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Dear Friends of the Chugach National Forest:

We are writing to seek your comments and ideas on how to implement overnight accommodations as part of the Whistle Stop Project. You are also invited to attend public open houses that will be held in Anchorage and Girdwood in May.

During project planning, we identified that overnight accommodations played an important role in providing a diversity of recreational opportunities in this backcountry area. Furthermore, a business plan for the Whistle Stop Project showed that there is a steady demand for accommodations in the Chugach National Forest; existing cabins are routinely booked solid throughout the summer. The Whistle Stop Record of Decision (ROD) authorized the development of up to six public use cabins in different areas along the project's trail system. These sites include a single cabin overlooking Spencer Lake, a cluster of three cabins south of Placer River, one at the end of the proposed Bartlett Glacier Trail, and one at the end of a trail near Grandview (see the attached map of the project).

We are currently considering two options for implementation. One option is for the Forest Service to construct and operate the cabins in a similar fashion to other cabins found on the Chugach National Forest. Minimal amenities would be provided at the cabins. A second option is a series of structures as part of a hut-to-hut system that could be operated by an organization such as the Alaska Mountain & Wilderness Huts Association where food and other amenities may be offered (see the attached concept). We encourage generating other ideas for these accommodations as well.

Your comments are most beneficial if they include specific issues to be considered or suggestions to improve the proposed options, as well as your ideas for alternatives to the proposed options. Comments should be sent to Paul Clark, the Whistle Stop Project Coordinator, at pdclark@fs.fed.us, or through any of the following means:

Glacier Ranger District
P.O. Box 129
Girdwood, AK 99587-0129
Phone: 907-754-2352 Fax: 907-783-2094

The Chugach National Forest will also host two open houses to offer further opportunities to comment and learn more about the options listed above. The first open house will be at the Loussac Library in Anchorage on May 12, 2009, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM, in the Public Conference Room. The second open house will be at the Glacier Ranger Station in Girdwood on May 13, 2009, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Your comments on the project and your ideas for partnership opportunities will help shape future decisions concerning overnight accommodations on the Whistle Stop Project. Thank you.

Sincerely,

KATE P. WALKER
Glacier District Ranger

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