

governments, as well as other federal agencies (Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 3, Planning Principle #2). This is especially true where we share management responsibilities, such as wildlife. They will be consulted, using both formal and informal processes, as the Revised Forest Plan is implemented.

Comment 06: The bald eagle nest protection standard (Raptor Nest Protection Management) requires a 330-foot retention zone around known eagle nest locations. This does not meet the 1990 Interagency Agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service regarding bald eagles. This agreement requires a ¼ mile retention zone. The Forest has also failed to conduct any bald nest survey over the last 5 years.

Response: In Southcentral Alaska, the USF&WS commonly has recommended a 330-foot buffer zone around eagle nest trees. The 1990 Interagency Agreement between the Alaska Region of the Forest Service and the Alaska Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service states, “Establish and maintain a minimum five-chain (330’) radius habitat management zone around each bald eagle tree and restrict, where necessary, activities inconsistent with current bald eagle use within this zone”. The Raptor Nest Protection Management standard is in compliance with this requirement. The agreement also requires that helicopters avoid repeated flights within ¼ mile of eagle nests during logging. No helicopter logging is proposed under any alternative in the Revised Forest Plan.

Bald eagle surveys are conducted on the Forest every year. Forty-three active and inactive nests have been located since 1990. Both aerial and ground surveys are used. Aerial surveys are conducted in April and May to locate and differentiate active and inactive nests. Due to budget limitations, the area is divided into two survey areas that are flown in alternate years. Flights are followed by ground surveys to quantify nest tree parameters and assign individual U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identification numbers (USDA Forest Service 2000a).

Comment 07: Forestwide standards and guidelines should be reviewed from the context of making them clearer and more specific. The EPA recommended several changes to the air, soil and water, and fisheries and water, and silviculture guidelines.

Response: We have reviewed the comments and adjusted a number of standards and guidelines in the Revised Forest Plan (Chapter 3) to improve both clarity and effectiveness. Specifically, we have adjusted the standards and guidelines for prescribed burning, soil, and fish, water and riparian areas.

Comment 08: The Kenaitze Indian Tribe asked to be consulted before sites within the Forest are disturbed or surveys are conducted.

Response: Consultation with any tribe is an important part of our analysis process. We have a memorandum of understanding with the Kenaitze Tribe outlining the consultation process (Revised Forest Plan, Appendix D).

Comment 09: The Forest Plan should discuss the potential need for a wilderness permit system so that wilderness values will not be compromised.

Response: When the criteria for ROS settings are exceeded in any particular recreational setting, forest managers may institute a variety of measures to address these problems, including the creation of a permit system. The Revised Forest Plan sets the sideboards for the recreational setting, but it leaves the method of staying within those sideboards up to the forest managers. When the criteria for an ROS setting is exceeded a specific analysis will be conducted before any specific actions, including establishment of a permit system, is instituted.

Comment 10: The final Plan should include prescriptive riparian standards and guidelines similar to those that were developed for the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan.

Response: The Chugach National Forest Revised Forest Plan relies on the use of the draft Aquatic Ecosystem Management Handbook to address specific direction regarding management of riparian areas. The handbook contains detailed information related to potential management actions that may affect the range of riparian conditions found in the national forests of Alaska. This is a better approach to meeting riparian objectives while accommodating appropriate uses, rather than focusing on one standard for all riparian conditions.

Comment 11: It is unclear that the term “saleable minerals” includes gravel and/or rock. This use should be recognized under the “Activities Table” portion of the various prescriptions, where appropriate.

Response: We have clarified that “saleable minerals” includes gravel and rock (FEIS, Glossary).

Comment 12: Special Uses (Non-Recreation) Standard 2. This standard did not allow shore tie, shore caches, waterlines, or other shore facilities in Category 1, Backcountry, and Backcountry Motorized prescriptions. This listing incorrectly implied that the Forest Plan exerts control over state owned tidelands and shore lands.

Special Uses (Non-Recreation) Guideline 1. There was a concern that this guideline included Backcountry areas. The State of Alaska’s Prince William Sound Area Plan allows for such uses in Backcountry areas.

Response: As per current agreement with the State of Alaska, the Revised Forest Plan does not provide direction over the waters of Prince William Sound. It does provide direction for lands immediately adjacent to the Sound and for permit holders using Chugach National Forest lands. The standard applies only to specific prescriptions in the shore areas.

The guideline indicates that floating facilities, including mariculture, are permitted. It anticipates cooperatively working with the State of Alaska to develop criteria for their location that is consistent with the Revised Forest Plan and avoids certain areas for their location.

Comment 13: Forestwide guidelines for brown bears include a 750-foot buffer of forest cover on both sides of Class I anadromous salmon streams. Based on recent studies conducted by the Interagency Brown Bear Study Team, these buffers appear inadequate. Based on 20,000 telemetry locations of female bears, the team recently determined that the average distance of female bears to the nearest anadromous stream was over 5,000 feet (about 7x the distance of the current buffer). It is recommended that the width of the proposed cover corridor for brown bears be expanded beyond the current 750-feet.

