



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Natural Resources

OFFICE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PERMITTING

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August 25, 2023

Chugach National Forest
Cordova Ranger District
UDSA Forest Service
Erin Cole, Project Manager
612 2nd Street
PO Box 280
Cordova, AK 99574

Submitted via email to erin.cole@usda.gov

Re: Cordova Ranger District cabin proposals, File code 1950; 2300

Dear Ms. Cole:

The State of Alaska (State) reviewed the scoping proposals to construct three new cabins and decommission two existing cabins on the Copper River Delta and Prince William Sound in the Chugach National Forest.

The State is supportive of cabin development in the Chugach and of this proposal to construct additional public use cabins in the Cordova Ranger District. These projects will provide increased opportunities for recreation in the forest and meet Forest Plan goals and desired conditions. We support projects that invest in rural infrastructure and support sportfishing, and wildlife related recreational opportunities. These projects can help to improve the quality of life for people who live in rural areas and can also attract visitors to the area, which can help to support the local economy. The following are our project specific comments:

New Port Chalmers Cabin and 18 Mile Cabin:

It is our understanding that the current Port Chalmers cabin has been damaged to the point that building a new cabin is the best option. The Port Chalmers area is popular with deer hunters, yet the new cabin proposed does not appear to include covered meat storage for hunters. We request the Environmental Assessment (EA) analyze the addition of a covered meat pole. Providing a separate covered meat hanging pole away from, but within view of, the cabin would encourage safe meat storage, reduce negative bear-human encounters, and increase overall human safety. While not frequently found in the Chugach Forest, several cabins and shelters in the Tongass Forest have these types of facilities that are popular with hunters. For example, the Kennel Creek Cabin on Chichagof Island has such an associated structure, which enables hunters to hang meat high off the ground, significantly reducing brown bears' ability to access stored meat. The shed is also located about 50 feet from the cabin, allowing occupants to readily observe and take steps to discourage bears from approaching.

The EA should also consider if the new Port Chalmers Cabin location will have any impacts on users' access to alpine habitat.

Regarding the 18 Mile Cabin, the EA should evaluate the anticipated user groups. We believe anglers fishing for silvers may make use of a cabin at this location.

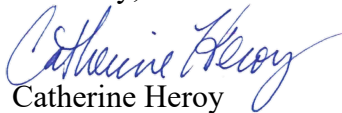
McKinley Lake Cabin:

While the existing McKinley Lake Cabin is in a less than ideal location (dark and buggy), it is not in disrepair and has many more years of use available. Since the cabin program and funding sources are for multiple years, we recommend holding off on decommissioning the existing cabin to see if the public continues to use it. While we agree that the new McKinley Lake Cabin is a better location, the public may continue to reserve the existing cabin even after the new McKinley Lake Cabin is available for reservation. The existing McKinley Lake Cabin and the proposed new cabin location are well separated; keeping both would better utilize already allocated funding. In addition, the existing location of the McKinley Lake Cabin is less than ideal for tent camping. Tent campers are not likely to replace the cabin users at this site, so by not decommissioning the existing cabin, the district could increase recreational opportunities in the forest.

Closing

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We look forward to reviewing the draft EA and following the projects' progress. Please contact me at 907-269-0880 or by email at Catherine.heroy@alaska.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Catherine Heroy
Acting ANILCA Program Coordinator