

October 19, 2023

The following comments concern the USFS Thorne Bay Basin IRMP young growth timber sale. Of particular concern to me is the huge scale of this project and the fear that most of the timber will be shipped out as round log export, with little added value by local operators. At 25,000 acres. I understand this sale to be one of the largest if not the largest young growth sale on the Tongass. As we begin this transition I would hope the USFS would seek a means to increase more value from each log, not simply sending them off to be processed elsewhere. The Thorne Bay Basin sale is not an example of a transition to sustainable young growth harvest that I envisioned.

More consideration should be given to protecting wildlife habitat, especially SBTB and other forest dependent species. As POW struggles with a declining deer population, a timber sale of this size does not provide the protection necessary to rebuild these populations for subsistence users. How will the habitat work be done, and who will do it?

At a time when the FS should be considering alternative methods of harvesting timber instead of clearcuts, I'm discouraged by the plan to clearcut these units. Other young growth harvest on the Tongass is utilizing selective harvesting methods which are more sustainable. I would hope that the USFS would seek more progressive, sustainable methods of harvest for this sale as well.

This is a large project, and should include an EIS, with a range of alternatives to fully understand the repercussions to local economics, wildlife habitat, and forest health. We should have a better understanding through a range of alternatives of how much timber will be cut, what harvest methods will be used, how wildlife habitat is being protected, and how the timber will be processed. I also think that the cumulative effects of state timber harvest adjacent to this sale should be considered in the range of alternatives in an EIS.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

Cheryl Fecko