Response: We are aware of the data collected by the Interagency Brown Bear Study Team. To date this data has not been analyzed. The Forest will consider modifying the 750-foot standard, through a Forest Plan amendment, when new information becomes available from the study team. The 750-foot standard is consistent with the Kenai Brown Bear Management Strategy developed by ADF&G and the stakeholder process. Important brown bear feeding areas are to be identified in cooperation with ADF&G field biologists during project planning. This requirement has been added to the Bear Habitat Management standard.

Comment 14: We recommend that the Forest Service work closely with the Fish and Wildlife Service in reviewing the standards and guidelines for marbled murrelet and Northern goshawks. We recommend adding the Kittliz's murrelet and deleting the osprey from Table 2.1.

Response: We have reviewed our wildlife analysis and standards and guidelines with the Fish and Wildlife Service and ADF&G. The osprey is an Alaska Region sensitive species, and therefore, must be included in the list. There are few risks to Kittliz's murrelet habitat from Forest Service activities on the uplands. Foraging and feeding habitat would be protected by the Seabird Rookeries Habitat Management and the Waterfowl and Shorebird Habitat Management standards.

Comment 15: There was no mention anywhere in the Plan of an oil spill response. We recommend that the Plan address this issue and develop a clear strategy for dealing with oil spills, particularly on the Copper River Delta.

Response: The Chugach National Forest is involved in cooperative oil spill response planning efforts. These efforts focus on a working group process involving federal, state, and local spill experts working with representatives from the oil production and transportation industry, citizens groups, and natural resource agencies. Working groups are or will be formed for each response zone on the Forest. The groups developed (or are developing) Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) which are designed to supplement the Sub-area Plans for Oil and Hazardous Substances and Spills and Releases, commonly referred to as the Sub-area Contingency Plans. The purpose of the plans is to provide strategies for the protection of sensitive areas to aid first responders to an oil spill. The plans serve as federal (including Chugach National Forest) and state coordinators “orders” during an oil spill in the area covered by the GRS. As such, the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation have approved these plans.

The Geographic Response Strategies include three phases of an oil spill response. The first phase is to maximize containment and removal of oil at the scene of the spill. The second phase is to intercept, contain and remove as much oil as possible before it moves into the near shore environment. The third phase is to protect a sensitive area to prevent or minimize impacts. This third phase directs how the Chugach National Forest, as well as other federal and state agencies, would go about protecting these sensitive resource areas in and adjacent to the Forest.

The strategies are intended to be flexible and would be modified to fit the prevailing conditions at the time of any event. Changes to the plans will be incorporated as the partners involved in the Geographic Response Strategies gather more information through drills, site visits, and actual use in spill situations.

Chapter 3 - Management Area Prescriptions

Comment 01: The 501(b) - Recommended Wilderness prescription should be applied to all the eastern Copper River Delta and to all barrier islands in the Copper River’s mouth. In addition, the 501(b) - Recommended Wilderness prescription should be applied to all polygons on the western side of the Delta south of the Copper River Highway and north to polygons C082 and C097. A 1/2-mile nonwilderness corridor should be established along the Copper River Highway.

Response: Many recommendations were received in response to the Wilderness and 501(b) Management Area prescriptions for the

Copper River Delta. Although both prescriptions provide similar protection for fish, wildlife and other values of the area, there are other considerations when applying prescriptions to specific lands, including local, state, national, and congressional support, and implementation strategies. These were all evaluated and considered when making the final recommendation.

In the Revised Forest Plan, a Recommended Wilderness Management Area prescription was not applied to all of the eastern Copper River Delta or the barrier islands. A Recommended Wilderness prescription was also not applied to all of the polygons on the western side of the Delta south of the Copper River and north to polygons C082 and C097.

Comment 02: There should be a more representative distribution of Category 1 prescriptions across the Forest. These included Recommended Wilderness for the Copper River Delta, large islands in Prince William Sound (specially Montague Island), and portions of the Kenai Peninsula, including Brown Bear Core Areas. As an alternative to the Recommended Wilderness prescription, the ANILCA 501(b) - Recommended Wilderness prescription could be used, as it has more management flexibility.

Response: The Revised Forest Plan includes Category 1 prescriptions applied to at least 10 percent of the land of 18 of the 22 identified land cover classes. The Preferred Alternative also relies heavily on Category 2 prescriptions to achieve biodiversity objectives. Category 1 and Category 2 prescriptions combined are applied to 75 percent of every land cover class in the Preferred Alternative.

Comment 03: To maintain helicopter recreation opportunities, apply the 212 - Backcountry Motorized Prescription for the following areas: P244-High Alpine Region North of Port Fidalgo Bay, P-318-High Alpine Region North of Gravina Bay, P200-High Alpine Region North of Sheep Bay, P-355-High Alpine Region North of Simpson Bay, P-108-North Fork of Columbia Glacier, and P107-Main Fork of the Columbia Glacier. Change the prescriptions in the Thompson Pass, Marshall Pass, and Tasnuna Valley areas to allow for heli-skiing.

Response: See Response to DEIS, Comment 01 under Recreation and Tourism. Polygons P107 and P100 are open to both winter and summer helicopter access. The other polygons are closed to motorized uses, except subsistence.

Comment 04: Change units P-200, P-201, P-202, P-204, and P-285, which are adjacent to the State Park in Sawmill Bay, from 212-Back Country Motorized to 211-Backcountry Nonmotorized.

