

**Chugach National Forest
Forest Plan Revision – Phase I
Public Forum Meeting Notes
Hope – April 06, 2013**

The public was invited to attend nine forest planning forums across the region during the month of February and two in early April to provide input on Phase I - Assessment of the Chugach Forest Plan Revision. Attendees were divided into smaller break-out groups and asked several questions (see below) regarding use, emerging trends and issues, and communication. Below is a summary of public input. Responses with a number in parenthesis indicate an item that was discussed in multiple break-out groups, the number indicating the number of groups.

Facilitators/Note Takers: Don Rees, Kai Rees, Chris Beck, Shelly Wade, John from SRD
Number of breakout groups: 3

Number of attendees: 32

I. Introduction and Welcome

- Forum purpose and agenda
- Basics about Chugach National Forest Plan Revision
- New Forest Service revision process – the “new rule”
- 2002 Chugach Forest Plan + Examples

II. Small Group Breakout

a. Use and Vision

How do you use the Forest today?

- Subsistence (firewood (2), hunting (2), moose, deer)
- Snowmachine, Snowmachine-assisted hunting, Snowmachine-assisted skiing
- Photography
- Palmer Creek (use area)
- Berry picking (2)
- Mushroom picking (2)
- Fishing (2)
- Horseback riding
- Solitude
- Biking (4), mountain biking, downhill extreme biking, cross country biking
- Resurrection Pass Trail
- Camping (2) (Bear Creek, M13)
- Backcountry skiing (along Seward Highway)
- Skiing (2), Resurrection Pass
- Skiing and hiking, (Hope Road > head of Resurrection)
- Hiking (3), Gull Rock
- Trail Running (Hope to Summit)
- Access to beaches
- Wildlife viewing
- Frisbee golf
- Four-wheeling
- Kayak Fest at 6 Mile

- Non-motorized
- Live here
- Work here
- Running (2), Trail ridge running
- Parasailing
- Cross country ski
- Pack rafters come for the white water festival
- Wildlife viewing (3) – swallows, humming birds, cranes, belugas, seal, moose, bear, caribou, ducks, geese, otter, lynx, moose, bear
- Backcountry skiing and exploring – Hope to Summit Lake
- Bike races
- Bike up/down Resurrection
- Camping everywhere
- 90% of visitors are summer use – Porcupine, Gull Rock, Resurrection Creek
- Palmer Creek – for snow machining, lack of parking and turnaround
- Climb bluffs, along the beaches
- Resurrection Trail cabins
- Gold panning
- Snowshoeing
- Multi-purpose use – snowmachine, then snowboard

How might use and users change over the next 20 years?

- Evolution in technology of equipment
- Land management
 - Healthy ecosystems are basis for recreation, for quality of life
- Community
 - FS lands - the backdrop to our daily lives; “we’re all here together in the forest”

b. Assessment

What are barriers to using the Forest?

What do you see as emerging forest issues and trends in the Chugach?

What is working or not working in the current 2002 Forest Plan?

How do preliminary USFS assessment findings (headliners) match your understanding of what is happening on the Forest?

Local Economy

- Consider buying local (e.g. logs for cabins)

Safety

- Safety issues (example bikes on road; need bike trail/signs)

Firewood

- Need for additional accessible areas for firewood in Hope and other communities, as those in Moose Pass and Girdwood come to Hope for firewood.
- Designate firewood areas in other communities; balance needs for public use by residents/public from other communities.

Motorized Use

- Increase in motorized use – snow machines
- More 4-wheelers looking for places to ride in Hope; “glad the answer is no”
- Increase winter use recreation opportunities

Increasing/Changing Use/Concern

- Cost of fuel causing more campers in Hope because it’s cheaper than going to Homer/Kenai.
- Fish numbers are down, advertising of fishing is up = increase in people
- More people = need to balance use/better access/place for parking
- More people are using the area and resources
- Explosion of backcountry skiing at Palmer Creek; more backcountry skiing at Palmer Creek, but not well known, mostly locals
- More people in the woods
- Use has gone up in the summer and winter
- Increase in use (Palmer Creek on weekends/summer)
- More traffic, no respect for walkers, bikers
- Middle Creek – more people upstream
- Palmer Creek recreation use increase on weekends is astonishing
- Porcupine heavily used when open – always full, need more campgrounds
- More people in pull-offs
- More people and traffic, conflict with pedestrians – no respect for walkers
- More out-of-state visitors
- Increased motorcycles
- Mile Post 13 area is trashed – people are camping for long periods
- Hope is an easy trip from Anchorage, use keeps growing
- Forest wide- more people, more activities
- Steady growth in visitation in the valley, more demand for recreation, for mushrooms, for real estate (prices increasing)

Special Uses

- More organized events happening, may not be enough infrastructure to handle this use
- Lots more organized events, organized access, don’t have infrastructure to support growth, more trash, trash cans full
- Mushrooms – concerns about commercial use, large groups come down from Anchorage to harvest mushrooms

Mining

- Increase in noise, negative, visual, air quality, from mining in Resurrection Creek
- Mining affecting fishing in Resurrection Creek
- Increased “recreation mining” activity
- Recreational mining – concern on the impact on mudflats
- Riding bike on Resurrection Creek not like it used to be – mining activities
- Mining is restricting access to creek/beaches
- Concerns re Hope Mining Company
- How long will mining continue?
- We heard mining will end. Will mining areas be reclaimed?

