

Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Alaska Division of Forestry
Land and Resources Management

March 3, 2010

RE: Parcel MSB004966

To Whom It May Concern,

The Willow Area Community Organization (WACO) appreciates this opportunity to respond to the public review draft of the Natural Resource Management Units Plan. Three units of the plan are within the WACO area, Willow, Deception Creek and Rogers Creek Units and will be the subject of this letter.

The Summary of Resources and Uses in regards to agriculture, forestry, fish and wildlife, cultural, and historical for each of these units, WACO feels, largely reflect those conditions that currently exist. Land uses such as recreation, private property, roads, trails and extraction resources we also find are consistent with present conditions. Not included in the summary is the Willow Area Trail Plan, adopted by WACO in 2006, which documents historical and current trails and their uses in each of the units. Willow Unit WACO strongly supports the priority designations of public recreation and water resources and the management intent of these values. Since the Willow Unit is located within the residential area of the community, it will serve as important "green infrastructure" as described in the MSB Core Area Comprehensive Plan.

This unit is situated adjacent to the Willow Creek State Recreation Area which further supports the need for primary designations of public recreation and water resource. The Willow Trail Committee and Willow Health Organization are currently developing a summer trails master plan of which the Willow Unit is a very important component.

In addition, a management agreement may be sought for a 40 acre parcel of MSB land between the the Willow Unit and the Willow Creek SRA. This parcel will be an important part of the summer trails plan and both illustrate the value of recreation and water resources to the Willow Unit. Deception Creek Unit Resource Management priority designation of the Deception Creek Unit with management intent to protect recreation and water resources has our agreement. As noted, forestry management can be important goal as long as it doesn't not effect recreation uses.

The Deception Creek Unit is located within an important and historic Haessler Norris Trail System which is documented in the Willow Area Trail Plan. This trail system is utilized by dog mushers in training for the Iditarod and other dog mushing events and for recreational mushers as well. In contrast to what was mentioned in the plan description, there is growing use for this area in tourism, mainly through dog mushing, kennel tours and guiding. This area is also a popular hunting area which depends on natural and water resource protection for wildlife. Protection of anadromous streams such Deception Creek and surrounding wetlands is vital for healthy fish habitat farther down stream in Willow Creek, one of the most popular fishing streams in the Borough and the State.

WACO also supports natural resource management intent for the Rogers Creek Unit . Emphasis should be on recreation and water resource protection while still allowing for personal use and small scale timber harvest where it does not significantly interfere or reduce recreational use. As with the previous unit, the Rogers Creek Unit has a strong history of dog mushing trails for professional and recreational dog mushers as documented in the Willow Area Trail Plan. It is also

a popular hunting area and includes prime fish habitat in Little Willow Creek, Iron Creek and Rogers Creek. The Willow Community Organization feels that the management intent for these three units sets the right balance between recreation, natural resource protection, forestry and other uses. We fully support the public review draft as written.

Sincerely,
(signed)Linda Oxley, Chair