Response: We have modified the designation of areas open and closed to motorized access in this area. This modification has closed these areas to motorized access in the Revised Forest Plan.

Comment 05: Change units P-388, P- 392, P-406-409, and P-412 on Knight Island from 211-Backcountry to 131-Recommended Wilderness.

Response: The current prescription for Backcountry management effectively balances the need for fish and wildlife conservation and other multiple uses. There are other areas, including a number of the islands in Prince William Sound, which are recommended for Wilderness designation in the Revised Forest Plan.

Comment 06: Change units P-318 P-325, P-335, and P-244, at the head of Fidalgo/Gravina below 1,800 feet from 211-Backcountry to 131-Recommended Wilderness and the area above 1,800 feet from Backcountry Nonmotorized to Backcountry Motorized. To protect the wild, unspoiled charter of Port Gravina, change the prescription from Backcountry to either Primitive or Recommended Wilderness. Change units P318 and P325 to the 501(b) - Recommended Wilderness prescription.

Response: The current prescription for Backcountry management effectively balances the need for fish and wildlife conservation and other multiple uses. The Revised Forest Plan also maintains the motorized closure above 1,800 feet, as there are other opportunities in the area for motorized recreation, including heli-skiing.

Comment 07: Retain the “Fish, Wildlife and Recreation” prescription on the K199 area.

Response: The Revised Forest Plan retains the Fish, Wildlife and Recreation designation on this area.

Comment 08: Hinchinbrook (P476 and P478) and Hawkins islands should be designated as Backcountry Nonmotorized.

Response: Most of Hinchinbrook and Hawkins islands are designated as closed to motorized recreation use. P476 and P478 are the only areas on these islands open to winter motorized use and summer motorized use on designated routes.

Comment 09: The Primrose Trail and all of the land below 2,000 feet between Mile 12 Hill and Primrose Creek (near mile 18) on the west side of the Highway should be designated with the Backcountry Nonmotorized prescription.

Response: Under the Revised Forest Plan, an area near the Primrose trail on the west side of the Seward Highway has been designated for winter nonmotorized use specifically for ski activities.

Comment 10: Some respondents supported the 501(b) - 2 Management Prescription for the Copper River Delta. They also opposed any Recommended Wilderness or Wild and Scenic River prescriptions for these lands.

Response: A new management area prescription has been created for the east side of the Copper River Delta (135 501(b) - 1). (FEIS, Chapter 2, Management Prescription Summary).

Prescription 501(b) - 2 remains on the west side of the Copper River Delta.

Comment 11: Change units P107 and P108 near Valdez, and P317, near Whittier, to the Backcountry summer and winter motorized prescription to reduce heli-skiing pressure away from important goat and bear habitat.

Response: Units P107 and 108 are currently within the Wilderness Study Area (WSA). All three of the areas identified above are open to summer and winter motorized recreation access, but P107 and 108 are not available for helicopter access until the WSA is released by Congress.

Comment 12: There were several suggested prescription changes for Montague Island. Some wanted a Recommended Wilderness Management Area prescription. Others wanted the Fish, Wildlife, Recreation prescription in the western, southwestern, and parts of southern Montague Island (polygons 513, 515, 516, 517, 519, 520, 583, and 584).

Response: The Forest has received mixed comments on the land allocations for Montague Island, some advocating prescriptions with greater restrictions, some advocating those with lesser restrictions. The analysis in the FEIS does not support increasing recreation developments on Montague Island. The Revised Forest Plan would continue to manage Montague Island under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation prescription.

Comment 13: The Recommended Wilderness prescription is tailored to accommodate existing uses such as fish and wildlife management and research, conservation and perpetuation of commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries, and motorized use for hunting and fishing.

Response: Recommended Wilderness may limit some existing uses. Wilderness, by definition, is intended to allow natural processes to dominate with little interference from humans. Areas recommended for Wilderness designation will be managed as if they were designated to preserve their wilderness character. Exceptions to wilderness management in ANILCA, such as traditional motorized use, will also be recognized and incorporated.

Comment 14: Change the area southwest of Resurrection Trail, adjacent to the Refuge Mystery Creek Wilderness on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (K134, K322, K323, K325, K326, K327, and K328), to the Category 1 prescriptions (501(b) - Recommended Wilderness).

Response: We have considered the recommendation for modifying the prescriptions in this area, but have retained the allocation of this area for Backcountry with a summer closure to motorized use and a winter closure to motorized use after February 15. This prescription recognizes the area's primitive recreation opportunities, while providing limited motorized use in the winter.

We believe that this prescription is compatible with the adjacent Wilderness on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

Comment 15: Change the area at the south end of Resurrection Trail (units K134, K322, K323, K325, K326, K327, and K328), to a stronger conservation prescription (Backcountry) to protect brown bears.

Response: The Revised Forest Plan retains the allocation of this area to Backcountry with a summer closure to motorized use and a winter closure to motorized use after February 15. This prescription will continue to protect brown bear habitat while permitting some motorized winter activities.

Comment 16: Add a buffer area designation of Backcountry or Fish and Wildlife Conservation northwest of Resurrection Trail (K053).

