



~~Walt Weller <waltaweller@gmail.com>~~

My letter to the Roadless Rule Team, using the online tool

1 message

Celeste Weller <celestialweller@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 12, 2019 at 2:44 PM

To: Dad <waltaweller@gmail.com>, Celeste Weller <celestialweller@gmail.com>

My name is Celeste Weller and I live in Pelican, AK. Since moving to Pelican, in Southeast Alaska, I have strongly adopted a subsistence lifestyle. In the fall and winter I wander through the old growth forests of Chichagof and Yakobi island looking for Sitka Blacktail deer to eat for the rest of the year. I set a subsistence line for halibut. I jig for rockfish. I set pots for shrimp and crab out of Lisianski Inlet and Stag Bay. And in the summertime, I troll commercially for silver, pink, and king salmon in Cross Sound, Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Straits, and all of the surrounding waterways. I fill my freezer. The salmon runs in SE are protected by the forests. The salmon I catch allow me to finance my troller, so that I can maintain my subsistence lifestyle in the wilderness, and the subsistence I catch feed myself, and my family. We save money by not ordering food from other cities, and eat healthier. I enjoy the solemnness of the wild and can't imagine seeing it torn down. It would be a travesty to our National Forest. I am a wildlife photographer and would have a hard time finding deer, bear, squirrel, and many bird varieties, if their environments were ruined. In the spring I forage for devils club for salves, in the summer I pick a variety of berries for jams, syrups, and sweets. I find fiddle-head fern in the woods, and spruce tips to throw in salads.

I am writing a comment on the Alaska Roadless Rule DEIS because I am concerned with how the Rule and the proposed full exemption will impact my fishing, hunting, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, the peace and solitude I find in nature, recreating, the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts, the conservation of resources for future generations .

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS I support alternative 1: no action. It protects important fish and wildlife habitat from clearcutting and roadbuilding. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for economic livelihood, healthy fish habitat, deer habitat and subsistence hunting, foraging and gathering wild foods, recreating and enjoying nature, carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation, viewing wildlife, keeping public lands wild for future generations, fiscal responsibility and saving taxpayer dollars . A full exemption does not protect these values, nor does it effectively balance economic development and conservation of roadless area characteristics. A full exemption from the Roadless Rule and increased logging and roadbuilding will negatively impact the Tongass and what I and many others use and depend on the forest to provide for us.

The Roadless areas on the Tongass that are especially important to me are most importantly those on or around Chichagof Island, but also all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass. I want the roadless areas in these locations to stay in roadless status in any alternative selected by the Forest Service, and be managed to provide for the uses and activities I listed above. It is important to me that the T77 and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections. I've seen the devastation logging can cause in Hoonah, AK. And I've seen the deadlands left by over-forestation in Canada caused by greed and unsustainable practices.

I do not support the Forest Service's preferred alternative of a full exemption. A full exemption is not in the interests of Southeast Alaskans who live in and use the Tongass National Forest, because It will destroy our way of life and this precious wilderness area.. The State of Alaska says that a full exemption is needed for rural economic development opportunities. However, a full exemption would not help create more rural economic development opportunities, it would instead harm our existing rural economies that are based on the visitor industry and commercial fishing industry.

It would further harm rural economic opportunities because pursuing the same outdated economic model of

old growth clearcut harvesting for export stifles innovation and possibility in other sectors, such as mariculture, sustainable young growth harvest, and rural agriculture. If the Forest Service wants to support rural economic development, they should transition to second growth logging and improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects rather than rehashing old conflicts.

Don't play into the hands of greedy logging companies who refuse to adapt to more sustainable ways such as second growth logging. The Tongass is the LARGEST NATIONAL FOREST in America. And some of the largest sections of OLD GROWTH forest that is left.

I urge the Forest Service to prioritize the voices of Southeast Alaskans over those of our political representation and corporate interests. Choosing a full exemption will not create a long lasting, durable solution for roadless areas on the Tongass. It will only increase the legal challenges, uncertainty for businesses, and conflict in our beautiful Tongass going forward.

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*Alester Wells Pelican
city council*