

Record of Decision

Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan

Kenai Peninsula Borough, Valdez-Cordova Census Area,
and Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska



Chugach National Forest photo captions (clockwise from upper left):

Snowmachiner, Johnson Pass

Sockeye salmon, Placer River drainage

Portage Glacier, Kenai Peninsula

Whitewater rafting, Six Mile Creek

Brown bear, Kenai River

Alaska Railroad's Glacier Discovery Train, Spencer Glacier Whistle Stop

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Record of Decision for the Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan

Kenai Peninsula Borough, Valdez-Cordova Census Area,
and Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska

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Introduction

This record of decision documents my decision and rationale for approval of the 2020 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan (final land management plan) and selection of an alternative from the Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement. The final land management plan and the selected alternative combined—hereafter called the final land management plan—will provide management direction for 5.4 million acres of National Forest System lands in southcentral Alaska for about the next 15 years. My decision is informed by the forest plan assessment¹ for the Chugach National Forest and input from the State of Alaska, local governments, other federal agencies, Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and members of the public.

This decision is consistent with the Forest Service’s 2012 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (2012 Planning Rule) (36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219) and advances goals of the Department of Agriculture, including promoting local economic development and sound land stewardship in partnership with communities. Part of the planning process included an objection process as described in Subpart B of 36 CFR 219. As instructed by the Regional Forester, I modified the final environmental impact statement (through errata), the final land management plan, the record of decision, and the planning record to respond to specific objection issues and resolutions. Appendix B of this decision lists the changes to the final environmental impact statement and final land management plan.

Forest Setting

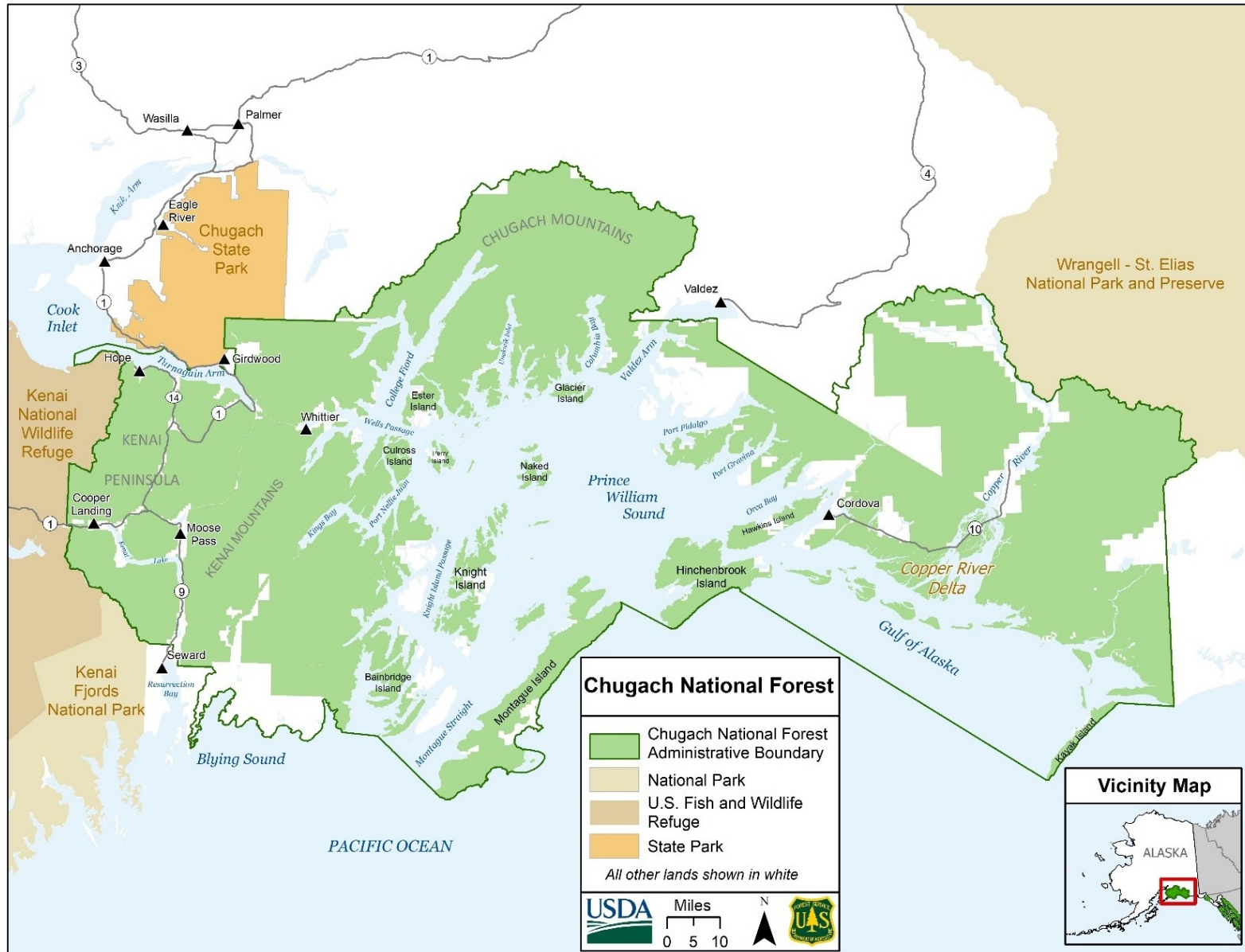
The Chugach National Forest is characterized by extensive coastal shorelines; rugged mountains; spectacular snow and ice covered peaks; expansive glaciers; countless lakes, rivers, and streams; and unparalleled scenery, much of which is far from roads or trails (map 1).

Over half the population of Alaska lives near the Chugach National Forest, with about 890,000 acres of the national forest within a day’s drive of Anchorage. The Chugach National Forest boundary is adjacent to lands managed by National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska State Parks, and State of Alaska. The national forest boundary also adjoins lands owned by Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and other private landowners.

The Chugach National Forest contributes significantly to the socioeconomic sustainability of southcentral Alaska. The national forest supports approximately 3,100 jobs tied to the commercial salmon harvest, valued at more than \$19 million per year, and an additional estimated 1,000 jobs tied to recreational activities, including sportfishing. Recreation use on the Chugach National Forest provides an annual contribution of \$12.3 million to Alaska’s economy. Visitors come from all over the world to experience the numerous recreation opportunities the national forest offers, such as viewing mountainous glacial scenery and abundant wildlife, participating in sportfishing in rivers and lakes, kayaking, rafting, hiking, heli-skiing, hunting, horseback riding, and camping.

The Chugach National Forest is central to the lives of many Alaska residents and supports significant local economic benefits and traditional uses including commercial salmon fishing; employment in the recreation sector; drinking water; hydropower; and subsistence hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering activities. Culturally important resources for subsistence and traditional uses are derived from healthy watersheds and clean water and contribute substantially to social well-being and economic sustainability in southcentral Alaska. The Chugach National Forest supports five species of Pacific salmon, as well as other fish and wildlife species, which provide local economic benefits through fishing and hunting.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 2014. Assessment of the ecological and socio-economic conditions and trends: Chugach National Forest, Alaska. R10-MB-787. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Region.



Map 1. Vicinity map for the Chugach National Forest

Six rural communities within the Chugach National Forest boundary harvest an average of 203 pounds per person per year of edible wild renewable resources. The Chugach National Forest supplies approximately 1,000 cords annually of fuelwood for local communities and has issued over 370 authorizations for uses and activities.

Thirteen federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes live within or near the Chugach National Forest, with many if not all identifying the forest as their ancestral home. While there is diversity and distinction among these Tribes, they all have deep-rooted connections to the lands and waters of the national forest. The Chugach National Forest contributes to Alaska Native People's way of life—through food and materials for daily use and artistic expression, spirituality, health care, family, and tribal history. Further, Alaska Native People see the Chugach National Forest as central to their being; they value and respect the forest with their culture and traditions, and they receive animals, fish, and plants from the forest for their health and well-being.

The Chugach National Forest has largely intact ecosystems and significant capacity for resilience to stresses from climate change. Inventoried roadless areas, governed by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 219 Subpart D), comprise 99 percent of the Chugach National Forest and are managed to allow natural processes to shape the landscape. Based on the Governor of Alaska's January 2018 petition, the Secretary of Agriculture decided that the state-specific rulemaking for Alaska inventoried roadless areas will not include areas on the Chugach National Forest.

Needs for Change

The National Forest Management Act directs the development, amendment, and revision of land management plans to provide for the multiple use and sustained yield of the products and services on National Forest System lands, including outdoor recreation, timber, watershed, wildlife, fish, and wilderness (16 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1604(e)). The 2012 Planning Rule guides this land management planning using a collaborative and science-based approach to promote the economic, social, and ecological sustainability of national forests and grasslands and National Forest System administrative units.

Since the 2002 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chugach National Forest² (2002 land management plan) was completed, there have been changes in ecological, social, and economic conditions on the Chugach National Forest, as well as changes in resource demands, availability of new scientific information, and promulgation of new policy. In 2014, the Chugach National Forest assessed these changes and considered input from the State of Alaska, local governments, other federal agencies, Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and the public. Based on our assessment and this input, we determined that revision to the 2002 land management plan was necessary to ensure management direction is responsive to current issues and conditions (see the Preliminary Need to Change the Forest Plan³).

² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 2002. Revised land and resource management plan: Chugach National Forest. R10-MB-480c. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Region.

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 2015. Preliminary need to change the forest plan: Chugach National Forest, Alaska. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Region.

The need to revise the 2002 land management plan is based on six overarching needs for change:

1. **Access.** To be consistent with the 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212), there was a need to remove site-specific travel management direction for summer and winter motor vehicle access that had been included in the 2002 land management plan. Land management plans are strategic in nature, and by design, they do not authorize site-specific activities or uses.
2. **Areas of Tribal Importance.** There was a need to acknowledge tribal values and the importance of the Chugach National Forest to Alaska Native People, and to better integrate traditional and cultural properties with management direction.
3. **Designated Areas.** There was a need to review special areas on the Chugach National Forest and determine what plan components are needed for existing special areas and whether any additional special areas should be recommended. Stakeholder comments included the need to clarify confusing and vague language in the 2002 land management plan regarding the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area.
4. **Ecosystems and Habitats.** There was a need to provide management direction as required in the 2012 Planning Rule to support terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem functions across the landscape and promote ecosystem resilience to encourage the persistence of native plant and animal species. The key ecosystem functions include air, soil, water, carbon, and landscape-scale connectivity across mixed ownerships where natural systems, such as watersheds and wildlife corridors, are shared. Ecosystem diversity is threatened by invasive species, climate change, increased tourism, recreation impacts, and population growth. There was a need to identify thresholds where increased human use may threaten natural systems and address the introduction and expansion of invasive species.
5. **Multiple Uses.** There was a need to address multiple uses on the Chugach National Forest, including wood harvest (community and personal use); subsistence resources; renewable energy; infrastructure (roads, trails, and cabins); and special forest products (such as Christmas trees, mushrooms, bark, ferns, berries, herbs, and wildflowers).
6. **Recreation and Tourism.** There was a need to develop a consistent approach for establishing recreation use and guided use capacities across the Chugach National Forest. Integrated plan components were needed to address the uncertainties associated with a changing climate and the timing and location of recreation opportunities and associated infrastructure. There was a need to provide diverse recreation opportunities in cooperation with partners, while protecting the natural, cultural, and scenic environment for present and future generations.

Revision Topics

The six preliminary needs to change the forest plan and the two significant issues identified during scoping (related to recommended wilderness and desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes) were consolidated into four “revision topics.” This helped to focus on developing alternatives to the proposed action. These revision topics were also used to analyze effects from the alternatives in chapter 3 of the final environmental impact statement. They are summarized below and described in more detail in chapter 1 of the final environmental impact statement. The order of the revision topics does not reflect a priority designation. All the revision topics are important and addressed through the planning process.

Land allocations. This revision topic addresses administrative recommendations for additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, designation of management areas, and management direction for special areas.

Recreation opportunities. This revision topic, which includes desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes, addresses the need to provide diverse recreation opportunities in cooperation with partners; the need to have sustainable recreation infrastructure; and the need to consider effects of a changing climate when planning, designing, and constructing trails, access points, and other recreation-related infrastructure.

Ecological sustainability. This revision topic addresses the need to guide management of key ecosystem functions such as air, soil, water, and vegetation to maintain terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem functions across the landscape.

Social, economic, and cultural sustainability. This revision topic addresses the need for additional management direction regarding the Chugach National Forest's contribution to the social and economic sustainability of local communities; collaboration and partnerships with other agencies and organizations; incorporation of the interests of Alaska Native Peoples; and the issuing of special use authorizations.

External Engagement

At the start of the plan revision process (the assessment phase) in March of 2012, the Forest Service engaged stakeholders and the public and continued engaging throughout the process. The goal of this engagement was to use a transparent process that was responsive to the State of Alaska, local governments, other federal agencies, Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and the public. We will continue to work with these groups throughout the life of the plan implementation.

State of Alaska, Local Governments, and other Federal Agencies

State of Alaska

The State of Alaska has a variety of land ownership and interests within and adjacent to the Chugach National Forest (see the section titled "Relationship between Land Management Plans and Site-Specific Activities" in chapter 3 of the final environmental impact statement). I reviewed relevant state management plans and found no inconsistencies with our final land management plan. Since 2013, the State of Alaska provided comments on the revision process, reviewed the draft land management plan and draft environmental impact statement, and communicated with the revision planning team. These interactions enabled the Forest Service to better evaluate whether individual state planning and land use documents were compatible with the land management plan, identify the State's concerns, and discuss opportunities to resolve or reduce conflicts. For a complete list of meetings with State of Alaska representatives, see the "Public Participation" section of the final environmental impact statement.

During this process, the State of Alaska expressed concerns about the difference between state and federal interpretations of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and pointed out that the draft land management plan did not cite specific sections of ANILCA related to individual plan components. The land management plan follows higher level direction including all laws, executive orders, and regulations. In response to the State's concerns, I identified areas in the final land management plan where we could emphasize how Chugach National Forest management is influenced by ANILCA mandates. To further address the concerns, I included a section titled "Laws Affecting National Forest Management in Alaska," in the final land management plan. This section highlights some sections of ANILCA that directly apply to plan components in the land management plan; however, it does not include all of the sections that apply.

The State of Alaska also expressed concerns regarding the number of acres recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and miles recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, as well as the prohibition on issuing hunting and fishing guiding

authorizations on the western Copper River Delta. I considered these concerns from the State of Alaska and modified the decision to address these concerns. Details and rationale for these changes are described in the “Decision and Rationale for the Decision” section and the “Commercial Guiding Authorizations in the Copper River Delta” section in this record of decision.

There are other points regarding management of the Chugach National Forest on which the Forest Service and the State of Alaska have not reached resolution; such as the ownership of lands uplifted or subsided during the 1964 Good Friday earthquake, and whether national recreation trails are conservation system units under ANILCA. These concerns are outside of the land management plan revision process and the scope of this decision, and cannot be answered or resolved here.

Detailed responses to the State’s comments on these issues are included in appendix C of the final environmental impact statement. We will continue to work with the State of Alaska to address their specific concerns regarding these and other issues that may arise.

***Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council**

The 1989 oil spill has had long-lasting effects in the Prince William Sound area. At least 10.8 million gallons of crude oil spilled from the *Exxon Valdez*, resulting in the stranding of oil on an estimated 1,300 miles of shoreline in Prince William Sound, along the Kenai Peninsula and lower Cook Inlet, and on the western side of the Alaska Peninsula, killing countless plants and animals. An *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (Council) was formed to oversee restoration of the injured ecosystem through the use of a \$900 million civil settlement. The Council consists of three State of Alaska and three federal trustees (or their designees). State trustees include department heads of Fish and Game, Environmental Conservation, and the Attorney General for the State of Alaska. Federal trustees include the Regional Administrator of the Alaska Region of the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Regional Forester for the Alaska Region of the Forest Service, and the Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs for the Department of the Interior. The Council is advised by members of the public and agency staff, and by members of the scientific community. I consulted with the Council on plan components for lands acquired with trustee council funds and included acquired lands in the land management plan as Management Area 6 *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill (EVOS)-Acquired Lands.