Response: Although the Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescription (312) permits a wider range of activities than Backcountry or Fish and Wildlife Conservation prescriptions, a specific buffer area designation is not merited in this area because of the resource protection measures in the existing prescriptions. A Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescription in this area will allow needed treatment of the spruce bark beetle killed trees.

Comment 17: Buffer the area south of Cooper Lake (K219, K222, K225, K227, and K228) to provide for brown bear conservation (Backcountry or, at least, the Fish and Wildlife prescription).

Response: In the Revised Forest Plan, the prescription has been changed on two of the identified polygons in the southernmost portion of the area to Fish and Wildlife to minimize new recreational and other developments. The other polygons are in a separate watershed near the Cooper Lake dam. To provide for a variety of habitats for fish and wildlife species and year-round recreational opportunities, we have concluded that retaining the Fish, Wildlife and Recreation designation for these areas is appropriate.

Comment 18: Buffer the Brown Bear Core area around Crescent Lake (K155, K164, K170, K204, K236, K237, K238, K239, and K240) to enhance brown bear conservation (Backcountry or, at least, the Fish and Wildlife prescription).

Response: In the Revised Forest Plan, the polygons to the south and west of Carter and Crescent Lakes have been changed to Fish and the Wildlife Conservation prescription. Polygons on the north and east sides along the highways were not changed as they have mixed ownership and represent opportunities for recreation development.

Comment 19: Change the Culross Passage area (P360 and P374) to 501(b) - Recommended Wilderness.

Response: Within the Wilderness Study Area, the Revised Forest Plan has sought a balance between wilderness values and recreational opportunities. The areas within one day access from Whittier have been designated Backcountry to provide for safe marine based dispersed recreation opportunities. The Backcountry allocation for the Culross Passage area is designed to support this objective by providing a relatively safe sheltered route to the southern wilderness and other areas.

Comment 20: Designate one or two campgrounds on the Glacier District with the Developed Recreation/Reduced Noise Management Area prescription. This prescription should also be applied to relatively small areas close to the highway areas to be managed for cross county skiing (like John's and Quartz Creek).

Response: These recommendations can be dealt with administratively. The existing prescriptions along highway corridors allow for new campgrounds and further expansion of existing campgrounds. These recommendations have been shared with the Glacier District for future consideration and inclusion on the recreation capital investment program list. If included, project-specific environmental analysis (with full public involvement) will be required in order to authorize such construction.

Comment 21: Apply a more restrictive prescription, such as Primitive or Research Natural Area, to the north Montague Island area. Hardened campsites should not be allowed in the area. A special designation should be applied within a 1,000-foot beach buffer, restricting boat landings (including kayaks) and any other type of public use and access from April 15 to May 25.

Apply a more restrictive prescription, such as Primitive or Research Natural Area, to Porpoise Island, Channel Island, Little Smith Island, Serpentine Bay/Island, Fool Island, Agnes Island, Jackpot Island, and Seal Island. Hardened campsites should not be allowed in these areas, and a special designation should be applied to prohibit all public access, such as boat landings (including kayaks), and any other type of public use from April 15 to August 31.

Apply a more restrictive prescription, such as Wilderness, to coastal habitat near Hobo Bay. A 1,000-foot shoreline buffer may also adequately protect birds and their habitat.

Response: Under the Revised Forest Plan, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation prescription with its emphasis on fish and wildlife conservation provides the best management for northern Montague Island. A Research Natural Area already is designated on nearby Green Island. A Primitive prescription would restrict activities needed for monitoring, management and restoration of fish and wildlife, and would limit subsistence activities.

Management direction of the smaller islands may be difficult to determine due to their size on the Revised Forest Plan map. Their

management generally matches that of the neighboring islands or land areas. The prescriptions have been adjusted and are now assigned as follows: Porpoise Rocks (Backcountry), Channel Island (Fish and Wildlife Conservation), Little Smith Island (Recommended Wilderness), Serpentine Bay Island (Recommended Wilderness), Fool Island (Recommended Wilderness), Agnes Island (Recommended Wilderness), Jackpot Island (EVOS Acquired Lands), and Seal Island (Recommended Wilderness). All of these prescriptions are Category 1 or 2 prescriptions that have a high level of wildlife protection.

For Hobo Bay, the Revised Forest Plan uses the Backcountry prescription, which best balances the need for wildlife conservation and dispersed recreation activities. The Revised Forest Plan will rely on the standards and guidelines for General Wildlife and Seabird Rookeries Habitat Management to provide protection for birds in this area.

It would be impractical and unnecessary to attempt a complete prohibition on boat landings in these areas. Providing hardened campsites in areas that have the least impact to wildlife is a preferred approach to prohibiting people, thus encouraging dispersed camping throughout the area. There are Forestwide standards and guidelines (General Wildlife, Threatened and Endangered Species, Seabird Rookeries Habitat Management, and Waterfowl and Shorebird Habitats Management) that will provide protection to important wildlife resources on northern Montague Island. These include the ability to apply seasonal restrictions to human activities. These are applicable to all management prescriptions.

