorized recreation access under the Revised Forest Plan is contained in this appendix and on the *Winter and Summer Motorized Recreation Access Maps* (dated May 2002), Revised Forest Plan Chapter 4, and Appendix B of the Revised Forest Plan. Different direction and different maps apply in the winter and summer because snow cover significantly changes the uses and impacts of motorized recreation.

This direction applies to motorized recreation transportation on Chugach National Forest System lands, roads and trails using motorized equipment, including but not limited to snow machines, off highway vehicles (OHV), airboats operating outside of established water bodies or flowing channels, and helicopters. This direction also applies to motorized dredges, which may be used for recreational gold panning.

This direction does not apply to fixed-wing aircraft, nonmotorized transportation (mountain bikes, sleds, etc.) and motorized watercraft that travel solely on navigable waters.

Motorized access for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents are allowed throughout the Forest except for the small portion designated as "Primitive Management Area." In areas where recreational motorized access is prohibited, subsistence users are requested to avoid or minimize their use of motorized equipment to help protect the resource values of those areas.

Note that additional direction may apply, such as 1) areas recommended as Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers may have different direction applied by Congress when they are designated, or by the Forest Service if motorized use is found to adversely impact a river's outstandingly remarkable values; and 2) motorized recreation access may be restricted on a site-specific or seasonal basis to protect fish and wildlife, their habitats, or other resource values (see Forestwide standards and guidelines).

Winter Motorized Recreation Access

The general rule is that the entire Chugach National Forest is open for winter-motorized recreation except where specifically closed. The map depicts the areas that are closed to meet the needs of other Forest users, protect resource values and manage the Wilderness Study Area.

The winter-motorized season on the Forest is from December 1 through April 30, except in Turnagain Pass where the season begins the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. However, the winter motorized recreation season may be changed by Forest Order in response to snow conditions.

The following describes the management direction for each of the areas identified on the Winter Motorized Recreation Access Map. Each of the subheadings mirror those found in the Winter Motorized Recreation Access Map legend. These descriptions and the map used together detail how winter motorized recreation access will be managed on the Forest.

Closed to All Motorized Use

This area (Power Creek area near Cordova) is closed to the use of snowmachines, helicopters or other motorized access for recreational or subsistence purposes during the winter season.

Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence

These areas are specifically designed to provide a nonmotorized winter recreation experience. The use of snowmachines or helicopters for winter recreational activities is not allowed in these areas. The use of snowmachines for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents is allowed in these areas.

Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence and Motorized Corridor

This area is specifically designed to provide a nonmotorized winter recreation experience in the lower Twentymile River valley. A clearly identified corridor will provide access to a larger area open to winter motorized recreation. Snowmachine access is allowed along this identified corridor only. Helicopter landings within this area are not permitted. The use of snowmachines for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents is allowed.

Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence and Traditional Activities

These areas are managed for a nonmotorized winter recreation experience in Wilderness Study Areas and recommended Wilderness. The use of snowmachines or helicopters is generally not allowed. The use of snowmachines for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents is allowed. Since these lands are managed as if they were Conservation System Units under ANILCA, motorized access for traditional activities, as defined by ANILCA and regional policy, may continue.

Recommended as Open to Helicopters Only

These areas are found within the Wilderness Study Area and their management is dependent on the status of the Wilderness Study. If the Wilderness Study Area designation is removed during the life of this Revised Forest Plan, these areas will be open to winter helicopter access and closed to snowmachines. Until the Wilderness Study Area is terminated, these areas will be managed as "Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence and Traditional Activities," described above.

Recommended as Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence

These areas are found within the Wilderness Study Area and their management is dependent on the status of the Wilderness Study. If the Wilderness Study Area designation is removed during the life of this Revised Forest Plan, these areas will be closed to all motorized access. Until the Wilderness Study Area is terminated, these areas will be managed as "Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence and Traditional Activities," described above.

Recommended as Open to All Motorized Use

These areas are found within the Wilderness Study Area and their management is dependent on the status of the Wilderness Study. If the Wilderness Study Area designation is removed during the life of this Revised Forest Plan, these areas will be

open to all motorized access. Until the Wilderness Study Area is terminated, these areas will be managed as “Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence and Traditional Activities,” described above.

Open to All Motorized Use

These areas are designed to allow a full spectrum of opportunities for winter-motorized recreation. Both snowmachines and helicopters are permitted in these areas during the winter season. Site-specific or other closures may be implemented to avoid resource damage, wildlife conflicts or safety issues.

Open to All Motorized Use until 2/15, Closed after 2/15

This direction applies specifically to the Resurrection Pass Trail area and is designed to provide both a motorized and nonmotorized access period. This access schedule corresponds to what traditionally has occurred on the Resurrection Pass Trail. From the beginning of the winter season until February 15, this area is open to all winter motorized recreation. After February 15, the only motorized activity allowed is snowmachine use for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents.

Open to All Motorized Use until 3/31, Closed after 3/31

This direction applies specifically to the Skookum Glacier area and is designed to provide both a motorized and nonmotorized access period, allowing early spring ski access to Skookum Glacier. From the beginning of the winter season until March 31, this area is open to all winter motorized recreation. After March 31, the only motorized activity allowed is snowmachines use for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents.