The final land management plan direction is consistent with the terms and conditions of the conservation easements that encumber the lands and the reserved rights of the grantors from whom the United States acquired the lands. I will continue to meet with the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council during plan implementation and ensure we comply with specific covenant restrictions particular to each conservation easement.

Local Governments

I coordinated with local government representatives regarding the land management plan revision through on-going meetings and reviews of the draft land management plan and draft environmental impact statement. These local governments included City of Seward, City of Whittier, City of Valdez, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Matanuska Susitna Borough, Municipality of Anchorage, and Whittier Chamber of Commerce. Local governments had different opinions about management of the Chugach National Forest, as follows:

- Some local governments felt that mining and timber production were not consistent with the current uses of the Chugach National Forest including subsistence, recreation, tourism, and commercial and recreational fishing, all of which are vital to the economy of Prince William Sound communities. These local governments want the entirety of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area maintained as if it were part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

- Some local governments wanted to maintain opportunities for winter sports of all types (motorized and non-motorized) and other recreation opportunities due to the positive economic impact of visitor use.
- Most local governments were concerned about access to in-holding parcels. They feel these private parcels need formal recognition of access in the land management plan.

I considered comments and concerns from local governments in making this decision. As a result, all of their concerns were addressed in the responses to comments in appendix C of the final environmental impact statement and some changes were made to the final environmental impact statement or land management plan. The “Decision and Rationale for the Decision” section in this decision explains how the final land management plan maintains current opportunities, shows that timber production is not suitable on the Chugach National Forest, and addresses mining activities. In addition, clarifications were made to address concerns about providing access to in-holding parcels.

Other Federal Agencies

Kenai Fjords National Park is located adjacent to the Chugach National Forest near Seward, Alaska. Park staff provided comments on the draft land management plan, specifically requesting that the land management plan:

- Recognize the role of the Kenai Mountain-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area when working with local communities to protect cultural resources within the National Heritage Area.
- Build upon the accomplishments of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council.
- Address the spread of invasive species.
- Address concerns about the authorized use of lands for salmon hatcheries and the effect of such use on wild salmon stocks.

The final land management plan addresses these areas of concern through plan components. The final environmental impact statement discusses Forest Service authorizations of fish hatcheries required by ANILCA and discloses that a portion of the hatchery fish stray into natural stream habitats used by wild fish as shown in Brenner et al. 2012⁴. These stray hatchery fish may be harmful to the productivity and fitness of wild salmon in Prince William Sound. Further studies are underway to evaluate the hatchery fish and wild fish interactions and effects. I look forward to working and partnering with the Kenai Fjords National Park, in conjunction with Alaska Department of Fish and Game, during plan implementation to address their concerns.

Environmental Protection Agency

The Environmental Protection Agency recommended that I select an alternative that maximized environmental benefits and avoided, minimized, and otherwise mitigated environmental impacts. The Environmental Protection Agency expressed concerns about water quality, safe drinking water, sediment delivery during activities (for example, construction, mining, recreation, residential development, subsistence, electrical transmission, and transportation projects), and impacts to aquatic and terrestrial resources from roads and trails. The Environmental Protection Agency was also concerned about climate change. Other concerns included impacts to fish and wildlife habitat, habitat connectivity, and invasive species.

⁴ Brenner, R.E.; Moffitt, S.D.; Grant, W.S. 2012. Straying of hatchery salmon in Prince William Sound, Alaska. *Environmental Biology of Fishes*. 94: 179–195.

I considered the Environmental Protection Agency comments when making my decision regarding the final land management plan, which maintains most of the Chugach National Forest in a natural condition and includes plan components to increase ecosystem resilience and sustainability.

Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations

Upon initiating plan revision, the Forest Service invited thirteen federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes and fifteen Alaska Native Regional and Village Corporations to attend early engagement workshops, to meet privately, and to consult directly with the Forest Service. The Forest Service hosted a booth at the Alaska Federation of Natives annual conventions in 2012 and 2013, providing information about plan revision efforts. The early consultations, notifications, and meetings were designed to clearly communicate the plan revision process and timeline, to encourage and identify preferred participation methods, and to identify significant issues for Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.

Targeted engagement with Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations took place from 2015 through 2020. Comments provided by Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations were used to identify the significant issues and to develop alternatives C and D.

Key issues raised focused on the need for the revised plan to recognize more explicitly the rights of Native Alaskans, especially rights for access to subsistence resources and to access and develop lands owned by Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations. Some Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations were concerned that wilderness designation would impact these uses and rights. To address these concerns, I worked with the Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations to clarify these uses and rights in the land management plan.

Plan components were updated or added that include specific actions required to improve communication, provide mutually beneficial outcomes that contribute to socio-economic sustainability of tribal communities and resiliency of the national forest's natural resources, and sustainable quantities of renewable national forest resources (including culturally significant food resources). My wilderness recommendation addresses the Alaska Native Tribes' and Alaska Native Corporations' concerns by maintaining the recommended wilderness acres from the 2002 land management plan rather than increasing the acreage.

Public Participation

The Chugach National Forest used a broad range of public involvement methods during the plan revision process. For a detailed description of public participation activities, please see the "Public Participation" section in the final environmental impact statement.

During early stages of the revision process, we hosted pre-assessment workshops and meetings targeting all local communities affected by the 2002 land management plan, including youth, permittees, neighboring landowners, and minority and low-income population areas. Some of these communities are remote and only accessible by boat or plane. Public input received from these meetings helped with development of the following document: Chugach National Forest Assessment of Ecological and Socio-Economic Conditions and Trends; Preliminary Need to Change the Forest Plan; draft Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation report; and Wild and Scenic Rivers Evaluation report.

In December 2015, we published the notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in the Federal Register, which initiated the scoping period for the proposed action. The public was informed of the notice of intent, proposed action, and comment period through the Chugach National Forest website, mailings to stakeholders and interested members of the public, and news releases. We received about 1,400 public comments during the scoping period. Most of the scoping comments were

from conservation and wilderness proponents, and favored the recommendation for more acres of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area to be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System and to provide more primitive recreation opportunities.

We maintained a dialogue with commenters and stakeholders to better understand their concerns as we identified issues, adjusted our proposed action, and began developing alternatives.

In December 2018, the Chugach National Forest published a draft land management plan and draft environmental impact statement and hosted nine open houses to capture stakeholder input. We received over 4,000 public comments on the draft land management plan and draft environmental impact statement. The subjects of greatest interest to the public again included the number of acres recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and motorized or non-motorized recreation opportunities. The final environmental impact statement was written and the land management plan was updated and changed in response to public comments.

Throughout the land management planning process, we continued to engage in consultation with local Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.

The legal notice of opportunity to object to the revised land management plan was published August 30, 2019, starting the 60-day objection process during which the draft record of decision and final environmental impact statement were made available for public review. The Regional Forester received 43 objections that met the requirements of 36 CFR 219 Subpart B. Some objectors wanted more acres recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and some objectors wanted fewer or no acres recommended for inclusion.

As outlined in the “Decision and Rationale for the Decision” section below, my decision responds to the public comments, including objections, in part by maintaining the recommended wilderness acres from the 2002 land management plan rather than increasing the acreage.

With this decision, I am further modifying the final environmental impact statement and land management plan to address direction from the Regional Forester’s response to objections. These changes occur throughout the documents and are listed in appendix B of this decision.

Responses to comments and concerns are available in appendix C of the final environmental impact statement. All public comments and objections are available in the planning record upon request.

Comment letters received from Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, the State of Alaska, local government stakeholders, and federal agencies are provided in appendix D of the final environmental impact statement.

Decision and Rationale for the Decision

Decision

I considered the four land management plan alternatives that were analyzed in the final environmental impact statement (described in the “Alternatives Analyzed in Detail” section later in this decision) and I selected a modified version of alternative C as the final land management plan. This final land management plan incorporates some items that were not analyzed in alternative C but were analyzed in other alternatives. All of the effects were analyzed in the final environmental impact statement in at least one alternative.

My decision takes into consideration how each alternative responded to the identified needs for change and associated revision topics; comments and input from the State of Alaska, local governments, Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other federal agencies, and the public; as well as the analysis disclosed in the final environmental impact statement.

The final land management plan has plan components that apply forestwide, as well as components specific to special areas, geographic areas, and eight management areas. The selected alternative responds to public comments by adding and strengthening plan components for ecosystem integrity and for collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders and clarifying access and uses of National Forest System lands near private inholdings.

My decision addresses the original needs to change as follows:

Access. The Access and Travel Management Plan is now a separate document from the final land management plan. Access and travel management is displayed on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/maps-pubs/?cid=STELPRDB5346707>). This meets direction in the 2005 Travel Management Rule and makes it easier to update as needed since a plan amendment is not required to make updates.

The Motor Vehicle Use Map incorporates the winter and summer motorized access and travel management decisions made in the 2002 land management plan record of decision and other site-specific access and travel management decisions made since 2002 as the current access and travel management for the Chugach National Forest (2005 Travel Management Rule, 36 CFR 212).

Winter snowmachine use is still allowed within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area, consistent with the definition of traditional activities⁵ and as provided for by ANILCA.

Areas of Tribal Importance. The final land management plan includes plan components describing ways the Chugach National Forest will strengthen shared stewardship with Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations. These include:

- Recognizing the importance of the Chugach National Forest as ancestral lands and the need to achieve common desired conditions across shared boundaries.
- Sustaining quantities of renewable resources for subsistence purposes, including culturally significant food resources.
- Maintaining access to areas of the Chugach National Forest identified as important for religious and traditional uses and as sacred sites, to be managed through continued coordination and consultation with Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.
- Increasing cultural awareness within the public through management approaches.
- Managing *Exxon Valdez* oil spill (EVOS)-acquired lands.

Special Areas. The final land management plan identifies and establishes management for multiple special areas. The final land management plan:

- Carries forward the existing administrative recommendation that 1,387,510 acres within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

⁵ Land management plan glossary – Traditional activities include, but are not limited to, recreation activities such as fishing, hunting, boating, sightseeing, and hiking. Such uses are subject to reasonable regulation to protect natural and other values of wilderness from damage (ANILCA Section 1110(a), R10 Supplement 2300-2008-2).

- Carries forward the existing recommendation of nine suitable river segments (82.4 miles) for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and provides plan components to guide their management.
- Establishes a “wilderness study area” management area, which clarifies management intent from ANILCA and the Alaska Region supplement (R10 Supplement 2300-2008-2) to the Forest Service national wilderness policy.
- Provides plan components for the management of existing special areas on the Chugach National Forest, including the Iditarod National Historic Trail, Kenai Mountain-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area, inventoried roadless areas, key coastal wetlands, national recreation trails, and scenic byways.

Ecosystems and Habitats. The final land management plan provides plan components to maintain ecosystem processes, conditions, and services on the Chugach National Forest, including those needed to maintain self-supporting populations of native aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial plants, fish, and wildlife, which are important to Alaska residents and visitors. The final land management plan establishes specific management direction for two species of conservation concern—the dusky Canada goose (*Branta canadensis occidentalis*) (final land management plan, pages 22, 52, and 99) and the Aleutian cress (*Aphragmus eschscholtzianus*) (final land management plan, pages 22, 37, and 99).

Multiple Uses. The final land management plan provides for multiple uses on the Chugach National Forest, including lands suitable for timber (fuelwood and sawtimber for local communities) and wood products (see supporting analysis in appendix B of the final land management plan, pages 105–109), direction for access to subsistence resources (final land management plan, page 20), renewable energy (final land management plan, pages 19, 25, 45, 68, and 70), infrastructure (final land management plan, pages 19, 23–26, 30, 36–37, 41–42, 45, and 64), and special forest products (final land management plan, pages 68, 70, 106, 139, and 157).

Recreation and Tourism. The final land management plan promotes the use of partnerships to maintain and strengthen recreation opportunities on the Chugach National Forest and includes direction for recreation sites and trail systems to make them ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable.

The final land management plan updates the desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes and associated maps to better guide where recreation opportunities should occur and to what condition they should be managed (final land management plan, pages 47 and 64, map 16). It brings management direction in line with current uses, and provides access to and enhancement of winter recreation opportunities and special use authorizations. My final land management plan decision incorporates the mapped desired recreation opportunity spectrum in appendix A of this decision.

Nature of the Decision

The purpose of the final land management plan is to guide management on the Chugach National Forest for approximately the next 15 years. The final land management plan is strategic in nature. It does not authorize projects or activities, make irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources, commit the Forest Service to take action, or dictate the day-to-day administrative activities needed to carry out the Forest Service’s internal operations. The final land management plan will be used to design, implement, and monitor site-specific activities, which must be consistent with the direction set forth in the final land management plan.

The final land management plan establishes plan components in the form of goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability to provide for ecological integrity and contribute to social and economic sustainability of the Chugach National Forest. The final land management plan meets the social, economic, and ecological sustainability requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule and is consistent with the goals and objectives of the USDA Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2018–2022 and Forest Service Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2015–2020. The plan components and the forest monitoring program incorporate best available scientific information and together will enable the Forest Service to adapt to new information and new opportunities that may arise in the future.

Rationale for the Decision

The final land management plan represents a way to maintain a healthy, accessible, and sustainable forest that integrates multiple uses; provides social and economic opportunities to the region; promotes education, cultural, and environmental awareness; and supports adaptive forest management that is inclusive and collaborative. Below I describe my rationale for this decision based on the revision topics used in the analysis.

Revision Topic 1: Land Allocations

Wilderness

Based on our analyses and input from stakeholders, my decision is for 1,387,510 acres within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, as displayed on a map 2 in appendix A of this decision. This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation. Plan implementation is not dependent upon subsequent action related to recommendations for wilderness designation. The information considered in making this preliminary administrative recommendation is available in appendix A of the final environmental impact statement, and balances the concerns expressed in public comments.

This decision will maintain the highly valued character of the area, including the expansive natural and remote settings that are valued by stakeholders and the public for subsistence uses and for recreational purposes. At the same time, this decision recommends no newly identified areas, rather it recommends the same as put forth in the record of decision for the 2002 land management plan (except for land conveyances and corrected shoreline acres due to tidewater glacier retreat), all of which falls within the existing Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area.

The 2.1 million-acre Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area was established in 1980 through passage of ANILCA and comprises more than one-third of the Chugach National Forest. Recent land conveyances and corrected shoreline acres due to tidewater glacier retreat have reduced that acreage to 1.9 million acres of National Forest System lands.

In accordance with regional policy, all 1.9 million acres of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area must be managed to maintain its presently existing character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This policy direction applies to all National Forest System lands within the designated wilderness study area.

Interest in establishing designated wilderness within Prince William Sound started in the late 1970s with 669,500 acres proposed for wilderness during the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II). ANILCA established the 2.1 million-acre Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area in 1980, which disappointed some because the area was not designated as wilderness.

The wilderness recommendation made during this land management planning process was of interest to many stakeholders, including the State of Alaska, local governments, Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and the public. Some stakeholders would like additional acres of recommended wilderness because they value these places as special, or because they believe recommended wilderness management is the best strategy to protect wildlife and aquatic resources. Others prefer that I do not recommend any acres for wilderness designation because they believe management for recommended wilderness is too restrictive. Based on the continued level of interest in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area and the direction from Congress to maintain the presently existing character of the wilderness study area so as not to preclude it from future inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, the alternative to not recommend any areas for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System was not analyzed in detail.

I listened carefully to both advocates and opponents of wilderness recommendation to better understand their interests. Although these interests could be mutually exclusive, 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 mostly wild and natural state.

In response to public input, I have included a monitoring question and associated indicators to monitor the presently existing character of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area and to determine whether plan components are sufficient to maintain the social and ecological characteristics of the wilderness study area. I have also added an objective for Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area to define the presently existing character of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area within one year of land management plan approval.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

My decision carries forward the 2002 land management plan recommendation to designate nine suitable river segments (82.4 miles total) for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (see appendix A of this decision and table 33 of appendix E in the final land management plan). During the revision process, the team reviewed the 2002 land management plan evaluation of over 760 named rivers. The 2015 Chugach National Forest Plan Revision [Wild and Scenic Rivers Evaluation \(https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd573504.pdf\)](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd573504.pdf) found there were no changed circumstances that would alter the suitability of the identified rivers. Evaluation methods and conclusions from this current review are provided in appendix E of the final land management plan. The final land management plan, in Management Area 2 Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers, includes plan components designed to retain the free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of these rivers until at such time they may be officially designated by Congress.

