

STATE OF ALASKA

FRANK H MURKOWSKI
GOVERNOR

ANILCA IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

550 W. 7TH AVENUE, SUITE 1660
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501
PH: (907) 269-7470 / FAX: (907) 269-3981
Sally_Gibert@dnr.state.ak.us

April 14, 2005

Forrest Cole
Tongass Forest Supervisor
648 Mission Street, Federal Building
Ketchikan, AK 99901-6591

Dear Mr. Cole:

I am writing to enlist your support in resolving a key concern with the development of Access-Travel Management Plans on the Tongass National Forest. In particular, the State of Alaska is concerned that the pending national policy concerning off-highway vehicle use appears to be leading the Districts in the Tongass Forest to conduct Access-Travel Management Plans through a planning process that is inherently inconsistent with the access provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). This concern, articulated in the enclosed April 14, 2005 letter to the Sitka Ranger District, is largely outside the scope of the individual District Access-Travel Management Plans, hence the need for your attention while the plans are still in early stages. See also our September 12, 2004 letter regarding the national OHV policy.

As described in the April 14 letter, the State is concerned the new national OHV policy may adopt a default "closed until open" process for motorized access, especially for off-highway vehicles. In marked contrast, several provisions of ANILCA, and implementing Department of the Interior regulations at 43 CFR Part 36, clearly use the "open until closed" approach. The State of Alaska has worked closely with federal agencies to facilitate a common understanding of ANILCA's access provisions over the last two decades. Increasingly, we have achieved mutually satisfactory interpretations subsequently adopted in federal policy and regulations. We welcome an opportunity to similarly participate with you in the development of ANILCA-compliant policy, regulations and management plans, as appropriate, that affect access on national forest lands in Alaska. I look forward to working with the Service on these efforts.

Sincerely,



Sally Gibert
ANILCA Implementation Program Coordinator

cc: Carol Goularte, Sitka District Ranger
Patricia O'Connor, Yakutat District Ranger

Enclosures: April 14, 2005 letter to Sitka District Ranger
September 12, 2004 letter regarding the draft national OHV policy