Comment 22: Change the following units (K036, K044, K045, K050, K052, and K053), which are adjacent to the Minimal Management and Wilderness Zones of the Kenai National Refuge, to the 111 – Primitive prescription. To protect the winter habitat of the Kenai Mountains caribou herd, snowmobiling should not be allowed above timberline.

Response: Under the Revised Forest Plan, these areas adjacent to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge are assigned to Restoration and Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescriptions, with the area open to winter motorized recreation until February 15. This mix of management strategies will restore forest conditions, provide recreational opportunities, and minimize any disturbance to caribou.

Comment 23: Change the following units (K055, K057, K061, K062, K064, K134, K142, K320, K233, K234, K235, K257, southwestern portion of K258, K259, K260, K321, K322, K323, K324, K325, K326, K327, and K328), which are adjacent to the Minimal Management and Wilderness Zones of the Kenai National Refuge, to the 131 - Recommended Wilderness prescription.

Response: The Revised Forest Plan maintains the Backcountry designation for most of this area with the exception of the K-142 near the Sterling Highway where the Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescription is applied. The Backcountry prescription provides an appropriate transition to the Wilderness and Minimal Management Zones on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, while allowing for a limited number of additional uses not permitted in Wilderness.

Comment 24: Remove all Backcountry prescriptions from Crow Pass Bear Valley, Seattle Creek, and Johns Creek. Remove the RNA prescription.

Response: The Revised Forest Plan continues the allocation of the Backcountry prescription to these areas, although the areas open and closed to motorized recreation have been modified. Research Natural Areas are part of the Forest Service program to identify a system of representative natural areas throughout the nation for research.

Comment 25: There should be a prescription just for logging.

Response: Few, if any, prescriptions are for a single purpose. Prescription 411 (Resource Development Management Area) had a focus for wood and minerals production and was considered in Alternative A. It was not included in the Preferred Alternative, as it is not consistent with the natural processes emphasized in the alternative.

Comment 26: There should be a prescription that does not allow new trails, roads, motorized subsistence use, cabins, hardened dispersed campsites, or any type of motorized use.

Response: The Primitive prescription is very similar to the one described above. It prohibits all motorized use, new cabins, and roads. It does permit conditionally new trail construction and hardened dispersed campsites. This would encourage use at selected sites rather than dispersed use, thus reducing resource effects.

Comment 27: Make modifications to prescriptions to protect sensitive trumpeter swan habitat on Bering and Martin Lakes, Montague Island and Prince William Sound. Recommend designating Bering and Martin Lakes as a sensitive wildlife area from April through October.

Response: Protection for important wildlife/tideland habitats is provided through the General Wildlife and Waterfowl and Shorebirds Habitat Management guidelines (Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 3, Forestwide Direction). These guidelines direct that facilities are designed and located or seasonal restrictions on human activities are used to reduce disturbance in such habitats. The season identified for trumpeter swans is mid-April through

August. This guideline applies to all prescriptions, including those assigned to Bering and Martin Lakes.

Comment 28: Some of the prescriptions allow uses that are contrary to the stated purpose of the prescription. This is especially a concern with Recommended Wilderness, Wilderness Study Area, 501(b) - Recommended Wilderness, Backcountry, and Fish and Wildlife Conservation prescriptions (especially on Montague Island). The 501(b) - 2 prescription allows activities that, despite precautions, could degrade and harm fish and wildlife resources.

Response: We have examined a number of prescriptions and made some adjustment to some of the uses or activities that are permitted in these prescriptions (see Revised Forest Plan, Appendix F, Management Prescription Activity Matrix). These include Forest Service roads in Fish and Wildlife Conservation Management Area (244) prescriptions. We have concluded that such activities are not appropriate for these management areas.

Comment 29: None of the prescriptions, including Primitive, Wilderness Study Area, Recommended Wilderness, Wild River, 501(b) - Recommended Wilderness or Brown Bear Core Areas, are classified as primitive under the Recreation Opportunity Class. All of these prescriptions should be classified as primitive.

Response: Table 3-7 in the Revised Forest Plan, Forestwide Direction indicates each prescription is expected to accommodate a range of ROS classes. All of the prescriptions indicated include the primitive ROS within that range. However, the representation of ROS classes for the alternatives generally displays the ROS setting that allowed the highest level of use or development for that prescription. Where specific management intent provides for a more remote recreation experience, this representation displays the expected ROS setting rather than the one allowing greatest use levels or development. We have modified the text in the FEIS to clarify this situation.

Comment 30: Changes should be made in the Category 1 Prescription Activities Table. Electronic sites should be conditional rather than allowed. The Outfitter Guide Capacity is 30 percent. Given that guides trips tend to be lower impact than private trips and that most other prescriptions use 50 percent, the Backcountry Prescription should be 50 percent. The "Semi-Primitive Group" category allows group sizes of up to 100 people. This party size is too high. Another respondent supported the 30 percent Outfitter Guide Semi-Primitive Group category but felt that it needed careful evaluation on a case-by-case basis before permits are issued. A party size limit of 15 people around Prince William Sound is recommended. The number of guided kayak groups needs to be limited; they may be at or near the upper limit. How was the Outfitter Guide Capacity determined?