Although not part of my recommendation for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System, my decision includes a mapping and acreage correction for the eligible section of Childs Glacier, as displayed in alternative C. Only suitable river segments can be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Childs Glacier was determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System based on the outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, and geologic feature values; however, the suitability analysis has not been completed. To maintain the eligibility of Childs Glacier, I have included it in Management Area 2 Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers but have not recommended it for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This protection measure applies until a decision is made on the future use of the river and adjacent lands through an Act of Congress or a determination that the river is not suitable.

Management Areas

I received many comments from the public and Chugach National Forest employees regarding the difficulty of implementing the 2002 land management plan because of the number of management areas.

To resolve this problem, my decision consolidates twenty-one existing management areas to eight management areas. This will make the land management plan simpler and easier to implement.

These eight management areas all have specific plan components to address the resource conditions of the area. For example, river segments identified as eligible or suitable “wild,” “scenic,” or “recreational” were formerly separated into three different management areas and are now combined into one. In some cases, management direction that had formerly been addressed through a unique management area, such as for minerals or developed recreation complexes, is now addressed in forestwide plan components.

Special Areas

My decision provides management direction for multiple special areas on the Chugach National Forest in support of the need for change (see “Needs for Change” section in this decision).

Consistent with the requirements of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, my decision includes a desired condition to protect the roadless character of lands included in the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This does not represent new management direction, rather it will support implementation of existing regulatory requirements.

My decision also includes direction to protect the values identified for three trails that are part of the National Trails System: the Iditarod National Historic Trail, the Resurrection Pass National Recreation Trail, and the Williwaw National Recreation Trail. Protection of these trails supports the need for change (see “Needs for Change” section in this decision) by providing for diverse recreation opportunities in partnership with other agencies, organizations, and local communities.

Congress designated these trails as “conservation system units” in ANILCA: ANILCA Section 102(4). The Resurrection Pass National Recreation Trail and the Williwaw National Recreation Trail were designated and in existence at the time that Congress enacted ANILCA. ANILCA states that any unit of the National Trails System is a conservation system unit; further, the National Trails System Act includes national recreation trails as a part of the National Trails System. Therefore, I identified specific plan components to manage the Resurrection Pass National Recreational Trail and the Williwaw National Recreation Trail as conservation system units defined by ANILCA Section 102(4)[1].

My decision also includes plan components for the Seward Highway Scenic Byway, the Kenai Mountain-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area, and for the Key Coastal Wetlands. I included these plan components in order to maintain the characteristics for which these special areas were designated.

Geographic Areas

My decision establishes plan components for the Copper River Delta, Prince William Sound, and Kenai Peninsula Geographic Areas. I included these plan components to support terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem functions across the landscape and promote ecosystem resilience (see “Needs for Change” section in this decision) and to maintain the unique qualities of these spatially contiguous geographic areas that were not sufficiently addressed by forestwide plan components.

Revision Topic 2: Recreation Opportunities

Commercial Guiding Authorizations in the Copper River Delta

To facilitate rural prosperity and economic development, and in response to comments from the State of Alaska and members of the public, my decision allows for commercial guiding authorizations for hunting and fishing in the western portion of the Copper River Delta (see map 3 in appendix A of this decision). I believe that special use authorizations for outfitting and guiding are better managed at the local level, rather than at the broader programmatic level of a land management plan. I do, however, acknowledge local concerns over potential for overcrowding and in response to these concerns I have included a desired condition and a management approach to address potential overcrowding impacting local users.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes

In response to needs for change related to recreation and tourism and extensive public input, my decision updates the desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes available on the Chugach National Forest. Since the early 1980s, recreation opportunity spectrum has been used as a framework for identifying, classifying, planning, and managing a range of recreation settings. Recreation opportunity spectrum describes the desired type and degree of access, remoteness, level of recreation development, social encounters, and the appropriate level of signing and regulation for on-site management. The desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes on the Chugach National Forest range from primitive, where an area is in a natural condition, interactions between users is low, and motorized vehicles are not allowed; to rural, where there is infrastructure (roads and buildings), interactions between users is moderate to high, and motorized vehicle use is allowed (table 1 and final land management plan glossary). The recreation opportunity spectrum class map in appendix A of this decision shows desired (future) recreation opportunity spectrum classes but not specific areas and routes open to motor vehicle use, which are determined through separate, project-specific travel management decisions and displayed on the Chugach National Forest's [Motor Vehicle Use Map \(https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/maps-pubs/?cid=STELPRDB5346707\)](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/maps-pubs/?cid=STELPRDB5346707). Travel management decisions made outside of the travel management process are enacted through forest orders. [Forest orders \(https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/chugach/alerts-notice\)](https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/chugach/alerts-notice) close or restrict the use of areas to protect resources, prevent resource damage, address public health and safety concerns, or set limits on use and occupancy of Chugach National Forest infrastructure and facilities. An example of a forest order is the closing of an area to snowmobile use when there is inadequate snow cover.

This decision establishes plan components to ensure that recreation sites and trail systems are economically and socially sustainable, are supported by communities and partners, and reflect current and future public needs and demands commensurate with Forest Service financial capabilities.

In order to provide diverse recreation opportunities, I have included a range of desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes that will allow flexibility to address emerging trends in recreation use. My decision includes changes to the desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes for the following reasons:

- To better align with existing recreation use patterns on the Chugach National Forest and meet desired conditions (align with current travel management decisions).
- To meet the need to integrate interests of Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and the State of Alaska (provide more flexibility to respond to access needs for traditional activities or subsistence uses).
- To continue to provide diverse recreation opportunities (provide additional primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class areas accessible from the highway system).

- To support local economies (provide for outfitting and guiding opportunities).
- To reduce conflicts between user groups while allowing access for both motorized and non-motorized recreationists.

In response to public comments, my decision also balances the number of acres in the primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class with those in less restrictive classes (table 1).

Table 1. Chugach National Forest—comparison of 2002 land management plan and final land management plan desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes

Desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Class	2002 Land Management Plan (Alternative A, No Action) Acres (percent)	Final Land Management Plan (Modified Alternative C) Acres (percent)
Primitive	2,498,666 (46%)	2,093,288 (38%)
Semi-primitive Non-motorized	1,535,709 (28%)	1,594,338 (29%)
Semi-primitive Non-motorized (Winter Motorized Allowed)	704,998 (13%)	1,257,213 (23%)
Semi-primitive Motorized	583,284 (11%)	379,543 (7%)
Roaded Natural	85,810 (1%)	90,296 (2%)
Rural	6,681 (<1%)	469 (<1%)

Key Elements of Land Management Plan Decision for Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The section below highlights those areas across the Chugach National Forest where the desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes from the 2002 land management plan were changed in this decision (see map 3 in appendix A of this decision).

Copper River Delta Geographic Area

The area located north of Scott Glacier and Sheridan Glacier to the national forest boundary and east to the Copper River was changed from primitive to semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) recreation opportunity spectrum class to be consistent with the current travel management decision for winter motorized use.

Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area

The desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes were changed in the following areas to be consistent with the winter travel management decisions made in the 2007 Kenai Winter Access Record of Decision⁶:

- Areas on both sides of the Seward Highway between the Sterling Highway junction and the Hope Highway junction: some areas along this corridor changed from semi-primitive motorized to either semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) or to semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum classes.
- Areas around and adjacent to the Carter Lake and Crescent Lake drainages were changed from semi-primitive non-motorized to semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) recreation opportunity spectrum class.

⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 2007. Kenai winter access record of decision. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Region, Chugach National Forest, Seward Ranger District.

- Areas west of Cooper Lake changed from semi-primitive motorized and semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) to semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class.
- Areas north of Seward and east of the Seward Highway, including all of the Snow River drainage and Lower Paradise Lake, were changed from semi-primitive motorized, semi-primitive non-motorized, and semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) to primitive recreation opportunity class spectrum. A corridor of semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) recreation opportunity spectrum class was created along Snow River to continue to allow winter motorized access through this area to access Godwin Glacier and the Nellie Juan Lake area.
- An area adjacent to Meridian Lake/Grayling Lake was changed from semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) to semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class.

In response to public comments and objections, including those about opportunities for solitude and for recreational motorized over-the-snow travel, my decision includes changing seven areas from semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class to semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) desired recreation opportunity spectrum class. This change reflects the types of recreation use allowed by current travel management decisions and the change to a non-motorized setting for summer months providing consistency with desired conditions. The change would apply to the specific areas listed below:

- Between the Hope Highway and Palmer Creek Road near the town of Sunrise
- West of Palmer Creek Road and on either of side of Resurrection Creek south to Wolf Creek
- The entire area east of Hope Highway and west of Turnagain Pass
- The area south of Summit Lake on the east side of the Seward Highway including the Quartz Creek drainage
- The area west of Snug Harbor road to and including the east side of the Cooper Creek drainage
- The Grant Lake drainage and the eastern portion of the Falls Creek drainage

My decision also increases the primitive desired recreation opportunity spectrum class by a combined 77,067 acres in Snow River and Upper Mills Creek. These areas were previously classified as semi-primitive motorized and semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) in the 2002 land management plan. This change creates two additional primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class areas accessible from the highway system in the Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area.

My decision designates Whittier Glacier near the town of Whittier as semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) desired recreation opportunity spectrum class to maintain winter motorized access to upper glacial icefields. The nearby Burns Glacier would stay semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class as it was in the 2002 land management plan to reduce conflicts between user groups while allowing access for both motorized and non-motorized recreationists. The Whittier Glacier area is a change from the 2002 land management plan, where it was semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class.

My decision would change the Spencer Whistlestop area from semi-primitive motorized to roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum class. This change reflects the desired condition with the

Spencer Whistlestop area having a higher level of recreation development, a larger number of parties encountered per day, and a more roaded environment.

My decision includes the following changes in the desired recreation opportunity spectrum class for other areas of the Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area to be consistent with current travel management decisions or desired conditions:

- Areas adjacent to Crow Creek Road and the Upper Winner Creek drainage: the recreation opportunity spectrum class would change from semi-primitive non-motorized to semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed).
- Twentymile tributary area: the recreation opportunity spectrum class would change from semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) to semi-primitive motorized.

My decision changes the rural recreation opportunity spectrum class that was placed on areas with mining claims in 2002 to a recreation opportunity spectrum class that is consistent with the surrounding areas. Mining claim ownership and claim boundaries change frequently, so individual desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes are not appropriate for these areas. This will facilitate implementation of the final land management plan by eliminating patchy desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes in these areas and allowing for consistent management. The only exception to this change is the area directly south of Hope on the Kenai Peninsula, where historic and modern placer operations have modified the natural environment in many places and where long-term mining operations are planned. The rural recreation opportunity spectrum class was retained for this area.

Prince William Sound Geographic Area

Within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area, I chose to keep the desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes the same as the 2002 land management plan recreation opportunity spectrum classes (described in alternative A (no action) and alternative B) except for along the southeast and northwest side of Blackstone Bay. In these areas, I chose a semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class for the shoreline and a primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class for the inland areas as described in alternative C.

Many members of the public wanted to see desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes that more closely aligned with the existing conditions of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area. The Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area’s existing characteristics most closely align with alternative C desired recreation opportunity spectrum, as was noted in the final environmental impact statement (page 174). Table 2 below shows how these existing characteristics compare with the final land management plan decision for desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes.

Table 2. Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area—comparison of existing recreation characteristics and final land management plan desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Class	Alternative C (existing recreation characteristics) Acres¹ (percent)	Final Land Management Plan (desired recreation opportunity spectrum class) Acres¹ (percent)
Primitive	1,850,304 (97%)	1,090,080 (57%)
Semi-primitive Non-motorized	43,117 (2%)	773,387 (40%)
Semi-primitive Non-motorized (Winter Motorized Allowed)	25,354 (1%)	55,266 (3%)

¹ The acres do not include the Management Area 6 EVOS-Acquired Lands located within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area boundary.

I chose to keep most of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area's desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes the same as the 2002 land management plan's desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes to provide more flexibility to respond to access needs for traditional activities or subsistence uses, and to provide outfitting and guiding opportunities. My decision retains a semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed) desired recreation opportunity spectrum class on the ice fields around Blackstone Bay and near Nellie Juan Lake and Nellie Juan River. In areas within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area that are closer to Whittier and Valdez, I also retained the semi-primitive non-motorized desired recreation opportunity spectrum class to allow for continued economic growth while still maintaining the area's presently existing character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

My decision changes the Olsen Bay Creek Research Natural Area from semi-primitive non-motorized to primitive recreation opportunity spectrum to retain the natural characteristics of the area. This is consistent with how the other four research natural areas on the Chugach National Forest are managed.

My decision changes portions of Hinchinbrook Island from primitive to semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class, allowing for higher levels of encounters in those areas used for deer and black bear hunting.

Revision Topic 3: Ecological Sustainability

My decision includes plan components for ecological integrity of aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial ecosystems necessary to sustain a diversity of vegetation, fish, and wildlife communities, including the persistence of native species. For more information, see the section on "Requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule" in this decision.

Additionally, the Alaska Regional Forester identified two species of conservation concern on the Chugach National Forest: the dusky Canada goose (*Branta canadensis occidentalis*) and Aleutian cress (*Aphragmus eschscholtzianus*). My decision includes plan components for these two species. Concerns about the viability of the dusky Canada goose stem from the 1964 earthquake, which uplifted wetlands that hosted nesting sites in the Copper River Delta. Once the uplifted wetlands drained, nest sites became more vulnerable to predation. Consistent with the Pacific Flyway Council's management plan for the dusky Canada goose, the Chugach National Forest initiated a program to provide low-predation-risk nesting habitat that is supported by plan components in the final land management plan.

The Aleutian cress was identified as a species of conservation concern because the alpine habitat on which this plant depends is likely to decrease as climate continues to change. Plan components were developed to support the persistence of Aleutian cress, but it may not be within the inherent capability of the plan area to maintain or restore the ecological conditions to retain a viable population of Aleutian cress due to the changing climate. While only one population of Aleutian cress has been documented on the Chugach National Forest, much of its habitat has not been surveyed and more populations may exist.

Revision Topic 4: Social, Economic, and Cultural Sustainability

My decision emphasizes the role of partnerships and collaborative relationships in implementation of the final land management plan, while also acknowledging specific values and interests of Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and the State of Alaska. My decision responds to the need for change by describing the importance of the land and features of the Chugach National Forest to First Nations (for example, the Chugach, Eyak, Ahtna, and Dena'ina) and how it contributes to social, economic, and cultural sustainability of communities.

Plan components allow for sustainable levels of goods and services, such as recreation and tourism opportunities, outfitter and guide services, established fisheries, minerals extraction and energy generation, forest products, and ecosystem stewardship opportunities. These goods and services contribute to the local economy through generation of jobs and income while creating a variety of products for use, both locally and nationally. For more information, see the “Requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule” section in this decision.

Economic Contributions of the Chugach National Forest

My decision will result in no quantifiable changes in economic impacts, such as effects on employment or income. Activities related to the Chugach National Forest will continue to contribute to the local economy by generating jobs and income while creating a variety of other benefits to people, both nationally and locally.

The commercial fishing sector is the largest employer in the Valdez-Cordova Census Area and Kenai Peninsula Borough. Other activities related to resource use and extraction—such as timber harvest, gathering of other forest products, and mining—occur within or can be linked to the Chugach National Forest. In a number of these cases, the magnitude of the activity is relatively small and hard to assess relative to the regional economy as a whole, making it difficult to accurately model economic impacts. For example, no commercial sales of sawtimber have occurred in the past 5 years; however, fuelwood is used as a heating source in local communities within and adjacent to the Chugach National Forest.

