

Sept 28, 1999

Dave Gibbons
Forest Supervisor
Chugach National Forest
3301 C Street, Suite 300
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Mr. Gibbons,

On September 14 and again on the 28th, an ad hoc group gathered to discuss Chugach Plan alternatives, and look for common ground among our different resource interests. Participants included representatives of Chugach Alaska and Chenega Native Corporations, the Alaska Miners Association, Alaska Visitors Association, Alaska Forestry Association, Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association, the National Outdoor Leadership School, Resource Development Council, and Alaska Sightseeing Cruise West.

There is a lot this group doesn't agree on. But we do share some important common perspectives, outlined below. We'd like to meet with you and review these conclusions, and discuss how this should affect the completion of the Chugach Plan process.

1. CREATIVE SOLUTIONS/REALISTIC ALTERNATIVES

At our first meeting we reviewed our respective general land use objectives for varying locations around the Forest. The process showed there are situations where we can find compromises that aren't emerging in the current alternatives process. One simple example is the option to reduce conflicts by modifying management area boundaries. For instance, dividing the management unit that extends along the Nellie Juan River area into Kings Bay could allow a conservation-oriented prescription on the Sound, while allowing different prescriptions on portions of the same management unit to the west. The potential for other "win-win" strategies exists in a number of other locations.

Recommendation:

The USFS should provide sufficient time and a structure for representatives of different interests to meet and discuss proposed uses in specific areas. The key to this approach is to work toward a "common ground" preferred alternative, focusing on the specific issues in particular areas. Differences of view that emerge through this process can be captured as alternatives for the EIS. The result will be big steps toward real solutions, and clarification of most viable alternatives. The 30+ alternatives developed thus far can form the starting point for this process.

FOR THIS PROCESS TO SUCCEED, HOWEVER, REQUIRES PROGRESS IN THE FOLLOWING TWO AREAS:

2. RESOURCE INFORMATION

Good land use decisions require good data. Information doesn't have to be perfect, but all parties need to be confident that objective data is available about the relative value of specific locations

for different uses. While for some topics addressed by the Chugach plan, resource information may be adequate, it is not possible to move ahead with the collaborative process described above until good data is available on all key uses. For example, the representatives of the Interagency Minerals Group, RDC, AMA and AFA believe the mining and forestry resource information currently available is not adequate for informed land use decisions.

Recommendation: Resource specialists with the USFS should meet with these resource groups and work out strategies to fill the data gap. In the near term, work should focus on making best use of existing data. This could include interpreting existing information to better answer planning questions, compiling information that exists but is lodged with various knowledgeable individuals, and/or incorporating prescriptions that hold open specific resource development options until better data are available. To move forward with collaborative planning, a common resource information base, including land title information, needs to be depicted on the base map utilized to all parties involved in the planning process.

3. PLANNING "GROUND RULES"

We want to work with USFS and DNR to clarify Forest Plan "groundrules". The Forest Service and DNR are already moving forward on some of this work - we're asking for more progress, focused on the following areas:

- a. Land Status - Base maps for alternatives need to show more accurately the range of easements, surface and subsurface ownerships within Forest Service boundaries. A partial list of information currently missing is presented below: small private inholdings (e.g. patented mining claims, set net sites, aquaculture sites, Native Corporation shareholder homesites); more information regarding non-USFS land ownership, such as location of University land; Native Corporation selected lands; EVOS purchased lands including clarification of differences in management intent, subsurface rights, including areas where the surface has been sold to as part of the EVOS process; State tideland permits for docks and other uses; ANCSA, ANILCA and CSA access routes. DNR has recently completed a set of maps that can help with this effort.
- b. ANILCA Legal Framework - As you know, CAC, AMA, AFA, RDC and other groups disagree with the USFS interpretation of ANILCA regarding options for establishing new federal protected areas (Wild & Scenic Rivers, Wilderness areas) outside the WSA. Questions also exist regarding flexibility under the 501b designation. The full group agrees that the lack of consensus on these issues is a major stumbling block to cooperative planning. We recognize that all these issues won't be cleared up quickly, but on some issues clarification is possible. Progress in other areas might be possible with a renewed effort.
- c. Management Areas Boundaries - We support the USFS effort to match the current DNR Prince William Sound Area Plan and tideland management boundaries, and to define management units to allow decisions for the land surrounding each PWS bay (rather than splitting bays in half). However, we need explicit clarification on the management


implications of combined DNR and USFS policy for adjoining water and non-USFS lands within the Forest boundaries.

- d. DNR Role - We will be working with DNR to get clarification on the type of changes to be made to the PWS Area Plan, the process DNR will follow in developing revised tidelands and state uplands policies, and public opportunities for being involved in this process.

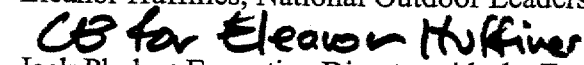
Recommendation - A standard base map depicting the information described above should be developed and used for all alternatives.

The bottom line: we'd like to help make this planning process more productive. We appreciate the open approach the Forest Service has followed thus far. We think the USFS should take the time needed to bring together different interests, good data, and a clear understanding of the groundrules, and develop a workable plan. We want to meet with you as soon as soon as possible to review these proposals.


Thank you for your consideration.

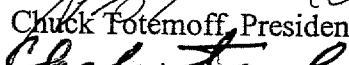

Steve Borell, Executive Director, Alaska Miners Association

Eleanor Huffines, National Outdoor Leadership School


Jack Phelps, Executive Director, Alaska Forest Association

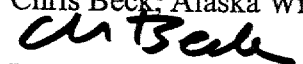

Peggy McNees, Alaska Visitors Association


Chuck Totemoff, President, Chenega Corporation


John Kreilkamp, Alaska Sightseeing/Cruise West

Rick Rogers, Manager Lands and Resources, Chugach Alaska Corporation


Chris Beck, Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association


Ken Freeman, Executive Director, Resource Development Council

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Marty Rutherford, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Natural Resources