Response: While electronic sites are permitted under the Backcountry prescription, their construction and use will be subject to site-specific environmental analysis. A key factor in this analysis is how the site can be managed to ensure that it is compatible with the intent and other standards and guidelines of the Backcountry Management Area prescription.

Generally groups of up to 100 will be guided. As with any commercial use of the national forest, upon receipt of request to conduct outfitting and guiding, a project-specific environmental analysis will be required before authorization. The standards and guidelines for Semi-primitive Groups will serve as parameters for considering the use, along with frequency, timing, mode of transportation, and other considerations.

The Semi-primitive Groups ROS class is specifically designed for site-specific areas to accommodate large groups in a Semi-primitive setting. Its use and application is limited to maintain the semi-primitive setting. Locations for application of the ROS class are shown on the alternative maps with red circles. None of these were identified for the Revised Forest Plan.

The guideline for outfitter-guide allocation has been changed to 50 percent. Again, upon receipt of a request for outfitted and guided activities, a project-specific environmental analysis will be conducted which will consider the amount of outfitted and guided use in comparison with non-commercial use, along with other factors of the proposed activity, such as mode of transportation, recreation activities proposed, group size, and other considerations.

Comment 31: Changes in the Backcountry Prescription Activities Table should be made. In earlier drafts of the Backcountry prescription, fixed-wing landings were not allowed. You should retain this requirement.

Response: Since fixed-wing aircraft are a common mode of transportation in Alaska, fixed-wing access enables recreation opportunities throughout the Chugach National Forest that would otherwise be inaccessible. In accordance with ANILCA, the Revised Forest Plan retains this opportunity in the Backcountry and many other prescriptions

Comment 32: The Brown Bear Core Area prescription fell short of its intent to protect brown bears. Utility corridors should not be allowed in the Brown Bear Core Area prescription. These areas should be closed to all motorized use. Adaptive management should be incorporated into all components of the Plan that impact brown bears.

Response: We made some adjustments to the Brown Bear Core Area prescription. Currently there are few utility corridors on the Kenai Peninsula. Although there are no utility corridor proposals

pending for the area, there may be a future need for new routes to meet the needs of growing communities. Only temporary roads needed to facilitate construction will be allowed and they will be rehabilitated and then closed to further use after construction of the corridor. Any future utility corridor maintenance would have to be done without roads. Therefore, potential effects from the development of utility corridors are expected to be short term. We have also separated direction for motorized recreational use from the prescription direction. Much of the Forest managed under the Brown Bear Core Area prescription is now closed to all motorized recreation. The monitoring plan addresses the Forest approach to monitoring brown bear population trends.

Comment 33: It is misleading to the public when both the Backcountry Management Area and the Backcountry Motorized Management Area prescriptions allow motorized use? Why does the Backcountry Management Area prescription allow motorized summer and winter use, helicopter and fixed-wing landings? A more comprehensive discussion and explanation are required.

Response: The 211 - Backcountry and the 212 - Backcountry Motorized prescriptions in the DEIS have been combined into one prescription, 210 – Backcountry, in the Revised Forest Plan. The Revised Forest Plan now separates direction regarding motorized use from the basic prescriptions. The new 210 – Backcountry prescription provides for a variety of recreational uses consistent with maintaining natural environments. These include providing opportunities for motorized recreation use as shown on the summer and winter motorized recreation access maps that accompany the Revised Forest Plan.

Comment 34: In the Wilderness prescription, under Transportation and Access, the Forest Service indicates that a, “responsible line officer must approve motorized access for administrative and permitted use.” It is our position that such motorized access be allowed only for emergency situations. The Forest Service must clarify it’s intent of this statement.

Response: The language in the prescription directs that any approved administrative and non-recreational permitted motorized access must be consistent with the intent of the prescription. Emergency situations, fixed-wing aircraft, motorized boat access on navigable waters, and other motorized access allowed under ANILCA are the kinds of motorized access expected under the Revised Forest Plan.

Comment 35: Maintain prescription flexibility on upland areas to accommodate some future recreation developments, such as lodges or hardened campsites. New lodges should not be constructed on public lands, especially on Glacier Island.

Response: The possible development of lodges in the Backcountry* prescription is not considered to be compatible with the intent of the prescription. Additionally, it is Forest Service policy not to compete with other landowners interested in providing developed recreation services.

Comment 36: There was no definition for Outfitter/Guide Allocations. What numbers do these percentages represent?

Response: A definition of outfitter/guide capacity and allocations has been added to the Revised Forest Plan.

Comment 37: We urge you to support a developed tourism spot near Spencer Glacier.

Response: The management prescription in this area is Backcountry, which does not allow such development. However, the Revised Forest Plan management direction would permit some opportunity for hut-to-hut, campgrounds or cabins accessible by trail, winter motorized access, or the railroad. Any such development would depend upon project analysis and preparation of an environmental document.

Comment 38: The Kenaitze Indian Tribe asked that permits and clauses for cultural site areas be used to insure that users understand the importance of co-use. They also asked that trails be widened to allow for both user groups.

Response: Where appropriate, permits will include clauses to protect culture sites. Trails are built to a standard to accommodate the intended use, following site-specific analysis.

Comment 39: Under the 501(b) - 2 prescription, motorized use in the east Copper River Delta would be encouraged. The area is presently considered too sensitive for motorized use (DEIS, page 3-316).