- “We get slapped for running up Hope Mtn; meanwhile Hope Mining Company is ripping up more land every year”
- Concern over increases in non-motorized activities – biking, rafting

Facilities

- Need to have more camp sites/camp grounds and better signs to direct people
- More public facilities needed
- More use (camping, roadside, skiing) – better highway access is contributing to this
- More parking/day use/ camping in landings and pits
- More use of pullouts (may have been from a campground closure)
- Maintain existing trails and rec areas
- Good improvements on Porcupine Campground
- Pullouts not designed for big trucks with trailers
- Improved campgrounds (expansion needed)
- Another campground needed at Resurrection trailhead
- Need speed bumps on some roads to slow down traffic as some are driving too fast causing a safety hazard
- Frisbee golf
- Mile Post 13 on the Hope Road needs an outhouse

Collaboration/Communication

- Better communication with residents needed
- Use billboard by bathrooms
- We need more advance information on FS projects – trails, mining, mine reclamation
- Hope community wants to work with FS, “wants to be part of the solution”
- Frustrated about Hope Point Trail reconstruction and lack of Forest Service engagement with the community
- Need better ongoing communication between Hope and USFS; e.g., bartender was only person who knew about campground closures; a lot of frustrated people; also need better information about status of mining, mining reclamation (agreed to arrange a meeting with FS staff person Karen Kromrey and community to clear up facts on this topic)
- Community wants more stakeholder input

FS Management

- Need new approaches to managing change

Access

- Gull Rock erosion where people are accessing the beach – need an established route
- Would like to see end of Hope Road get plowed more often for access
- Need to plow entrance of Palmer Creek
- Maintain accessibility for everyone
- Need better winter parking for Resurrection trail
- Mile Post 13 informal camping area is really seeing serious impacts. People camp out there all summer, trash the place; USFS needs to better manage that site
- 6-mile creek should be designated “wild and scenic”

- 6 mile creek should be wild and scenic river protected from large development, recreational prospecting/panning is okay
- Allowing/enabling access into areas not used before
- Access for all age groups needed
- Encouraging year round activity/better access

Trails

- Expand historic mining roads for trails, encourage loop trails
- More, new “unofficial, user made trails”, should we make them official? User made trails, should be adopted by Forest Service for management
- Trail planning – traverse across Point Hope
- Need trails that start and end in Hope
- Need more loop trails
- Build bike trail, take advantage of utility corridor that parallels Hope road
- Ski trails – need some non-motorized ski trails
- Mountain runners used the much-loved, direct steep trail up to Hope Point; the switchback trail that starts from a different location doesn’t meet this need

Fish and Wildlife

- King salmon introduced in Resurrection – good idea, but would attract many people
- Less moose, more bears, more brown bears, more wolves, less fish,
- More bears in the community
- Opening of Palmer Creek to moose hunting is bad for moose; took out 3 big breeders
- Increase of nonnative plants (dandelions, chokecherry and clover)
- Dandelions increasing on Hope Point along with nonnative clover
- Less berries
- Vegetation is changing – shrubs, trees, invasive species, alder is growing in the trails
- Humming birds are now common
- Garden slugs are increasing – “never were here when I was a kid”
- Reduced swallow population
- Increased deadfall – spruce beetle
- Increase fire danger
- Fewer beaver
- Increased Coho in Resurrection Creek
- Coho runs are up, more anglers “secret is out”
- Pinks are down in numbers
- Smallest run of pinks this year (should have been a good year)

Climate Change

- Snow is now heaviest Jan-April instead of Nov-February
- Colder summers
- Land by water is rebounding from earthquake; “no more iris” – dried out
- Snowpack seems about the same
- Palmer Creek:
 - Noise increase
 - Air quality decrease
 - Vegetation degradation

Water

- More stuff in creek – water quality issues, debris; increased unknown green growth in Middle Creek
- Resurrection River is becoming a garbage dump – trees coming down river, get stuck, totally closed up

Vegetation

- Changing vegetation round the river
- Opened hunting last fall
- Fewer low bush cranberries and currents
- Middle Creek changing (green growth) from upstream use
- Trees coming down from Resurrection Creek from activities upstream

Changing Community

- Keep Hope a quiet place, a place where you can turn off your car and leave it off
- Recreation use changing from out of state to Alaskans.
- “We’re living on the cusp of real change in Hope”
- More use – motorized and non-motorized, but so far not too disruptive
- First tour bus (says someone, another person says, no they’ve been coming for a while)
- Right on margin of being an easy place to live (e.g., a place with jobs); but we’re not there yet “It’s good that it’s a bit hard”
- Jobs that do exist? - commute to Girdwood, telecommute, North Slope
- Borough sold subdivision – 32 lots?
- Increase in younger families moving into Hope
- Delicate balance between more folks wanting to come and limited infrastructure helping to keep the numbers in check
- Town is growing
- “Hope turning into more of a party town”
- Hope is now a blend of “new wave/old wave”

c. Communication and Public Involvement

What are the best ways to involve you, and others, in the Forest Plan Revision Process?

How did you find out about the meeting?

- E-list
- Jayme the bartender
- Flyers

Other comments re: future communications

- Email (better than letter)
- People didn’t hear about the sequence of public forums
- Need a local liaison from the USFS that explains FS actions, regulations that affect Hope
- Need better info on 2002 Plan prescriptions as apply to Hope
- More local communication on local bulletin boards

Questions

- How will decisions be made? Vote?
- What will be the status of projects communities want to move on (e.g. with volunteers)?
- Will permits/NEPA process delay implementation of plan priorities, of community priorities?
- Can greater community support influence action?

III. Conclusion and Wrap up