I am carrying forward the decision from the 2002 record of decision that all four oil and gas production zones of the Chugach National Forest remain unavailable for oil and gas leasing. Two of the zones have low or no oil and gas production potential. Two of the zones were available for development based on settlement agreements with Alaska Native Corporations. Because oil and gas development did not happen during the span specified in these agreements, the agreements terminated.

Under the final land management plan:

- Spending on recreational visits to the Chugach National Forest will remain the same or increase slightly with the increase in areas available for winter motorized access.
- Payments from the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act and Payments In Lieu of Taxes are estimated to support 70 jobs (full or part time) and about 4.3 million dollars in income (2016 dollars) each year.
- Spending of about 16 million dollars by the Chugach National Forest (2016 Chugach National Forest budget) is estimated to support 280 full- or part-time jobs and 18 million dollars in labor income.
- Water quantity and quality will remain the same, and is expected to maintain fish habitat and the economic contribution from commercial fishing, sportfishing, subsistence fishing, and fish processing industries.
- Economic contribution is expected to remain the same or increase if more special uses are authorized; however, we are unable to quantify economic contributions such as employment or spending from the types of activities we authorize through special uses.
- There will be no changes to the accessibility of fuelwood.

Access and Travel Management

My decision separates the existing Access and Travel Management Plan, which was integrated into the 2002 land management plan, into a separate document. The existing access and travel management decisions will remain in effect, but because they are separate from the final land management plan, these decisions will be easier to update on a project-level basis in the future.

This does not mean that the decisions on motorized use in the 2002 land management plan would be nullified; those decisions, such as the 2007 Kenai Winter Access Record of Decision, remain in place. Authorized routes that are open and closed to motor vehicle use will be displayed on the Chugach National Forest's Motor Vehicle Use Map, and will be updated as new decisions are made. Similarly, routes and areas closed to winter motorized use will be displayed on an Over Snow Vehicle Use Map. Both maps are available to the public on the Chugach National Forest website (Motor Vehicle Use Map at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/maps-pubs/?cid=stelprdb5346707>).

In some cases, existing travel management decisions are not consistent with desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes identified as desired conditions in this land management plan decision. Areas where future site-specific travel management decisions will be needed to move the Chugach National Forest towards desired conditions are disclosed in chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement.

The 2002 land management plan decision for helicopter landings has also been retained. Any future changes where helicopter landings are allowed will be made through a project-level analysis and decision. Use of boats and aircraft by the public for recreational or other purposes will be managed through forest orders, consistent with ANILCA and other applicable laws and agreements. The final land management plan does, however, include plan components related to authorized (commercial) and administrative uses of boats and aircraft.

Cultural Sustainability

The Chugach National Forest is critical to the identity and continued welfare of Alaska Native Tribes. In addition to responding to specific comments received from Alaska Native Tribes (see section on "External Engagement" in this decision), the final land management plan reinforces compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act through the implementation of the Programmatic Agreement among the USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region; the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; and the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office. The agreement addresses heritage program management on national forests in the State of Alaska to protect cultural resources, which are defined as objects or definite locations of human activity, occupation, or use identifiable through field survey, historical documentation, or oral evidence.

Requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule

The Chugach National Forest final land management plan has been prepared in compliance with the Forest Service's 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219). My decision meets the specific 2012 Planning Rule requirements at sections 219.8–219.11 as follows.

219.8 Sustainability

Social and Economic Sustainability

The final land management plan contributes to social and economic sustainability by:

- Including plan components that maintain water quantity and quality for fish habitat, which supports commercial fishing, sportfishing, subsistence fishing, and fish processing industries (final land management plan, pages 20–22, 34–36, 42, 50–51, and 90–91).

- Emphasizing partnerships and agreements with communities, businesses, and non-profits to deliver programs, projects, and services.
- Promoting continued engagement with the State of Alaska, Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and local communities to reduce hazardous fuels in an all-hands and all-lands approach, including updating Community Wildfire Protection Plans using the four goals and actions tied to the Alaska State Forest Action Plan⁷: wildfire and public safety, forest health, community forestry, and forest stewardship programs.
- Supporting Alaska Native People’s way of life through new plan components tied to mutual interests such as land ownership and entitlements, traditional uses, statutory rights, and working agreements (final land management plan, pages 15–18).
- Supporting Alaska Native Regional and Village Corporations’ rights to develop their surface and subsurface estates, which may include access and development on, across, or adjacent to the Chugach National Forest, consistent with ANILCA and other laws.
- Recognizing the importance of recreation to residents, visitors, and the regional economy by providing for diverse recreation opportunities in cooperation with partners, while protecting the natural, cultural, and scenic environment for present and future generations (final land management plan, pages 6 and 30–33).
- Managing recreation facilities based on use and maintaining the ability to sustain facilities, resources, visitor experiences and use, and encouraging partnerships to help manage new and existing facilities.
- Supporting the social and economic opportunities and interests of residents and businesses through special use authorizations for fish hatcheries, communication sites, utilities, hydroelectric facilities, outfitters and guides, recreation events, cabins, resorts, and campground concessionaires (final land management plan, pages 6–8, 19, 25, 30, and 62–66; final environmental impact statement, page 328).
- Maintaining watershed health and important habitat for salmon, which supports a commercial salmon harvest valued at more than \$19 million annually and generates over 3,000 jobs.
- Acknowledging the importance of subsistence uses for local communities and supporting these uses, including the harvest of wild renewable resources such as fish, game, berries, wood, and medicinal plants (final land management plan, pages 6, 8–9, 17–20, 36, 58, 62, 74, and 84).
- Supporting the availability of fuelwood for personal use as an important economic factor for residents due to the high cost of heating fuel in many rural areas (final land management plan, pages 3, 27, 62–64, 68, and 72).
- Recognizing the potential for the development of locatable minerals such as gold, and salable minerals such as sand and gravel, quarry rock, and other minerals (final land management plan, page 3; final environmental impact statement, pages 211–215).

⁷ Alaska Department of Natural Resources. 2016. State forest action plan. Anchorage, AK: State of Alaska, Alaska Division of Forestry.

Ecological Sustainability

The final land management plan contributes to ecological sustainability by:

- Developing plan components for the interdependence of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and the ability of these ecosystems within the plan area to adapt to changes from system drivers and stressors, such as the potential effects of a changing climate and forest insects and diseases (final land management plan, pages 20, 33–35, 61, and 63).
- Promoting hazardous fuel reduction near communities by continuing to work with neighboring communities to reduce fuel levels.
- Maintaining air quality (including during prescribed fire activities), providing for soil productivity, preventing erosion, and protecting water resources in the plan area.
- Maintaining largely intact, highly functioning terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and watersheds, including the largest contiguous wetland complex on North America’s Pacific coast (Copper River Delta).
- Supporting the continued restoration of resources and services injured by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, consistent with the 1994 *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Restoration Plan.
- Informing plan components with the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment for the Chugach National Forest and the Kenai Peninsula.⁸
- Promoting ecosystem resilience to encourage the persistence of native plant and animal species in a changing climate by emphasizing the use of adaptive management as knowledge about these trends continues to grow (final land management plan, pages 22–23 and 93).
- Requiring the use of best management practices when undertaking management activities.
- Identifying and maintaining or restoring priority watersheds in accordance with the agency’s Watershed Condition Framework⁹ to maintain or restore the diversity of ecosystems and habitat types by focusing on maintaining or restoring key characteristics associated with the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, including a diversity of native tree species.

219.9 Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities

The final land management plan meets the coarse filter requirements for the diversity of plant and animal communities by:

- Maintaining the ecological integrity of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and watersheds by maintaining natural disturbance regimes (for example, glacial action, snow avalanches, earthquakes, floods, native insects and pathogens, windthrow, lightning-caused fire, and climatic variations) as the primary mechanisms shaping the landscape and ecological communities.
- Supporting ecosystem services that help sustain hunting and subsistence opportunities (final land management plan, pages 15, 18–19, and 20–21).

⁸ Hayward, G.H.; Colt, S.; McTeague, M.L.; Hollingsworth, T.N., eds. 2017. Climate change vulnerability assessment for the Chugach National Forest and the Kenai Peninsula. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-950. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station.

⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 2011. Watershed condition framework: a framework for assessing and tracking changes to watershed condition, FS-977. Washington, DC.

- Supporting the ecological processes and conditions necessary to maintain habitat quantity, quality, and distributions of self-supporting populations of native plants, fish, and wildlife (final land management plan, pages 20–23).
- Incorporating species-specific plan components that support four federally listed species and two species of conservation concern (dusky Canada goose and Aleutian cress) (final land management plan, pages 37, 52, and 55).
- Consulting with the National Marine Fisheries Service on plan components to protect populations of the endangered fin whale, endangered Cook Inlet beluga whale, humpback whale, and Steller sea lion.

219.10 Multiple Uses

The final land management plan provides for multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish by:

- Providing desired conditions, objectives, goals, standards, guidelines, and potential management approaches for multiple uses and ecosystem services in the plan area (final land management plan, pages 15, 17–19, 22–23, 25, 30, 33, 44, and 46)
- Recognizing and protecting historical, cultural, and tribal uses associated with the Chugach National Forest (final land management plan, pages 3–4, 15–17, 28, and 36).
- Providing desired conditions, objectives, goals, standards, guidelines, and potential management approaches that: maintain the quality of both surface and subsurface waters on and flowing from National Forest System lands; sustain native terrestrial and aquatic species and ecosystems; meet federal and state water quality standards; and support State of Alaska designated beneficial uses (final land management plan, pages 34–36).
- Supporting the persistence of fish and wildlife and other renewable resources, which support robust commercial salmon fisheries, traditional activities, subsistence resources, outfitting and guiding opportunities, recreation (motorized and non-motorized), and a tourism economy (final land management plan, pages 20–23, 36–37, and 62–66).
- Providing opportunities for harvest of forest products, fuelwood (an important forest product for the local economy and a major source of heating for local communities), and sawtimber for local communities through small-scale vegetation management activities. Activities will also restore and enhance wildlife habitat and reduce the risk of wildfires near road corridors, communities, and infrastructure (final land management plan, page 62).
- Providing opportunities for the development of mineral resources, where appropriate (final land management plan, page 30).
- Providing opportunities for the development of energy resources, where appropriate (final land management plan, page 25).
- Preventing invasive species introduction and establishment, and containing, reducing, or eradicating known infestations to protect terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems (final land management plan, pages 27–28 and 43–44).
- Providing desired conditions, objectives, goals, standards, and guidelines for the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area to maintain its presently existing character and potential for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System (final land management plan, pages 73–78).

- Managing rivers and streams found eligible for the National Wild and Scenic River System with desired conditions, goals, standards, and potential management approaches (final land management plan, pages 79–81).

219.11 Timber Requirements based on the National Forest Management Act

The final land management plan addresses timber requirements in the National Forest Management Act by:

- Identifying 5,409,088 acres as not suitable for timber production for legal or technical reasons. For example, timber production may be prohibited by statute, executive order, or regulation (inventoried roadless areas, research natural areas, suitable wild and scenic river segments, wilderness study areas, EVOS-acquired lands, ANILCA 501b areas, and pending State of Alaska selections) (final land management plan, page 105).
- Identifying 6,060 acres that may be suitable for timber production and further recognizing that this acreage is insufficient to provide a flow of timber on a predictable basis; therefore, no lands are identified as suitable for timber production within the Chugach National Forest (final land management plan, appendix B).
 - The determination that no lands are suited for timber production does not preclude integrated forest vegetation management on lands within and outside the roaded area. Timber management helps to control the establishment, growth, composition, and health of forests to meet management objectives, such as wildlife habitat enhancement (moose winter range), forest stand improvement, and hazardous fuels reduction. Timber harvested from these treatments contributes to a sustainable fuelwood and sawtimber supply sufficient to meet local community needs (final land management plan, page 106).
- Identifying 11,170 acres suitable for the management of wood products for purposes other than timber production, including free-use timber and fuelwood per 36 CFR 223.10 and 223.5.
- Managing vegetation to restore and enhance wildlife habitat and reduce the wildfire risk near communities and infrastructure (final land management plan, pages 22–23, 26–27, 37, and 51–55).
- Providing for different types of forest products, other than timber production. In particular, fuelwood is an important forest product for the local economy and a major source of heating for local communities (final land management plan, pages 21, 39, 62, 64, 66, 68, 92, 102, and 112–114; final environmental impact statement, pages 131–152).

Preliminary Administrative Recommendations

Recommended Wilderness

As described earlier in Revision Topic 1: Land Allocations, my recommendation is for 1,387,510 acres within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area to be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System, as displayed on map 2 in appendix A of this decision. This is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation. Plan implementation is not dependent upon subsequent action related to recommendations for wilderness designation. The information considered in making this preliminary administrative recommendation is available in appendix A of the final environmental impact statement, and balances the concerns expressed in public comments.

In response to public input, I have included a monitoring question and associated indicators to monitor the presently existing character of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area and to determine whether plan components are sufficient to maintain the social and ecological characteristics of the wilderness study area. I have also added an objective for Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area to define the presently existing character of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area within one year of land management plan approval.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

As described earlier in Revision Topic 1: Land Allocations, my decision carries forward the 2002 land management plan recommendation to designate nine suitable river segments (82.4 miles total) for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (see appendix A of this decision and table 33 of appendix E in the final land management plan).

Although not part of my recommendation for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System, my decision includes a mapping and acreage correction for the eligible section of Childs Glacier, as displayed in alternative C. Only suitable river segments can be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Childs Glacier was determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System based on the outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, and geologic feature values; however, the suitability analysis has not been completed. To maintain the eligibility of Childs Glacier, I have included it in Management Area 2 Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers but have not recommended it for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Interim protective measures must be applied to maintain preliminary classification, water quality, free-flowing characteristics, and outstandingly remarkable values for river segments the Forest Service determines to be eligible or suitable. These protection measures apply until a decision is made on the future use of the river and adjacent lands through an Act of Congress or a determination that the river is not suitable.

This recommendation for designation of wild and scenic river segments had limited interest from stakeholders. The few comments and objections related to the recommendation were based on the interpretation of ANILCA and not specific river segments.

This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, or the President of the United States. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on designation of rivers as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Monitoring Program

The land management plan's monitoring program (appendix A) includes a broad range of monitoring questions and associated indicators for specific plan components. Monitoring questions and associated indicators are designed to inform management of resources within the plan area, by testing relevant assumptions, tracking relevant changes, and measuring management effectiveness.

A biennial monitoring evaluation report will be prepared to indicate whether a change to the land management plan, management activities, or monitoring program may be needed, or whether a new assessment may be warranted based on new information. This report will be made available to inform the public, and to encourage feedback on the methods and how we are doing in meeting our land management plan goals.

The monitoring program in the land management plan is focused on priority management questions and related core information. The land management plan monitoring program does not include all monitoring conducted for the Chugach National Forest or the Alaska Region. Project and activity monitoring is not included in the land management plan monitoring program, although information collected with such monitoring may inform the monitoring program and adaptive management of the plan.

The monitoring program contains one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the eight required topics (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)). Some monitoring questions and indicators may address more than one of these required topics. Details of the plan monitoring program—including monitoring protocols, data collection methods, schedules, and data management—will be part of a separate monitoring guide. The entire monitoring program must be within the financial and technical capabilities of the Forest Service.

Alternative Development

Alternatives were developed around the four revision topics, which were based on the need for change (see the “Needs for Change” section in this decision) and the two most significant issues identified during public scoping (recommended wilderness and desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes). Revision topics 1 and 2 respond to the significant issues, and revision topics 3 and 4 respond to other need for change elements and to public comments that were not identified as significant issues. The “Alternatives” section in chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement describes each alternative and provides detailed information on how the action alternatives were developed.

Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

The following comparison looks at how the alternatives address Revision Topic 1—Land Allocations and Revision Topic 2—Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, as these are different for each of the alternatives. Differences among the alternatives for Revision Topics 3—Ecological Sustainability and 4—Social, Economic, and Cultural Sustainability are primarily related to the way the alternatives are addressed through the plan components.

