

PUBLIC TESTIMONY BY KARLA HART  
PRESENTED AT THE  
JUNEAU COMMUNITY ROADLESS RULE PUBLIC MEETING  
HELD: DECEMBER 16, 2019, JUNEAU, ALASKA

SUBMITTED DECEMBER 17, 2019, AS A UNIQUE LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

KARLA HART: My name is Karla Hart, K-A-R-L-A H-A-R-T. 99801 is my zip code.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide information. I'm a lifelong resident of Alaska with over 55 years of living in Southeast Alaska. Over that time I've hiked, rowed, paddled, watched wildlife, boated, and guided tourists and explored and volunteered from Yakutat down to Prince of Wales Island. I've seen a lot of land over a lot of time and seen a lot of changes.

Rolling back the roadless rule designation has impacts so broad and destructive that I, as a private citizen, do not have enough time to personally analyze and respond to every detail. By reference I support and include all of the 117 pages of comments submitted by the professionals at the Alaska Wilderness League, National Wildlife Foundation, et al., including Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, of which I'm a proud member.

My reasons are varied and many. Climate change -- as mentioned, the science is solid. Climate change is happening, and the Tongass has immense global value for carbon sequestration. Leave the old growth alone. Leave the roadless areas intact and undisturbed.

Ecological values. We don't even know what we don't understand or misunderstand. No volume of analysis in an environmental document today can predict what people will know and value tomorrow. Looking back just a few decades shows the ongoing learning curve. Do no harm. Leave the roadless areas roadless. These areas extend from the presently glacier-covered rock through alpine, subalpine, various forests zones, and stages of growth down to tidewater and the unique uplifting margins of the archipelago. Complex, understudied exploitation of these areas is not in the best interests of the Tongass or of the present and future generations of people, wildlife, animals, and plants that will live here.

Invasive species are a particular concern of mine, and I shared some at the Forest Service's public meeting but not hearing. I've seen so many new invasive species coming into the region and spreading and spreading and spreading. And volunteering with the Forest Service, I've gone out and pulled weeds and spent ten days at a time in the wilderness with teams pulling weeds and seeing that it's like putting your little finger in a dike that's collapsing.

Right now the roadless areas are fairly safe from invasive species because there aren't a lot of ways for the invasives to get in. If we leave them alone, they can stay relatively safe. We do not have the resources -- the national forest does not have the resources to inventory the invasives, much less to protect them.

One more point, and then I'll send the rest in my written comments.

Mining. Their analysis claims that this isn't going to have much benefit for mining, and yet I saw a couple of key mining people at the public meeting that the Forest Service had in Juneau before. It made me wonder what's up. The Forest Service specifically says, with their very carefully worded language, that the 1872 mining law already allows them to access the roadless areas. So it says, "Changes in roadless management are therefore not expected to affect existing or future locateable mine exploration or mining activities in the forest."

It doesn't mean it can't make it a lot cheaper and easier for them to get their permits and to go in and not have to do things that take care of the land. They don't detail that, and I am suspicious that we're giving up a lot without even knowing it. The same with leasable mines and their language there. They're not being transparent with the public on what's happening. And I'll leave it there.

Thanks.

Public Testimony recorded and transcribed by Glacier Stenographic Reporters, Inc.