

Tongass National Forest; Alaska; Greens Creek Mine North Extension Project
Meeting: November 2020

Docket ID Number: 2020-22440

I am an environmental science major at Ursinus College in Pennsylvania, and the sale of protected land to companies for profit is a very large worry to me, and I ask that you do not grant this sale. Over Trump's term as president, he showed no remorse in selling off protected public lands to oil and mining companies. By doing this it hurts the environment, animals, and the people that live in the surrounding area. Over the long term, this forest will do a lot more for the environment and humans as a whole rather than just short term monetary benefits from natural resources. The companies do not deal with the long lasting damages to the environment and destroy the lands and waters to extract things that belong to all people for their own profit. The Hecla Greens Creek Mining Company is asking for more land even though they were granted access to the Tongass National Forest in 2013. This expansion will cause more disruption to the protected habitat and hurt the environment more than they already have.

There are three Native American tribes that rely on the Tongass National Forest for resources, and by expanding mining into further areas, it will only cause damage to the lands and waters that native peoples rely on for sustenance. The Hecla Greens Creek Mining Company will not have to deal with the aftermath of the destruction and pollution that mining causes, yet these people are going to have to. In the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) under the habitat evaluation, it brings up the effects of mining on an area. It says, "These areas are a source of acid mine drainage, surface runoff, erosion, and sedimentation, which create water pollution and land degradation problems. Mining activities leave a harsh environment for vegetation because of the lack of nutrients and organic matter, low pH, low water retaining capacity, toxic levels of trace metals, compaction, and poor physical conditions of spoil material" (Sopper 1988). There are major negative effects that come with mining, and it is not acceptable for protected forests to be sold off.

The Tongass National Forest is so important for the environment because it helps take carbon from the atmosphere, supports surrounding communities and has naturally clean water. The Forest Service provides a report on the benefits of the Tongass National Forest. It states, "The Environmental Protection Agency designates protected areas where public water systems draw their drinking water from surface and groundwater supplies. Water goes to about 10,000 people served by protected areas overlapping the forest by at least 25%" (2018 by Ecosystem Management and Coordination). There are thousands of people that rely on clean water and air from this forest, and these resources need to be protected from companies that are only looking for the money they can get out of it. Again, please do not allow the sale of more land in the Tongass National Forest to the Hecla Greens Creek Mining Company. Our national forests are a public resource and should not be sold to companies that will destroy habitat and pollute waters only for their own profit.

Habitat Evaluation:

2020. Habitat Evaluation: Guidance For The Review Of Environmental Impact Assessment Documents. p.133. Available at:

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/habitat-evaluation-pg.pdf>

[Accessed 21 November 2020].

Benefits to People Report about the Tongass National Forest:

2020. Benefits To People.

<https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/economics/documents/at-a-glance/benefits-to-people/alaska/BTP-Tongass.pdf>

[Accessed 21 November 2020].

Info On Tribes in the Area:

Fs.usda.gov. 2020. Region 10 - History & Culture. [online] Available at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r10/learning/history-culture/?cid=stelprdb5377945#:~:text=The%20Tlingit%2C%20Haida%2C%20and%20Tsimshian,the%20resources%20of%20the%20forests.>

[Accessed 21 November 2020].