Alternative A (No Action)

Revision Topic 1—Land Allocations

Alternative A is the 2002 land management plan and record of decision. This alternative recommends about 1.4 million acres (72 percent) of National Forest System lands in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Alternative A does not explicitly address ecological, social, and economic sustainability or climate change.

The 2002 land management plan includes 21 management areas with management area prescriptions that include desired conditions, suitability determinations, and standards and guidelines.

Revision Topic 2—Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes from the 2002 land management plan would not change.

Revision Topics 3—Ecological Sustainability and 4—Social, Economic, and Cultural Sustainability

This alternative does not incorporate plan components that respond to the needs for change related to ecological sustainability and social, economic, and cultural sustainability.

I did not select this alternative because it does not adequately respond to the need for change and includes a large number of management areas, making implementation difficult.

Alternative B

Revision Topic 1—Land Allocations

Alternative B is the draft land management plan that was released as the proposed action for public scoping in December 2015. This alternative maintains the 2002 land management plan wilderness recommendation, about 1.4 million acres in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area.

Alternative B consolidates the 21 management areas from alternative A into eight management areas with associated plan components.

Revision Topic 2—Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes in alternative B are the same as the 2002 land management plan for the Prince William Sound and Copper River Delta geographic areas. In the Seward Ranger District within the Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area, alternative B incorporates changes to desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes to make them consistent with the 2007 Kenai Winter Access Record of Decision.

Revision Topics 3—Ecological Sustainability and 4—Social, Economic, and Cultural Sustainability

This alternative incorporates plan components that respond to the needs for change related to ecological sustainability and social, economic, and cultural sustainability. The plan components were displayed in the proposed revised land management plan released with the December 2015 scoping document.

I did not select this alternative because it did not balance the need for non-motorized and motorized recreation opportunities and did not include desired recreation opportunity spectrum class changes to meet the current and desired conditions on the Chugach National Forest. However, I did incorporate the wilderness recommendation from alternative B into the selected alternative (modified alternative C), as it best balanced the comments for how many acres to recommend for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (see discussion in “Decision and Rationale for the Decision” section).

Alternative C (as Proposed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement)

Alternative C was identified as the preferred alternative in the final environmental impact statement. Like alternative B, this alternative consolidates the 21 management areas from alternative A into eight management areas with associated plan components.

Revision Topic 1—Land Allocations

In response to public comments expressing interest in additional acres of recommended wilderness, alternative C recommends about 1.8 million acres (94 percent) of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Although not part of my recommendation for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System, alternative C includes a mapping and acreage correction for the eligible section of Childs Glacier. Eligible river segments cannot be recommended for inclusion; however, to maintain Childs Glacier eligibility it is part of Management Area 2 Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers.

Revision Topic 2—Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

In addition to the desired recreation opportunity spectrum class changes described for alternative B, alternative C makes additional changes to more accurately reflect the types of recreation use allowed by current travel management decisions, including changes in some areas to a non-motorized setting for summer months and allowing motorized use for winter months. The changes respond to public comments to balance the need for motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, and include shifting nearly all of the western Prince William Sound Geographic Area to the primitive desired recreation opportunity spectrum class. In the Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area, approximately 65,000 acres that had been designated “front country” would change to “backcountry” management area. This change better reflects management intent for these relatively remote areas and responds to public comments that front country management area boundaries were too broad.

Alternative C includes plan components that strengthen language for collaboration and partnerships; clarify access and uses of Chugach National Forest lands near private inholdings; and strengthen management for ecosystem integrity.

Revision Topics 3—Ecological Sustainability and 4—Social, Economic, and Cultural Sustainability

This alternative incorporates plan components that respond to the needs for change related to ecological sustainability and social, economic, and cultural sustainability. The plan components were displayed in the August 2019 land management plan.

I selected many components of alternative C in my decision, as described in the “Decision and Rationale for the Decision” section. I believe that the components of alternative C related to motorized and non-motorized opportunities provided the best balance of these uses. One of the reasons that I did not select the wilderness recommendation from alternative C is because it did not adequately balance non-motorized and motorized uses.

Alternative D

Alternative D is the same as alternative C except for changes to the area recommended for wilderness and to some desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes.

Revision Topic 1—Land Allocations

In response to public comments, alternative D increases the area recommended for wilderness designation. Under this alternative, 97 percent of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area is recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (about 1.8 million acres), with the exception of Blackstone Bay, the Nellie Juan Lake and Nellie Juan River area, and all *Exxon Valdez* oil spill-acquired and other split estate lands.

Revision Topic 2—Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

In the Kenai Peninsula Geographic Area, the backcountry management area is approximately 3,896 acres more than in alternative C, and approximately 69,251 acres more than in alternative B.

Revision Topics 3—Ecological Sustainability and 4—Social, Economic, and Cultural Sustainability

This alternative incorporates plan components that respond to the needs for change related to ecological sustainability and social, economic, and cultural sustainability. The plan components were displayed in the August 2019 land management plan.

I did not select any of alternative D because it does not balance motorized and non-motorized access and the recommendation for wilderness area designation does not respond to comments requesting fewer recommended wilderness acres.

Alternatives Considered but Not in Detail

Federal agencies are required to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were eliminated from detailed study (40 CFR 1502.14).

Public comments on the proposed action suggested alternative methods for achieving the purpose and need. Some of these alternatives were outside the scope of this revision effort or duplicative of the alternatives considered in detail. Four alternatives (or alternative variations) were considered but eliminated from detailed consideration for reasons summarized in chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement. The following alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study.

- Implement a commercial timber harvest program
- Do not recommend any areas for wilderness area designation
- Consider the following areas for wilderness area designation:
 - Gulch Creek and Alpenglow Complex
 - Snow River and Greater Paradise Lakes Valley
 - Green, Montague, Evans, Hawkins, and Hinchinbrook Islands
- Recommend the entire Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area for wilderness area designation

After considering the analyses of alternatives A through D, and the alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study, I find that a reasonable range of alternatives has been carefully evaluated in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act procedures. All action alternatives are realistic, implementable, and responsive to the land management plan revision topics.

Administrative Review and Objections

The land management plan for the Chugach National Forest was subject to the objection process identified in 36 CFR 219 Subpart B. Known as a “pre-decisional administrative review process,” this process provided one more opportunity for the public to work with the Forest Service to resolve any outstanding issues with the land management plan prior to a final decision. The 60-day objection filing period for the draft record of decision, land management plan, and final environmental impact statement was initiated on August 30, 2019, concurrently with an objection filing period for the Regional Forester’s species of conservation concern list for the Chugach National Forest. The Regional Forester, David E. Schmid, received 43 eligible objections regarding the draft record of decision and related documents. No objections were received on Regional Forester’s species of conservation concern list for the Chugach National Forest.

The objections fell into the following categories:

1. Inventoried roadless areas from the 2001 Roadless Rule – some people wanted to reduce the inventoried roadless area acres and some people wanted more protection for inventoried roadless areas.

2. Elimination of pack llama use by Forest Service personnel and contractors through a land management plan standard – some people felt that the standard that was intended to reduce disease vectors affecting Dall sheep and mountain goats should not have been added between the draft environmental impact statement and final environmental impact statement and disagreed with the supporting science.
3. Climate change – some people felt that climate change should have been considered more in the wilderness recommendation.
4. Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area – some people felt that:
 - more plan components were needed to protect the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area,
 - the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area should be managed for wilderness character and not presently existing character, and
 - plan components should be added to ensure a minimum requirements analysis is completed for projects.
5. Recreation opportunity spectrum – people were concerned that it was not clear if the recreation opportunity spectrum classes were current conditions or desired conditions.
6. *Exxon Valdez* oil spill-acquired lands – some people:
 - wanted these lands to be included in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area,
 - others wanted these lands kept out of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area, and
 - some wanted more plan components to manage these lands.
7. National Trails System – there were objections on how the Williwaw and Resurrection Pass national recreation trails were described as conservation system units (defined by ANILCA) and how a management approach in the plan could be interpreted to include the Portage Curve Multimodal Connector Trail as part of the Iditarod National Historic Trail system.
8. Winter travel management – some people wanted new analysis for the travel plans from the 2002 land management plan and for areas that did not have travel analysis yet.

The Forest Service Alaska Regional Office convened a review team of resource managers and specialists to review documents and the project record related to those issues raised by objectors.

After the initial review of objections, interested parties and objectors were invited to attend resolution meetings with the Regional Forester and myself in Anchorage on January 14–15, 2020. Many objectors participated in these meetings, in person or over the phone. We were able to find common ground on some issues, while on other issues we were not.

In a written response to the objection issues on January 27, 2020, the Regional Forester found that the final environmental impact statement, the land management plan, the draft record of decision, and the associated planning record addressed most concerns raised through objections. He also found the land management plan revision documents are in compliance with current law, regulation, and policy. The written response on the administrative review was the final decision by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As part of the written response, the Regional Forester also provided me with instruction to add rationale in errata to the final environmental impact statement, define and describe actions more

clearly in the land management plan and record of decision, and remove and modify some plan components in the land management plan. See appendix B in this decision for the changes to the final environmental impact statement and land management plan. Changes to the record of decision were incorporated into this document.

I completed all of the Regional Forester's instructions prior to finalizing this record of decision. All modifications fall within the effects considered across the range of alternatives, and consider all sides of the issues identified in previous comment periods and during the objections process.

Modifications Made in Response to Objections and Instructions

Environmental Impact Statement and Land Management Plan Changes in Response to Instructions by the Regional Forester

I modified the final environmental impact statement (through errata), the final land management plan, this record of decision, and the planning record in response to instructions by the Regional Forester. Modifications include deleting, editing, and adding plan components and clarifying language.

Changes to the final environmental impact statement and land management plan include the following paragraphs.

Changes to the Environmental Impact Statement

- Through an errata to this record of decision (in appendix B), changes were made to chapters 1 and 3 of the final environmental impact statement to address the decision to remove references to llamas (or lamas) as potential vectors for the transfer of pathogens to Dall sheep or mountain goats. The Regional Forester found that the references to llamas in the final environmental impact statement were not easily identified by the reader as llama was misspelled as "lama." Also, he found that the final environmental impact statement lacked rationale as to why llamas were the only domestic livestock species, aside from sheep and goats, identified as a potential vector for transmission of pathogens to Dall sheep and mountain goats. Due to this lack of documentation, the Regional Forester directed me to complete an errata to remove from the final environmental impact statement references to llamas as a potential vector for the transfer of pathogens to Dall sheep or mountain goats.
- As scientific literature addressing the prevalence and pathogen transmission dynamics for South American camelid pathogens becomes available, I may choose to revisit this issue through another public process.

Changes to the Land Management Plan

- Typographical errors, number inconsistencies, and misspellings were corrected throughout the land management plan. These are not listed separately in the changes in appendix B of this decision. An example of the type of change is on page 4, where Canyon Creek was misspelled Cannon Creek; this is corrected in the final land management plan.
- Modified forestwide standard FW-WLGOAT-S-2 to remove the word "llama" due to the Regional Forester concerns regarding the misspelling of "lama" and the final environmental impact statement lack of rationale as to why llamas were the only domestic livestock species, aside from sheep and goats, identified as a potential vector for transmitting pathogens to Dall sheep and mountain goats.

- Replaced several Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area standards and guidelines referencing the need to complete “minimum requirements analyses” with guidelines that apply the minimum requirement concept. The terminology “minimum requirement analysis” was removed from the final land management plan after the Regional Forester clarified his interpretation of the Forest Service Manual R-10 Supplement 2300-2008-2. In an April 4, 2019, memo to the Chugach National Forest, the Regional Forester stated that the intent of Forest Service Manual R-10 Supplement 2300-2008-2 is not to manage the wilderness study area as if it is congressionally designated wilderness. He directed the Chugach National Forest to follow section 2320.3 of this supplement, which states the policy for wilderness study areas is to maintain presently existing character and potential for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Regional Forester further directed the Chugach National Forest to follow direction provided for designated wilderness areas “only to the extent necessary to maintain presently existing character and to preserve the area’s potential for designation as wilderness.” The Nellie Juan- College Fiord Wilderness Study Area is not designated wilderness, and therefore there is no legal requirement to complete a minimum requirements analysis for activities in the wilderness study area.
- Removed the management approach SA-INHT-MAP, related to building new sections of trail that parallel the primary route of the Iditarod National Historic Trail within the highway right-of-way and that these trail sections would not be recommended for inclusion as part of the Iditarod National Historic Trail. Removal of this management approach was requested by the State of Alaska.
- Added a Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area objective to define the presently existing character of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area within one year of land management plan approval.
- Updated language regarding the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill (EVOS)-acquired lands to be consistent with direction from the Regional Forester to clarify that the management of the EVOS-acquired lands is constrained by the conveyance documents and conservation easements consistent with the conservation easements.
- Updated the glossary with the definitions for National Historic Trail and recreation opportunity spectrum term semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed).

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

National Environmental Policy Act regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives that were considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act regulations define an environmentally preferable alternative as: “the alternative that best promotes the national environmental policy as expressed in the Act’s section 101. Ordinarily, the environmentally preferable alternative is that which causes the least harm to the biological and physical environment; it also is the alternative which best protects and preserves historic, cultural, and natural resources” (36 CFR 220.3).

I find, based upon the laws and regulations guiding National Forest System management, that alternative D is the environmentally preferred alternative. The main difference between the alternatives is the amount of wilderness recommended, and alternative D recommends the most acreage for wilderness designation. This is the primary basis for my determination. Should Congress designate wilderness, it would impose statutory protections for the biological and physical environment and historic, cultural, and natural resources on the ground. More acres would fall under this statutory protection with alternative D, making it the environmentally preferred alternative.

Within the selected alternative, modified alternative C, all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from this alternative have been adopted. Through the selected alternative's desired conditions, standards, guidelines, goals, and management strategies, environmental harm is minimized. Through the land management monitoring program, the effectiveness of minimizing impacts will be reviewed periodically as required by the 2012 Planning Rule.

Best Available Scientific Information

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the responsible official to document how the best available scientific information was used to inform the assessment, the plan decision, and the monitoring program. Such documentation must identify what information was determined to be the best available scientific information, explain the basis for that determination, and explain how the information was applied to the issues considered.

I have reviewed the science used to develop the assessment, the final land management plan decision, and the monitoring program. I find the best available scientific information was used.

Assessment Phase

The Forest Service prepared an Assessment of the Ecological and Socio-Economic Conditions and Trends Chugach National Forest, Alaska, in compliance with provisions of the 2012 Planning Rule as outlined in 36 CFR 219, and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. The assessment summarized existing information about the ecological, economic, and social conditions and trends within the context of the broader landscape, and their relationship to the 2002 Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended). The assessment identified relevant information that informed the preliminary need to change the 2002 Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Scientific review was provided by the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station to insure the most relevant scientific information was used (assessment, page 18).

The assessment provided the foundation for development of plan components, environmental analysis, and the monitoring program. The best available scientific information used in the assessment is described in chapter 1 of the assessment. In addition to the best available scientific information, the assessment included provisions of the 2012 Planning Rule, annual Chugach National Forest monitoring reports, and public engagement and collaboration feedback, as well as planning and land use policies of federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other federal agencies, and state and local governments where relevant. Information from the assessment was updated and augmented throughout the planning process; for example, the final environmental impact statement was updated with new information from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Planning Phase

The following list summarizes, but is not fully inclusive of, the science used to develop the final land management plan and environmental impact statement. Citations in the environmental impact statement are used to link findings to the best available scientific information used in the analysis.

- Science related to disturbance processes, which informed analysis of all resources and guided development of plan components, is summarized in the first two sections of chapter 3 of the environmental impact statement.