Response: Direction on recreational motorized use is now separated from the prescription. The Revised Forest Plan does not permit summer motorized access, but does permit winter motorized access in a portion of the area.

Comment 40: A sentence should be added following the “Activities Table” statement that explains the relationship of the “Theme” to the “Activities Table”.

Response: We have made some modifications to the introduction of the prescriptions in Chapter 4 of the Revised Forest Plan. “Theme” is a short description of the major purposes of the prescription. “Activities Table” is a tabular display of typical activities that may or may not be allowed in a given prescription.

Comment 41: The 312 - Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescription needs to be revised to provide a greater level of specificity of what activities will occur in what areas.

Response: The Fish, Wildlife and Recreation prescription does not have additional standards and guidelines as it does not have any conditional uses to which these would apply. The prescription permits activities, but does not authorize them. Ultimately, the determination of what activities will occur in specific areas depends on individual project analysis.

Comment 42: Under the 313 - Backcountry Groups Management Area prescription an interpretation could be made that upland development, in locations other than the two identified sites, would be inconsistent with the Forest Plan.

Response: The Backcountry Group prescription does provide for a certain level of upland development at these sites. Other upland areas with shoreline are governed by the standards and guidelines of other prescriptions. Those prescriptions need to be consulted to determine whether or not a specific kind of administrative facility can be permitted.

Comment 43: The 314 – Forest Restoration Management Area prescription description should include management of the spruce bark beetle infestation. In addition, the text needs to be expanded to include a description of the management intent as it applies to the Hope area and state that the Forest Service will work with that community in the development of forest restoration plans.

Response: The application of prescription 314 - Forest Restoration as applied to the Hope area is primarily directed to restoration of ecosystem conditions in the aftermath of spruce bark beetle and other ecosystem degradations that have occurred in that area. Working with local communities is a normal part of the NEPA process in the preparation of any restoration activities. Please also see our Response to Fire, Comment 01 and Insect and Disease, Comment 01.

Comment 44: It was unclear how the 521 – Minerals Management Area prescription relates to the “minerals” component under the standards and guidelines.

Response: The Minerals Management Area prescription applies to all mining areas with an approved plan of operations. Those that currently exist are shown on the land allocation map. New approved plans of operations will be managed within the prescription as stated in the Forestwide standards and guidelines.

Comment 45: It was unclear as to what exactly is intended for the intersection of the Seward and Sterling Highways, specifically Developed Recreation polygons 147, 148, 151, 153, 157, 161, 163, 164, 341, and 441.

Response: We have changed the prescription in this area. A corridor allocated to Fish, Wildlife and Recreation will be provided within a half mile of the highway. This will provide opportunities for a variety of uses in the immediate vicinity of the highway.

Comment 46: The standard that set a minimum altitude restriction for Forest Service permitted or approved aircraft flights should be modified as only the FAA has jurisdiction over air space (DEIS, Volume I, page 327).

Response: While it is true that the FAA has jurisdiction over air space, aircraft operating under Forest Service permit or approval must abide with the provisions of their permit or contract. Therefore, Revised Forest Plan standards that set a minimum altitude for such uses are appropriate.

Comment 47: The Waterfowl and Shorebird Habitat Guideline 3, "Maintain a 2,640-foot (1/2) mile no disturbance buffer around active trumpeter swan nest..." should address the ADF&G ability to conduct long standing fisheries research projects on Copper River Delta lakes.

Response: The responsible line officer would approve deviations from guidelines for administrative projects, such as the State of Alaska's ongoing fisheries research on Copper River Delta lakes. Keeping track of such use will aid us with our monitoring requirements.

Comment 48: Administrative Facilities Guideline 3 states, "Temporary administrative facilities or camps should be in place no more than two seasons and the site rehabilitated after removal." The two-season removal requirement could interfere with ADF&G management activities that require temporary facilities for more than two seasons to accomplish projects. We urge the Forest Service to adopt the Fish and Wildlife Service's definition for temporary facilities. "The term 'temporary' refers to any structure or other human-made improvements which can be readily dismantled and removed from the site when the period of authorized use terminates"

Response: To respond to these comments we have made some substantial adjustments to Forestwide standards and guidelines on Special Use (Non-Recreation) and administrative facilities regarding temporary camps Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 3, Forestwide Direction.

Comment 49: The Backcountry Motorized prescription applied to the area west of Valdez Arm (P145, P200, P201, P202, P204, and P591) should have specific standards and guidelines to protect mountain goats from stress associated with helicopter overflights and/or landings.

Response: We have modified the management of this area so that it is now closed to recreational motorized access.

Comment 50: Develop a standard and guideline for beach fringes and estuaries.

Response: The Revised Forest Plan provides direction for land portions of such estuaries and beaches. The approach has been to provide direction limiting development or access to or from these land portions in the areas of greatest sensitivity from a wildlife perspective. This direction is contained in the Forestwide standards and guidelines.

Comment 51: The Plan does not address the material extraction located at mile 37,42, 49, and 62 of the Seward Highway. The Plan does not allow for new mining claims.

