

**From:** [Fairweather Ski Works](#)  
**To:** [Julie Cozzi](#)  
**Subject:** heli ski map changes  
**Date:** Monday, November 07, 2016 1:13:17 PM

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Hi Julie,

My name is Graham Kraft and I am contacting you Re: the heli ski map changes up for review this year. I'm a small business owner in the ski industry at Fairweather Ski Works and an avid backcountry skier and advocate. I understand there was some tension (surprise surprise) regarding some of the new changes that SEABA and AK hell have proposed to the map, largely regarding potential conflict areas between non motorized and heli ski users.

I believe that a well thought out map can alleviate tension between these user groups and promote safety in the backcountry. I have skied extensively around the state and witnessed the repercussions of the different approaches to backcountry use management plans. For example, the Chugach National Forest has done a fantastic job managing their area. Roadside terrain is reserved for non motorized use and the more difficult to access terrain is available for heli skiing. Both parties seem to have a great relationship and conflict is generally avoided thanks to the well thought out map.

In contrast, the Valdez special use area has no restrictions on where helicopters can take commercially guided groups. This all too often results in extremely dangerous situations where guided helicopter skiers ski above non motorized hikers, exposing them to avalanches from above on a shockingly regular basis.

Thankfully, in Haines we have a decent (albeit still contentious) management plan and conflicts between user groups in the mountains is rare. Part of this has to do with a lower number of backcountry users, but also the willingness of heli ski operators to change locations when non motorized users are encountered. Also, there is a reasonable amount of terrain reserved for non motorized users. As the popularity of backcountry skiing continues to increase (as it has drastically for the past decade) I believe a well thought out map will be essential to encourage winter tourism and most importantly safety in the mountains around Haines.

After looking at the management plan, I don't personally see a conflict between heli skiers and backcountry users in many of the harder to access places on the heli ski map. These locations being across the Chilkat river, Pyramid Harbor, Cathedrals, Upper Tsirku, areas.

The area that concerns me the most is the Old Faithful and Flower Mountain areas and mountains along the road corridor near the Klehini river. This region is increasingly popular for snow machine accessed skiing and backcountry touring because of the ease of access. Already, these areas are a bit of a zoo and I worry about the future of motorized conflicts and safety in the area as the number of users grows.

My recommendation would be a bit of a give and take approach. If the heli companies want to expand their terrain, perhaps some of the easier to access terrain should be excluded from the map to promote safety of all users and continued growth of backcountry and snow machine accessed skiing around the Haines area. Hopefully a more positive attitude for all could result.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or want clarifications.

Graham

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Fairweather Ski Works

*Wild Alaska skis!*

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