- Projected trends from the 2017 Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment for the Chugach National Forest and the Kenai Peninsula are summarized in chapter 3 of the environmental impact statement. This peer reviewed publication addresses ecological and socio-economic effects of changing climate, including glacial recession.
- Forest Service scientists from the forest health protection staff contributed information on the status and trends of forest insects and diseases.
- A biological assessment and biological evaluation were prepared according to agency standards.
- Informal consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service on the endangered fin whale, endangered Cook Inlet beluga whale, humpback whale, and Steller sea lion resulted in the National Marine Fisheries Service’s concurrence with the Forest Service’s “not likely to adversely affect” determinations for these species.
- Documentation supporting the Regional Forester’s selection of species of conservation concern is in the planning record and available on request. This information was used to develop plan components for the species of conservation concern and analyze the environmental consequences of the alternatives.
- Information from the Forest Service Watershed Condition Framework was used to develop plan components and identify priority watersheds.
- The National Landcover Database, National Wetlands Inventory, and forest-level plant community classification were used to develop plan components for vegetation and analyze effects of alternatives. Trends related to disturbance processes such as glacial recession, mortality from forest insects and diseases, and human-caused fire were considered.
- Results from the Forest Service’s National Visitor Use Monitoring Program informed development of plan components related to recreation and analysis of the alternatives.
- An economic contribution analysis estimated how the Chugach National Forest contributes to regional employment and labor income. The 2016 Economic Impact Analysis for Planning (IMPLAN) modeling system was used to estimate the economic contributions.
- The minerals analysis employed the most recent U.S. Geological Survey maps of mineral potential (2016–17).
- Documentation of science supporting the selection of each monitoring question and associated indicators is included in the planning record and is available on request.
- Documentation from monitoring and evaluation reports completed for the 2002 land management plan were used to inform the assessment process.

Monitoring Program

The monitoring questions and associated indicators found in the land management plan monitoring program were developed using best available scientific information for each of the eight required categories identified in the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)). The “Planning Phase” section above identifies the best available scientific information sources used to develop both the land management plan components and the monitoring program questions and associated indicators.

Research Station Director Concurrence

The Pacific Northwest Research Station completed the science review of the Socioeconomic Modeling and Analysis of the Draft Chugach Land and Resource Management Plan¹⁰ and analysis of plan components for research natural areas. The research station's review team followed the science review process outlined in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.12). Science reviews, in general, focus on four primary areas relevant to the land management planning process and decision documents:

- Has the applicable scientific information been considered?
- Is the scientific information interpreted reasonably and accurately?
- Are the uncertainties associated with the information acknowledged and documented?
- Have the relevant consequences, including risks and uncertainties, been identified and documented?

The Acting Station Director found the “socioeconomic modeling and analysis in support of the Chugach National Forest land management plan was adequate in terms of the consideration and interpretation of available scientific information and tools given the range of actions in the forest plan alternatives under consideration.”

Findings Required by Laws and Executive Orders

The Forest Service manages the Chugach National Forest in conformance with many laws and regulations. I have considered the statutes specific to individual resources as described in the final environmental impact statement, and I find that this decision meets our obligations to the current statutory duties of the Forest Service. Following are summaries of how the final land management plan addresses the relevant laws and regulations.

Acts of Congress

Accessibility Acts

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 and 508 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 has incorporated accessibility requirements into the final land management plan and associated documentation.

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act

The land management plan adheres to all of the requirements in ANILCA. The sections listed here are included to respond to specific concerns expressed during comment and objection periods and do not represent the only sections of ANILCA that apply to or will be implemented by the Chugach National Forest.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 2019. Socioeconomic modeling and analysis of the draft Chugach land and resource management plan. Unpublished report. Available upon request at the Chugach National Forest Supervisor's Office, 161 East 1st Avenue, Door 8, Anchorage, Alaska, 99501.

ANILCA Section 101(d) Purposes

ANILCA Section 101(d) states that the Act provides sufficient protection for the national interest in scenic, natural, cultural and environmental values on public lands in Alaska while balancing adequate opportunity for economic and social needs of the State of Alaska and its people. Congress believes that the need for future legislation designating new conservation system units, new national conservations areas, or new national recreation areas has been obviated thereby. This section of ANILCA provides important congressional determinations, findings, and information and was considered in making my final recommendations and decisions. By implementing and abiding by the provisions of ANILCA, the plan will meet the requirements of 101(d) by providing protection of scenic, natural, cultural, and environmental values on the Chugach National Forest while also providing opportunities to satisfy economic and social needs.

ANILCA Section 501b 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) shall be the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats. I assigned these lands to Management Area 5 ANILCA 501(b) Areas. In addition to the forestwide and geographic area plan components for conservation of fish and wildlife, I ensured that the intent of ANILCA Section 501(b) is met through the provision of additional plan components specific to Management Area 5 ANILCA 501(b) Areas. These include desired conditions to protect fish and wildlife species and their habitat, restrictions on the circumstances under which recreation or administrative infrastructure may be built, and a guideline limiting use of motorized equipment for purposes other than conservation of fish and wildlife.

ANILCA Section 704 Designation of Wilderness Study Area within the National Forest System

ANILCA Section 704 requires the Secretary of Agriculture to review public lands within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area and submit recommendations to the President and Congress regarding the suitability of the lands for wilderness area designation. The report was completed in 1985 and explains that until Congress has acted on the recommendations, the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area will be managed so as to maintain its presently existing character. The 2002 land management plan record of decision updated the wilderness recommendation within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area. My recommendation to include about 1.4 million acres of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area in the National Wilderness Preservation System is the same as what was recommended in the 2002 land management plan record of decision and provides an update to acreages and current conditions within the (wilderness study area) boundaries of the 2002 recommendation. This meets ANILCA Section 704 requirements for a “recommendation as to the suitability or non-suitability of all areas within such wilderness study boundaries for preservation of wilderness.”

ANILCA Section 708(b)(4) RARE II Release

ANILCA Section 708(b)(4) states that 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. The final land management plan is consistent with ANILCA because it is a forest-specific plan and is not a statewide review and evaluation of lands suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Section 708(b)(4) includes a finding of “adequate consideration” for the initial land management plan developed after ANILCA was enacted, but it does not prohibit additional evaluations occurring in conjunction with land management plan revisions at a scale smaller than statewide. The 2012 Planning Rule requires the Chugach National Forest to identify and evaluate lands for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation

System (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)(v) and Forest Service Manual 1923.04c), the National Wild and Scenic River System (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)(vi), and Forest Service Manual 1924.04(d).

ANILCA Section 810 Subsistence Uses

Subsistence use evaluation and determination is not required for land management plan approval. Land management plans are programmatic-level decisions and are not a determination whether to “withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise permit the use, occupancy, or disposition” of National Forest System lands. However, a forestwide evaluation and determination is included in chapter 3 of the final environmental impact statement to facilitate future project-level planning and decision making in compliance with ANILCA Section 810.

I concur with the analysis in chapter 3 of the final environmental impact statement and find that implementation of the selected alternative will not result in a significant restriction of subsistence uses. Forestwide plan components, including standards and guidelines and management area plan components, reflect the policies of Title VIII of ANILCA. To maintain the federal rural priority of fish and game for qualified rural Alaska residents and in response to public comments, a desired condition and management approach provide for the local line officer to consider and potentially issue outfitting and guiding special use authorizations for fishing and hunting in the western portion of the Copper River Delta (Game Management Unit 6C).

ANILCA Section 1326(b) Future Executive Actions

ANILCA Section 1326(b) states that 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 final land management plan is consistent with this section of ANILCA because it is a general land management plan and not a single purpose study. Land management plans guide sustainable, integrated resource management of the resources within the plan area in the context of the broader landscape, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas (36 CFR 219.1(b)).

Clean Air Act

The overall level of activities proposed under this decision is not anticipated to degrade air quality or violate State of Alaska air quality implementation plans. This finding is based on information presented in the final environmental impact statement. No communities within or directly adjacent to the Chugach National Forest are classified by the Environmental Protection Agency as non-attainment areas or maintenance areas. More detailed air quality impact analyses will be made at subsequent levels of planning, where emissions can be more accurately quantified and reasonably forecasted and local impacts assessed. The final land management plan includes a desired condition that “prescribed burning on National Forest System lands is coordinated with the State of Alaska. Smoke from prescribed burning is short in duration and meets State of Alaska standards.”

Clean Water Act

Implementation of the final land management plan is expected to maintain and improve water quality and satisfy all State of Alaska water quality requirements. I base this finding on the standards and guidelines in the final land management plan, the application of approved “best management practices” specifically designed to protect water quality, and the discussion of water quality and beneficial uses contained in chapter 3 of the final environmental impact statement. Additionally, project-level analysis for subsequent activities implemented under the final land management plan will be required to demonstrate compliance with Clean Water Act and State of Alaska water quality standards.

Endangered Species Act

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act requires all federal agencies to ensure that agency actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed species, or adversely modify designated critical habitat.

Four federally listed species are known to occur within the Chugach National Forest plan area. All four species fall under the jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service. The Forest Service submitted a biological assessment to National Marine Fisheries Service on April 8, 2019, and requested their concurrence with the biological assessment's "not likely to adversely affect" determinations. We also requested informal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act on the endangered fin whale, endangered Cook Inlet beluga whale, humpback whale, and Steller sea lion.

Based on the early coordination and pre-consultation communication, the land management plan includes plan components to address National Marine Fisheries Service concerns and meet National Marine Fisheries Service species recovery plans including:

- General mitigation measures for marine mammal viewing to protect fin whale, Cook Inlet beluga whale, humpback whale, and Steller sea lions from disturbance or collision.
- Seasonal special use authorization restrictions in Twentymile River and other waters to protect seasonally important foraging habitat for the Cook Inlet beluga whale.
- Protection of National Marine Fisheries Service designated critical habitat for the Cook Inlet beluga whale.
- Mitigation of effects to Steller sea lion critical habitat, rookeries, and haulouts.

On June 21, 2019, the National Marine Fisheries Service concurred with the Chugach National Forest determination that the proposed action may affect, but is "not likely to adversely affect," fin whales, Cook Inlet distinct population segment beluga whales, western distinct population segment Steller sea lions, or Mexico or western North Pacific distinct population segment humpback whales. I find that the final land management plan is fully compliant with the Endangered Species Act.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act states that all federal agencies must consult the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service for actions or proposed actions that may adversely affect essential fish habitat. The Act promotes the protection of essential fish habitat through project review, assessment, and mitigation of activities that may adversely affect these habitats.

The final environmental impact statement includes an analysis of essential fish habitat to determine if the actions or proposed actions considered in the land management plan revision would have an adverse effect on essential fish habitat. The analysis concluded that the land management plan does not authorize any specific project or actions that would reduce quality and/or quantity of essential fish habitat or contribute to any effects that may include direct or indirect physical, chemical, or biological alterations of the waters or substrate and loss of, or injury to, benthic organisms, prey species and their habitat, and other ecosystem components. Future project activities designed to implement the final land management plan that may adversely affect essential fish habitat will go through consultation in accordance with the Act. I find that the final land management plan is fully compliant with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act

The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act requires National Forest System lands to be administered to provide for multiple uses such as recreation, timber, watersheds, wildlife, and fisheries. The final land management plan establishes a strong multiple-use framework by providing plan components related to ecosystem structure, process, and function; wildlife and fisheries; recreation; traditional and cultural resources; forest products; special uses; mining and minerals extraction; and energy transmission and development. I find that the land management plan is fully compliant with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act.

National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental and social effects of implementing federal actions. 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 the Act (40 CFR 1500–1508). These include (1) considering a range of reasonable alternatives, (2) disclosing cumulative effects, (3) insuring the integrated use of the natural and social sciences, (4) considering long-term and short-term effects, and (5) disclosing unavoidable adverse effects.

The final environmental impact statement considers a range of alternatives, including four alternatives considered in detail and four additional alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study (see chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement). Alternatives were developed and revised based on public input and comment, including consultation with Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, State of Alaska, local governments, and other federal agencies. The final environmental impact statement discloses cumulative effects of each alternative by evaluating past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the plan area. Although non-federal lands are outside the scope of this decision, effects from their use have been considered in the environmental impact statement to a degree appropriate for a programmatic environmental analysis document at this scale. The final environmental impact statement also makes use of the best available scientific information. This use has been reviewed by the Pacific Northwest Research Station 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. The best available scientific literature was used to help estimate environmental consequences.

The final land management plan adopts all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm, including plan components to provide the ecological conditions needed to support biological diversity and standards and guidelines to mitigate adverse environmental effects that may result from implementing various management practices. The final land management plan includes a monitoring program and an adaptive management approach to allow flexibility to make needed adjustments over the plan period.

My decision does not directly authorize any ground-disturbing activities or projects. Future ground-disturbing activities and projects must be consistent with the final land management plan and are subject to additional site-specific public involvement, environmental analysis, and pre-decisional review processes. The final land management plan is fully compliant with the National Environmental Policy Act and Council on Environmental Quality implementing regulations.

National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act requires the development, maintenance, amendment, and revision of land management plans for each unit of the National Forest System. Under the Act, the Forest Service is to ensure coordination of the multiple uses and sustained yield of products and services of the National Forest System.

The National Forest Management Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate regulations for developing and maintaining land management plans. On April 9, 2012, the Department of Agriculture issued a Final Planning Rule for National Forest System land management planning (36 CFR 219; refer to the Federal Register at 77 FR 68, pages 21162–21276).

My review of the planning process, the final environmental impact statement, and the information provided in this record of decision (see sections titled “Rationale for the Decision” and “Requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule”) document that the final land management plan and its preparation meet requirements for revising land management plans under the provisions of the 2012 Planning Rule, and is fully compliant with the National Forest Management Act.

National Historic Preservation Act

Alaska’s State Historic Preservation Officer reviewed the draft land management plan and found no potential for the land management plan to affect cultural resources. The State Historic Preservation Officer stated that the revised plan adequately addressed the Forest Service’s responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act and that further consultation on the land management plan was not required, as the land management plan is administrative direction rather than physical alteration of the landscape that could have the potential to affect cultural and historic sites. Therefore, I find that the final land management plan fully complies with the National Historic Preservation Act.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

As stated in Revision Topic 1: Land Allocations, this Act establishes a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with three classifications of rivers: wild, scenic, and recreational. The purpose of the act is to protect the designated rivers “for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations” and to preserve the rivers’ free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires an evaluation of eligible wild, scenic, or recreational rivers in land management planning. During the revision process, the team completed the 2015 Wild and Scenic Rivers Evaluation; they reviewed over 760 named rivers and found that there were no changed circumstances that would alter the suitability of the identified rivers in the 2002 land management plan. The evaluation and analysis resulted in the nine suitable river segments (82.4 miles total) that I am recommending for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (see map 4 in appendix A of this decision and table 33 of appendix E in the final land management plan).

Management Area 2 Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers in the final land management plan provides plan components for the protection of free-flowing conditions and the outstandingly remarkable values identified for the eligible segments of rivers on the Chugach National Forest. Therefore, the final land management plan is compliant with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Only suitable river segments can be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Childs Glacier was determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System based on the outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, and geologic feature values; however, the suitability analysis has not been completed. To maintain the eligibility of Childs Glacier, I have included it in Management Area 2 Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers but have not recommended it for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Wilderness Act

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be administered in such a manner as to leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. It provides the statutory definition of wilderness, how areas are assessed for addition to the wilderness system, and management requirements for congressionally designated areas.

As stated in Revision Topic 1: Land Allocations, the evaluation of the existing Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area in the final environmental impact statement led to the acres recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System in this record of decision. The final land management plan provides direction for the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area through plan components that preserves the presently existing wilderness character in Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area. Therefore, the revised land management plan is compliant with this act.

Rules

Roadless Area Conservation Rule

Management direction for inventoried roadless areas is compliant with the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B, published at 66 FR 3244-3273). The 2001 Roadless Conservation Rule includes a prohibition on road construction and road reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas and prohibitions on timber cutting, sale, or removal except in certain circumstances. The land management plan is a programmatic-level planning effort and does not directly authorize any road construction, reconstruction, or timber removal. Therefore, the land management plan is fully compliant with this Rule.

Travel Management Rule

The final rule for Travel Management: Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use (commonly referred to as the 2005 Travel Management Rule), implements provisions of Executive Orders 11644 and 11989, to address the use of off-road motor vehicles on federal lands. Regulations implementing this Rule are found at 36 CFR 212. The portion of the rule pertaining to motor vehicle use is Subpart B; the portion of the Rule pertaining to motorized over-snow vehicle use is Subpart C, which was updated in January 2015.