Response: There are no approved plans of operations for mineral material pits at miles 37, 42, 49, and 62 of the Seward Highway. The Mile 62 pit is a community pit, on the Glacier District. It is within a prescription that allows the activity. The Proposed Revised Forest Plan did not specifically identify old material sites or potential sites. However, that information is in the planning record in a 1997 report entitled "Mineral Materials Survey of the Seward and Glacier Ranger Districts Road Corridor", Chugach National Forest, Alaska, by Gary Sherman, Earle Williams, and Mark Meyers.

Under the 1872 Mining Law, new mining claims can be filed on any lands not withdrawn from mineral entry.

Comment 52: The Spencer pit and quarry site is classified as Backcountry Motorized. This area should be classified as a 521-Mineral Management Area.

Response: By definition, the 521-Mineral Management Area is an area with an approved plan of operations. The Spencer pit and quarry site does not have an approved plan. When there is an approved plan, the area will be included in the 521 - Minerals Management Area prescription.

Comment 53: Create a Developed Recreation Complex at Turnagain Pass as proposed by the Forest Service about 10 years ago.

Response: The Revised Forest Plan permits expansion of recreation activity in the Turnagain Pass area, including some opportunities for new recreation facilities. The Revised Forest Plan does not provide for development of a major recreation complex at this location. A major developed recreation complex is this area

would be incompatible with the goal of maintaining the natural character of this area.

Comment 54: The Developed Recreation – Reduced Noise prescription was not used properly in the Primrose Campground and the Devils Pass area. This prescription was not created for large areas. Perhaps the Backcountry Nonmotorized would be the prescription of choice?

Response: The Revised Forest Plan now allocates this area to the Backcountry Management Area prescription, except in the area immediately adjacent to the highway that is allocated to Fish, Wildlife and Recreation. The area is managed for nonmotorized recreational activities.

Chapter 4 - Monitoring and Evaluation

Comment 01: The monitoring plan should be revised and refined.

Response: We have completely revised our monitoring plan and added material identifying research needs (Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 5).

Comment 02: Identify critical habitat for key species in the eastern Prince William Sound, including the black oystercatcher, brown and black bears, northern goshawks, and spawning salmon.

Response: Critical habitat has specific meaning under the Endangered Species Act. Its identification is a responsibility of the agency responsible for the species in question. None of these species are listed (threatened or endangered) species. Our monitoring plan includes specific monitoring for wildlife species.

Comment 03: There should be a detailed description of how brown bear populations will be monitored. We recommend that the Forest Service support research that will measure potential impacts of snowmachine use on wildlife on the Forest, especially denning brown bears on the Kenai.

Response: We have added more material on monitoring of brown bear populations, and we have identified a number of research needs related to snowmachine activity.

Comment 04: The methods of monitoring brown bears are inadequate. The Forest Service must collaborate with the Department of Fish and Game to integrate new information and research techniques, monitor the success or failures of management actions (such as vegetation management and bear viewing), and adjust the Plan accordingly, on an ongoing basis, in an integrated adaptive management framework. The ADF&G urged the Forest Service to program more than the indicated \$18,000 a year to gather information on brown bear population trends.

Response: The monitoring plan for brown bears has been updated. Our monitoring plan consists of a multi-agency collaborative approach to addressing brown bears that includes

participation of the Department of Fish and Game for the State of Alaska and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Comment 05: A more detailed monitoring plan is needed for brown bears, wolves, lynx, wolverine, and other species so that the effectiveness of implementation can be evaluated.

Response: We have added material related to the monitoring plan for a number of species. However, we do not have sufficient funds to monitor all of the species of interest in the Revised Forest Plan. As a result, we have had to limit our monitoring commitment to individual species, but it does include the above species. Chapter 5 explains how these priorities were established.

Appendix A – Description of the Preferred Alternative

Comment 01: The relationship of the Plan map with the Preferred Alternative description is a critical linkage that needs to be established and clearly stated in the text of the final Plan. We further recommend that the explanations in the “Description of the Preferred Alternative” be expanded. This section should be referred to as the “Description of the Forest Plan”.

Response: This Appendix has been retained in the Revised Forest Plan. However, material that was in this Appendix has also been incorporated into the Forestwide Direction section of the Revised Forest Plan. We have added a section in the Introduction to the Revised Forest Plan that describes the role of all of the elements in the document, including the maps, in forming plan direction.

Comment 02: Interests Emphasized-Resource Production: This section should be corrected: 1) personal use/free use forest products may not necessarily be road accessible, and 2) the location of small-scale commercial harvest and the relevant prescriptions need to be identified. Also, please define the term “special forest products”.

Response: The language is not specifically repeated in the Revised Forest Plan. Language governing personal use/free use forest products and timber harvest is contained in the prescriptions. The term “special use forest products” has been defined in the FEIS, Glossary.

Comment 03: Variation in Intensity of Use: The Forest Plan should state in the Description section what variations in use intensity within the Sound is intended, especially in the westernmost area.

Response: The management areas in the westernmost area of the Prince William Sound are Recommended Wilderness and Backcountry. Both of those prescriptions identify variations in use intensity intended in the social systems desired condition section and use and occupancy in the activities tables in the Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 4, Management Area Direction. Also see Appendix C, Potential Project Implementation Schedules.