Open to Helicopters and Closed to Snowmachines

These areas are managed to provide an opportunity for helicopter supported skiing. They are open to helicopter access during the winter months, but closed to recreational snowmachine use. However, the use of snowmachines for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents is allowed in these areas.

Open to Snowmachines and Closed to Helicopters

Snowmachines are permitted in these areas but helicopter access during the winter season is not allowed. Site-specific or other closures may be implemented to avoid resource damage, wildlife conflicts or safety issues.

Closed to Motorized Use (EVOS Acquired Interests)

These lands were acquired as a result of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill and are not available for winter motorized subsistence or recreational access. Exceptions for motorized access may exist and can be found in the purchase agreements for the specific land parcels.

Summer Motorized Recreation Access

The general philosophy in allocating motorized and nonmotorized recreation access was for the summer, motorized use is restricted to designated open roads, trails, and areas and for subsistence purposes. The map depicts the areas that are open for motorized recreation use to provide recreational opportunities, meet the needs of Forest users and management needs in the Wilderness Study Area.

The summer-motorized season on the Forest is from May 1 through November 30, except in Turnagain Pass where the season ends the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. However, the season may be changed by Forest Order in response to snow conditions.

The following describes the management direction for each of the areas identified on the Summer Motorized Recreation Access Map. Each of the sub-headings mirrors those found in the Summer Motorized Recreation Access Map legend. These descriptions and the map used together detail how summer motorized recreation access will be managed on the Forest.

Closed to All Motorized Use

This area (Power Creek area near Cordova) is closed to the use of OHVs, helicopters, or other types of motorized access for recreational or subsistence purposes during the summer season. The use of motorized dredges for recreational gold panning is prohibited.

Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence

These areas are designed to provide a nonmotorized summer recreation experience. The use of OHVs, helicopters or other types of motorized access for summer recreational opportunities is not allowed in these areas. Although discouraged, the use of OHVs or airboats for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents is allowed. The use of motorized dredges for recreational gold panning is prohibited.

Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence and Traditional Activities

These areas are managed for a nonmotorized summer recreation experience in Wilderness Study Areas and recommended Wilderness. The use of OHVs, helicopters or airboats is generally not allowed in these areas. Although discouraged in these areas, the use of OHVs or airboats for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents is allowed. Since these lands are managed as if they were Conservation System Units under ANILCA, motorized access for traditional activities, as defined by ANILCA and regional policy, may continue. The use of motorized dredges for recreational gold panning is prohibited.

Recommended as Open to Helicopters Only

These areas are found within the Wilderness Study Area and their management is dependent on the status of the Wilderness Study. If the Wilderness Study Area designation is removed during the life of this Revised Forest Plan, these areas will be open to summer helicopter access. Until such time, the Wilderness Study is terminated, these areas will be managed as "Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence and Traditional Activities," described above.

Recommended as Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence

These areas are found within the Wilderness Study Area and their management is dependent on the status of the Wilderness Study. If the Wilderness Study Area designation is removed during the life of this Revised Forest Plan, these areas will be closed to all motorized access except subsistence. Until such time, the Wilderness Study is terminated, these areas will be managed as “Closed to Motorized Use Except for Subsistence and Traditional Activities,” described above.

Open to All Motorized Use

These areas are designed to allow a full spectrum of opportunities for summer-motorized recreation. OHVs, helicopters, and airboats outside of established flowing channels and waterbodies are allowed during the summer season. Site-specific or other closures may be implemented to avoid resource damage, wildlife conflicts or safety issues. Motorized dredges for recreational gold panning are allowed.

Open to All Motorized Use On Designated Routes Only, Open to Helicopters

These areas (the barrier islands near Cordova) are open to OHV use, but only on routes designated for OHV use. These routes are limited to hardened surfaces to avoid resource damage. These areas are also open to access from helicopters and airboats. Although discouraged, motorized use of OHVs or airboats for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents is allowed. Motorized dredges for recreational gold panning are allowed.

Open to Motorized Use In Nonvegetated Areas Only

These areas are open to OHV use and airboats (outside of established flowing channels and waterbodies), but only on nonvegetated portions of the land. Helicopter landings are also allowed but limited to nonvegetated areas. Motorized use on vegetated areas is allowed only for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents. Motorized dredges for recreational gold panning are allowed.

Open to Helicopters, Closed to OHVs and Airboats

These areas are managed to provide an opportunity for helicopter-supported hiking. They are open to helicopter access during the summer months, but closed to OHV use and airboats (outside of established water channels or water bodies). However, the use of OHVs or airboats for subsistence purposes by rural Alaska residents is allowed in these areas. Motorized dredges for recreational gold panning are allowed.

Closed to Motorized Use (EVOS Acquired Interest)

These lands were acquired as a result of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. These lands are not available for summer motorized subsistence or recreational access. The use of motorized dredges for recreational gold panning is prohibited. Exceptions for motorized access may exist and can be found in the purchase agreements for the specific land parcels.