Prior to this plan revision, the Chugach National Forest designated specific roads, areas, and trails for the use of motor vehicles (including off-road vehicles), and displayed these routes on [Motor Vehicle Use Maps \(https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/maps-pubs/?cid=STELPRDB5346707\)](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/maps-pubs/?cid=STELPRDB5346707) as required by 36 CFR 212 Subpart B. The Chugach National Forest completed 2007 Kenai Winter Access Record of Decision, which shows over-snow vehicle use on the Kenai Peninsula and this decision carries forward motorized and non-motorized vehicle use decisions in the 2002 land management plan as required by 36 CFR 212 Subpart C. This programmatic plan decision does not authorize additional motor vehicle use, or prohibit existing motor vehicles uses, therefore the Motor Vehicle Use Maps remain unchanged.

Executive Orders

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

As required by Executive Order 12898, all federal actions must consider potentially disproportionate effects on minority or low-income communities (also known as environmental justice populations). Land management plans are strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. These plans do not create, authorize, or execute any ground-

disturbing activity, although they do provide for the consideration of certain types of activities. Future site-specific activities will consider potential disproportionate effects on minority or low-income communities during project planning.

Analysis in the “Social and Economic Contribution” section of the final environmental impact statement did not identify any disproportionate impacts resulting from the proposed management direction for the Chugach National Forest because a wide range of opportunities, activities, and services are offered. There are no changes to the availability and access to subsistence resources. Therefore, there are no anticipated effects to minority or low-income populations. In addition, collaboration on the final land management plan with local agencies and members of the public did not identify any concerns regarding disproportionate impacts to minority or low-income populations.

Floodplains and Wetlands (Executive Orders 11988 and 11990)

Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 require federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, short- and long-term effects resulting from the occupancy and modification of floodplains, and the modification or destruction of wetlands. The final land management plan provides forestwide standards and guidelines for soil and water, wetlands, and riparian areas to minimize effects to floodplains and wetlands. Additionally, project-level analysis for subsequent activities under the final land management plan will be required to demonstrate compliance with the Clean Water Act and State of Alaska water quality standards.

Safeguarding the Nation from the Impacts of Invasive Species (Executive Orders 13112 and 13751)

Executive Order 13112 of February 3, 1999 (Invasive Species), called upon executive departments and agencies to take steps to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species, and to support efforts to eradicate and control invasive species that are established. Executive Order 13751 amends Executive Order 13112 and directs actions to continue coordinated federal prevention and control efforts related to invasive species. This Executive Order maintains the National Invasive Species Council and the Invasive Species Advisory Committee; expands the membership of the National Invasive Species Council; clarifies the operations of the National Invasive Species Council; incorporates considerations of human and environmental health, climate change, technological innovation, and other emerging priorities into federal efforts to address invasive species; and strengthens coordinated, cost-efficient federal action.

The final land management plan provides forestwide plan components, including desired conditions, objectives, and guidelines to prevent or minimize the establishment or spread of invasive species.

Additionally, project-level analysis for subsequent activities implemented under the final land management plan must be consistent with the final land management plan. The final land management plan includes monitoring questions to track the effectiveness of the plan components related to invasive species.

Effective Date

The Chugach National Forest final land management plan will become effective 30 calendar days after publication of the notice of the approval of this final record of decision in the Federal Register (36 CFR 219.17(a), 2012 Planning Rule).

Plan Implementation

Existing Authorizations

Authorizations for occupancy and use made before this plan goes into effect may proceed unchanged until time of reauthorization. At time of reauthorization, all permits, contracts, and other authorizing instruments must be made consistent with the final land management plan, subject to existing valid rights, as provided at 36 CFR 219.15(d).

Project Consistency

As required by National Forest Management Act and the 2012 Planning Rule, subject to valid existing rights, all projects and activities authorized by the Forest Service after approval of this land management plan must be consistent with the applicable plan components (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)) as described at 36 CFR 219.15.

Previously approved and ongoing projects and activities, where initiation date preceded approval of the final land management plan, are not required to meet the direction of the final land management plan and will remain consistent with the direction in the 2002 land management plan, as amended.

With the exception of previously approved and ongoing projects mentioned in the paragraph above, projects and activities authorized after approval of the final land management plan must be consistent with the plan components of the final land management plan. After the effective date of the final land management plan, all project or activity approval documents prepared will describe how the project or activity is consistent with the applicable plan components. When a proposed project or activity would not be consistent with the applicable plan components, the responsible official shall take one of the following steps, subject to valid existing rights:

1. Modify the proposed project or activity to make it consistent with the applicable plan components.
2. Reject the proposal or terminate the project or activity.
3. Amend the plan so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended.
4. Amend the plan contemporaneously with the approval of the project or activity so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended. This amendment may be limited to apply only to the project or activity.

Resource plans developed by the Chugach National Forest (such as the travel management plan) that apply to the resources or land areas within the plan area must be consistent with the plan components of the final land management plan. Resource plans developed prior to this decision must be evaluated for consistency with the final land management plan and updated, if necessary, to be consistent with the final land management plan. Updates to the travel management plan, or any other resource plan, will tier to the goals, desired conditions, and objectives of the final land management plan.

Maintaining the Plan

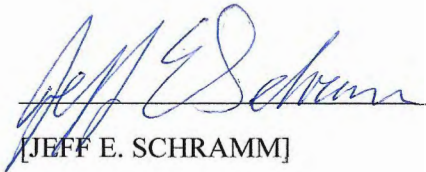
A land management plan is an integral part of an adaptive management cycle including assessment, plan revision or amendment, and monitoring. This adaptive management cycle will enable the Chugach National Forest to identify and respond to changing conditions, changing public desires, and new information, such as that obtained through research and scientific findings. The final land management plan monitoring program is an integral part of this adaptive management cycle.

A land management plan may be amended at any time based on a preliminary identification of the need to change the plan. The preliminary identification of the need to change the plan may be based on a new assessment, land management plan monitoring, or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances. The amendment and administrative change process is described at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(2) of the 2012 Planning Rule.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision, please contact David Fitz-Enz, Chugach National Forest Planner; 161 East 1st Ave., Door 8, Anchorage, AK 99501; (907) 743 9595; david.fitz-enz@usda.gov.

Signature and Date



[JEFF E. SCHRAMM]

Forest Supervisor
Chugach National Forest

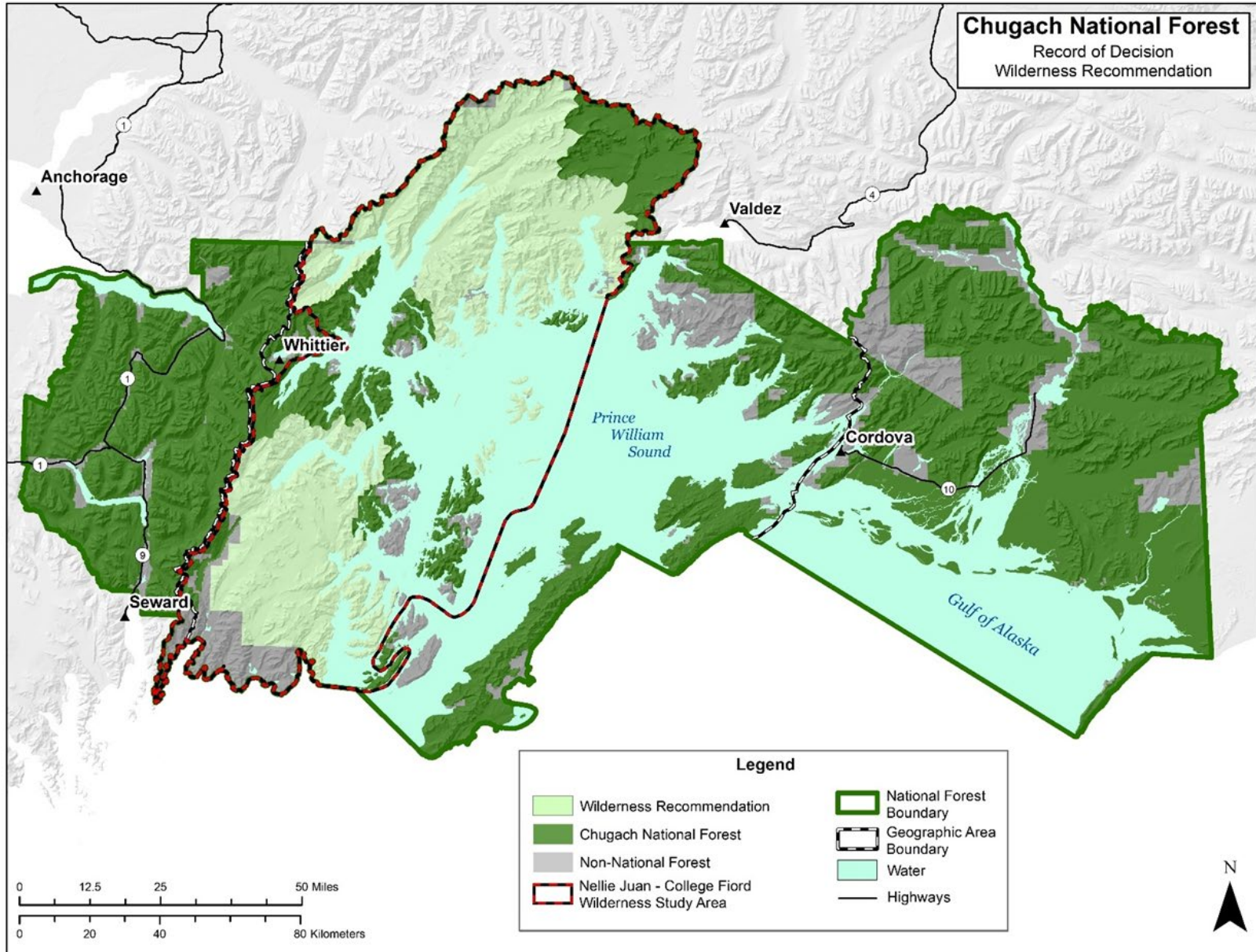
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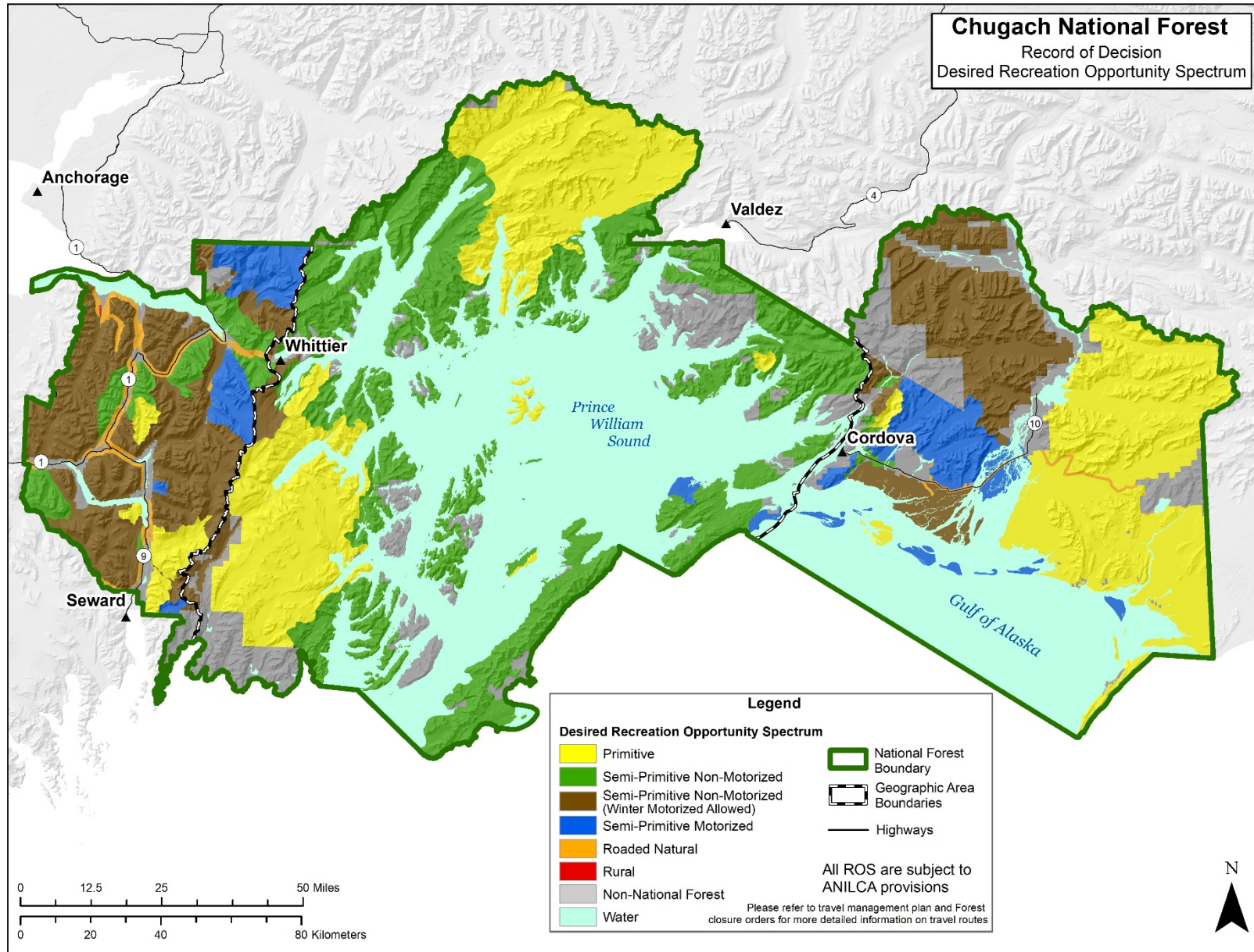
Appendix A – Maps

This appendix to the record of decision consists of the following maps:

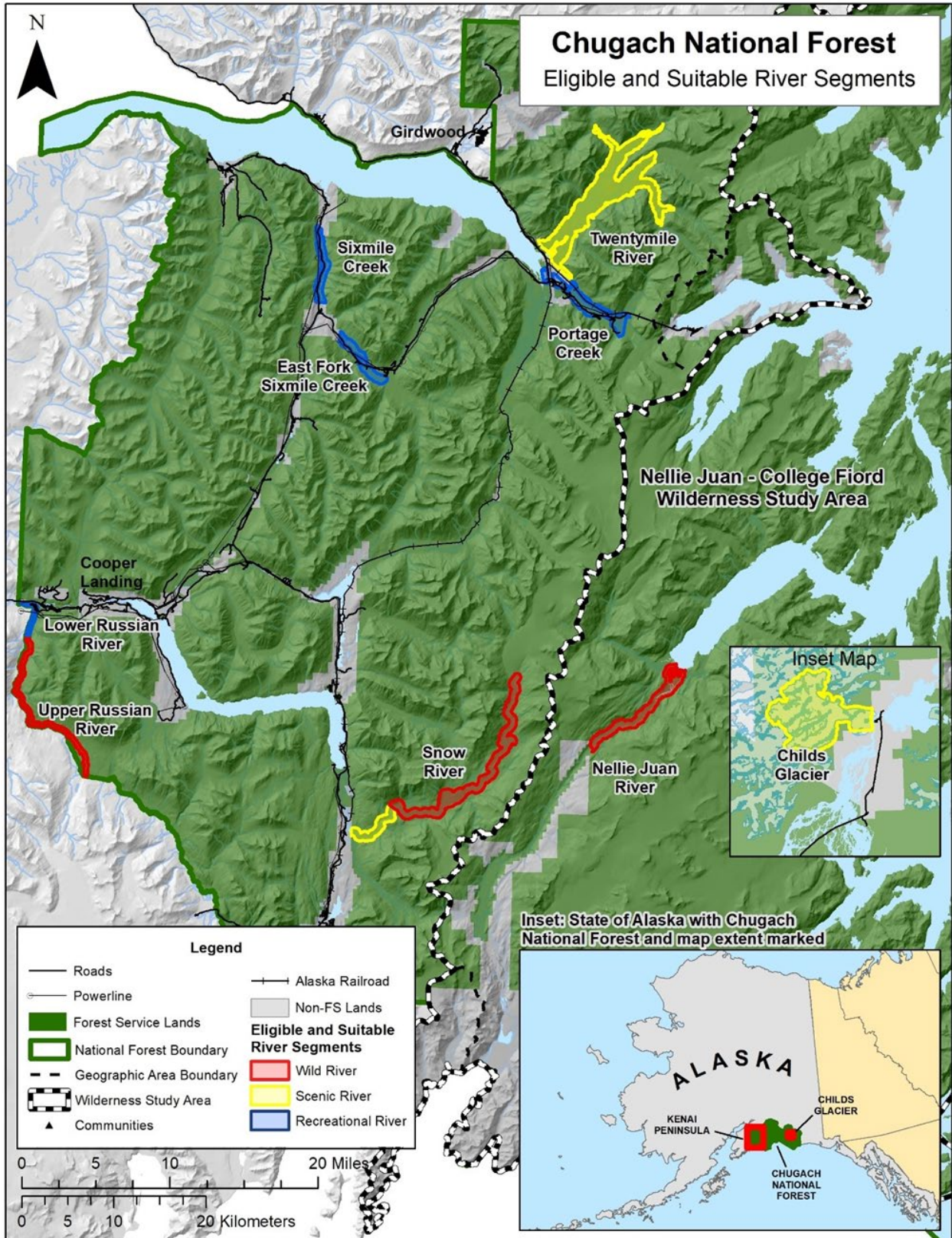
- Record of Decision – Wilderness Recommendation
- Record of Decision – Desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
- Record of Decision – Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers



Map 2. Record of decision – wilderness recommendation



Map 3. Record of decision – desired recreation opportunity spectrum



Map 4. Record of decision – river segments of the Chugach National Forest deemed suitable and recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. Note: Childs Glacier is deemed eligible so has not been recommended but is part of Management Area 2 Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers.

Appendix B – Changes

This appendix to the record of decision consists of changes to the final environmental impact statement and final land management plan made between August 30, 2019 and February 2020. Many of these changes were required by the Regional Forester to respond to objections. In addition, typographical errors, number inconsistencies, and misspellings were corrected throughout the land management plan. These corrections are not listed in this appendix. An example of this type of change is on page 4, where Canyon Creek was misspelled Cannon Creek; this is corrected in the final land management plan.

Errata for the Final Environmental Impact Statement

This section lists the corrections (known as errata) to the 2019 Chugach Land and Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement. Errata are entered chronologically by chapter and page number from the electronic final environmental impact statement.

Final Environmental Impact Statement Volume 1

Chapter 1

Page 13: Changes between the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements – Chapter 3 – Terrestrial Wildlife and Habitats

Update this section:

Updates to text were made for clarification purposes in response to comments. The Threats to Abundance, Distribution, or Persistence section was updated. The text on domestic goats, sheep, or lamas was updated.

With this section:

Updates to text were made for clarification purposes in response to comments. The Threats to Abundance, Distribution, or Persistence section was updated.

Chapter 3

Pages 439–440: Effects to Key Wildlife Species – Dall Sheep (*Ovis dalli*)

Update this section:

Since Dall sheep, mountain goats, or both are present within most areas of the national forest regularly used for land based recreational activities, the potential for contact with domestic pack animals is substantial (see table 115). Even a single contact with infected domestic sheep or goats carries the risk of irreparable harm to all interconnected native Dall sheep and mountain goat populations, making it imperative that the Forest Service implement measures to prevent such contact. Personnel conducting Forest Service management actions or authorized activities (employees, contractors, cooperators, special use permit holders) shall not use or keep domestic goats, sheep, or lamas on National Forest System lands within the Chugach National Forest. This measure is designed to maintain separation of Dall sheep and mountain goats from domestic livestock and to reduce the risk of wild herds becoming infected with *M. ovi*, a primary pathogen believed to be responsible for epizootic pneumonia (WAFWA 2017).

With this section:

Since Dall sheep, mountain goats, or both are present within most areas of the national forest regularly used for land based recreational activities, the potential for contact with domestic pack animals is

substantial (see table 115). Even a single contact with infected domestic sheep or goats carries the risk of irreparable harm to all interconnected native Dall sheep and mountain goat populations, making it imperative that the Forest Service implement measures to prevent such contact. Personnel conducting Forest Service management actions or authorized activities (employees, contractors, cooperators, special use permit holders) shall not use or keep domestic goats or sheep on National Forest System lands within the Chugach National Forest. This measure is designed to maintain separation of Dall sheep and mountain goats from domestic livestock and to reduce the risk of wild herds becoming infected with *M. ovi*, a primary pathogen believed to be responsible for epizootic pneumonia (WAFWA 2017).

Page 442: Effects to Key Wildlife Species – Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*)

Update this section:

Concern over the potential for disease transmission from domestic goats and sheep to Dall sheep and mountain goats is growing in Alaska (Jex et al. 2016; TWS-AAWV 2015). Thinhorn sheep and mountain goats in Alaska and northwestern Canada have not been exposed to many pathogens commonly carried by domestic sheep species (Garde et al. 2005; Miller et al. 2008), but evidence suggests they are as sensitive as bighorn sheep to some respiratory pathogens (Jex et al. 2016).

Neither Dall sheep nor mountain goats in the Kenai and Chugach mountains have yet suffered from a major disease outbreak, but the prevalence of livestock on private lands adjacent to the national forest, and the use of domestic goats and other hooved mammals as pack animals increases the exposure risk (Schommer and Woolever 2008) and the probability of disease affecting wild sheep and goats over the entire Kenai Peninsula. Concern for disease transmission led the Alaska Board of Game to ban the use of domestic goats as pack animals while hunting wild sheep, mountain goats, or muskox. Since Dall sheep, mountain goats or both are present in most areas of the national forest regularly used for land based recreational activities, the potential for contact with domestic pack animals is substantial. Even a single contact with infected domestic sheep or goats carries the risk of irreparable harm to all interconnected Dall sheep and mountain goat populations, making it imperative that the Forest Service implement measures to prevent such contact. Personnel conducting Forest Service management actions or authorized activities (employees, contractors, cooperators, special use permit holders) shall not use or keep domestic goats, sheep or lammas on National Forest System lands within the Chugach National Forest. This measure is designed to maintain separation of Dall sheep and mountain goats from domestic livestock and reduce the risk of wild herds becoming infected with *M. ovi*, the primary pathogen believe responsible for epizootic pneumonia (WAFWA 2017).

With this section:

Concern over the potential for disease transmission from domestic goats and sheep to Dall sheep and mountain goats is growing in Alaska (Jex et al. 2016; TWS-AAWV 2015). Thinhorn sheep and mountain goats in Alaska and northwestern Canada have not been exposed to many pathogens commonly carried by domestic sheep species (Garde et al. 2005; Miller et al. 2008), but evidence suggests they are as sensitive as bighorn sheep to some respiratory pathogens (Jex et al. 2016).

Neither Dall sheep nor mountain goats in the Kenai and Chugach mountains have yet suffered from a major disease outbreak, but the prevalence of livestock on private lands adjacent to the national forest, and the use of domestic goats and other hooved mammals as pack animals increases the exposure risk (Clifford et al. 2009) and the probability of disease affecting wild sheep and goats over the entire Kenai Peninsula. Concern for disease transmission led the Alaska Board of Game to ban the use of domestic goats as pack animals while hunting wild sheep, mountain goats, or muskox. Since Dall sheep, mountain goats, or both are present in most areas of the national forest regularly used for land

based recreational activities, the potential for contact with domestic pack animals is substantial. Even a single contact with infected domestic sheep or goats carries the risk of irreparable harm to all interconnected Dall sheep and mountain goat populations, making it imperative that the Forest Service implement measures to prevent such contact. Personnel conducting Forest Service management actions or authorized activities (employees, contractors, cooperators, special use permit holders) shall not use or keep domestic goats or sheep on National Forest System lands within the Chugach National Forest. This measure is designed to maintain separation of Dall sheep and mountain goats from domestic livestock and reduce the risk of wild herds becoming infected with *M. ovi*, the primary pathogen believed responsible for epizootic pneumonia (WAFWA 2017).

References

Pages 413, 439, and 442

Replace in-text citation for (Schommer and Woolever 2008) with (Clifford et al. 2009).

Replace this reference:

Schommer, T.J.; Woolever, M.M. 2008. A review of disease related conflicts between domestic sheep and goats and bighorn sheep. Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-209. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 17 p.

With this reference

Clifford, D.L.; Schumaker, B.A.; Stephenson, T.R. [et al.]. 2009. Assessing disease risk at the wildlife–livestock interface: A study of Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. *Biological Conservation*. 142: 2559–2568. Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2009.06.001>.

Final Environmental Impact Statement Volume 2

Page 157: Ecological Sustainability – Wildlife

Update this section:

Response: National forests have a proclaimed boundary that surrounds the entire Forest and often includes lands and waters that are not owned or managed by the Forest Service. The standard prohibiting domestic goats, sheep, and llamas applies only to National Forest System lands within the Chugach National Forest as stated in the original language (draft land management plan page 69, #14). It does not apply to any other federal, state, tribal, or private lands located within or outside the boundaries of the Chugach National Forest.

With this section:

Response: National forests have a proclaimed boundary that surrounds the entire forest and often includes lands and waters that are not owned or managed by the Forest Service. The standard prohibiting domestic goats and sheep applies only to National Forest System lands within the Chugach National Forest as stated in the original language (draft land management plan, page 69, #14). It does not apply to any other federal, state, tribal, or private lands located within or outside the boundaries of the Chugach National Forest.

Page 158: Ecological Sustainability – Wildlife

Update this section:

Response: The land management plan guideline prohibiting domestic goats, sheep, and llamas on National Forest System lands applies only to activities authorized by the Forest Service through special use permits, contracts or agreements, and actions conducted by Forest Service personnel (draft

land management plan page 1, line 23). Any limitations on the public's use of domestic goats, sheep or lamas on National Forest System lands, and the manner in such limitations would be implemented will be addressed at a later time through development of a forest order (draft land management plan page 69, #14).

With this section:

Response: The land management plan guideline prohibiting domestic goats and sheep on National Forest System lands applies only to activities authorized by the Forest Service through special use permits, contracts or agreements, and actions conducted by Forest Service personnel (draft land management plan, page 1, line 23). Any limitations on the public's use of domestic goats and sheep on National Forest System lands, and the manner in such limitations would be implemented will be addressed at a later time through development of a forest order (draft land management plan, page 69, #14).

Changes between the 2019 Land Management Plan and the Final Land Management Plan

Changes made to the land management plan are identified below, by section and page number. These changes appear in the final land management plan. In addition, typographical errors, number inconsistencies, and misspellings were corrected throughout the land management plan. These corrections are not listed in this appendix. An example of this type of change is on page 4, where Canyon Creek was misspelled Cannon Creek; this is corrected in the final land management plan.

Final Land Management Plan

Forestwide Direction

Page 27: Invasive Species (INV), Desired Conditions

Updated this sentence:

There are no forestwide desired conditions for invasive species.

With this sentence:

The forestwide desired condition for invasive species is contained in FW-GL3-EPC-DC-5 (see Ecosystem Processes and Conditions).

Page 55: Wildlife Management (WL) Mountain Goats and Dall Sheep (Goat) – FW-WLGOAT-S-2

Modified forestwide standard FW-WLGOAT-S-2 to remove the word "llama" due to the Regional Forester concerns regarding the misspelling of "lama" and the final environmental impact statement lack of rationale as to why llamas were the only domestic livestock species, aside from sheep and goats, identified as a potential vector for transmitting pathogens to Dall sheep and mountain goats.

Updated this section:

2. Personnel conducting Forest Service management actions or authorized activities (employees, contractors, cooperators, and special use permit holders) shall not use or keep domestic goats, sheep, or lamas on National Forest System lands within the Chugach National Forest. [Standard]

With this section:

2. Personnel conducting Forest Service management actions or authorized activities (employees, contractors, cooperators, and special use permit holders) shall not use or keep domestic goats or sheep on National Forest System lands within the Chugach National Forest. [Standard]

Special Areas Direction

Pages 57–58: Special Areas Desired Conditions and Guidelines – Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT)

Removed the management approach SA-INHT-MAP, related to building new sections of trail that parallel the primary route of the Iditarod National Historic Trail within the highway right-of-way and that these trail sections would not be recommended for inclusion as part of the Iditarod National Historic Trail. Removal of this management approach was requested by the State of Alaska.

Management Areas Direction

Starting on Page 73: Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area

Replaced several Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area standards and guidelines referencing the need to complete “minimum requirements analyses” with guidelines that apply the minimum requirement concept. The terminology “minimum requirement analysis” was removed from the final land management plan after the Regional Forester clarified his interpretation of the Forest Service Manual R-10 Supplement 2300-2008-2. In an April 4, 2019, memo to the Chugach National Forest, the Regional Forester stated that the intent of Forest Service Manual R-10 Supplement 2300-2008-2 is not to manage the wilderness study area as if it is congressionally designated wilderness. He directed the Chugach National Forest to follow section 2320.3 of this supplement, which states the policy for wilderness study areas is to maintain presently existing character and potential for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Regional Forester further directed the Chugach National Forest to follow direction provided for designated wilderness areas “only to the extent necessary to maintain presently existing character and to preserve the area’s potential for designation as wilderness.” The Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area is not designated wilderness, and therefore there is no legal requirement to complete a minimum requirements analysis for activities in the wilderness study area.

Page 75: Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area – MA1-OBJ-3

Added a Management Area 1 Wilderness Study Area objective to define the presently existing character of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area within one year of land management approval.

Added Text:

3. Within 1 year of land management plan approval, define the presently existing character of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area.

Page 88: Management Area 6 EVOS-Acquired Lands – Management Area 6 (MA6) Management Intent

Updates were made to be consistent with direction from the Regional Forester. Language regarding Management Area 6 EVOS-Acquired Lands was updated to read:

This management area was developed to specify management direction for lands or interests acquired with EVOS Trustee Council funds. Purchase agreements and related documents for the sale, purchase, or protection of lands and interests in lands among the Chenega Corporation, Eyak Corporation, Tatitlek Corporation, the United States of America, and the State of Alaska contain specific covenants that apply to each protected property. These purchase agreements and related documents identify detailed management requirements.

Page 89: Management Area 6 EVOS-Acquired Lands – MA6 Standards (S) and Guidelines (G)

Management Area 6 EVOS-Acquired Lands standards and guidelines updates were made to be consistent with direction from the Regional Forester. Language regarding the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill-acquired lands was updated to read:

(MA6-S)

1. All lands shall be managed consistent with the terms and conditions of the conservation easements that encumber the lands and the reserved rights of the grantors from whom the United States acquired the lands. [Standard]
3. Construction of power generation and transmission lines, communication sites, and utility corridors shall not be authorized unless specifically needed to reasonably develop the subsurface estate. [Standard]

Page 142: Conditional in Management Area 6: EVOS-Acquired Lands

Updates were made to be consistent with direction from the Regional Forester. Language in appendix F regarding suitability of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill-acquired lands was updated to read:

NOTE: The first standard for Management Area 6: EVOS-Acquired Lands states: All lands shall be managed consistent with the rights acquired, recognizing the rights reserved in the conveyance documents and consistent with the conservation easements. [MA6-S-1 Standard]. These easements are the primary reason why many uses are “conditional.” For those uses that have easements, additional constraints are listed below. Check site-specific easement covenants before proposing projects in this management area.

Glossary

Added definitions of terms.

National Historic Trail: National Historic Trails recognize original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance including past routes of exploration, migration, and military action. These trails can only be designated by an Act of Congress.

Recreation opportunity spectrum terms

- **semi-primitive non-motorized (winter motorized allowed):** area is characterized by a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment of moderate to large size. Interaction between users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. The area is managed in such a way that minimum on-site controls and restrictions may be present, but would be subtle. Motorized recreation use is allowed in winter months. Motorized use may be permitted other times of the year as provided for in ANILCA (Section 811). Use of roads for other resource management activities may be present on a limited basis. Use of such roads is restricted to minimize impacts on recreational experience opportunities.