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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to express my strong opposition in rolling back the Roadless Area Conservation Rule in Southeast Alaska. I am asking that the "No Action" choice be made given the overwhelming public support and long-term benefits of maintaining the long standing conversation rule.

I had the opportunity to explore SE Alaska's Inside Passage over a summer via sailboat and saw many areas within the Tongass National Forest. The Tongass holds some of the most pristine natural environment I have ever seen and feel enabling further development would put at risk a national treasure equivalent to the likes of Yellowstone, Glacier, and Rainier National Parks.

Throughout my travels in the Tongass, I saw humpback whales, bear, and salmon in abundance not seen anywhere else on the west coast. Having grown up outside of Seattle, I've read about how the Puget Sound used to have an abundance of wildlife and forests like SE Alaska has now. As the growth of the Puget Sound area over the past century has increased, the population of legendary salmon runs and orca drastically decreased. I fear this will be the future of the Tongass if the roadless rule is rolled back.

Tourism (both traditional and adventure/environmental) is a significant source of revenue for SE Alaska. Entire cities are oriented around the influx of tourists with arrival of the daily cruise ships that transit the Tongass in the summer. These tourists come from around the globe to experience one of the world's last remote wildernesses. You can watch a number of these cruise ships transit the Tongass daily with thousands of people per ship on MarineTraffic.com.

Outside of risking a significant tourism industry, there are dozens of local communities that rely on the salmon fishery for sustenance and for their livelihood. Further development of the Tongass will risk one of the world's greatest salmon habitats that has no equal.

The combined economic drivers of tourism and fishing industries dwarf that of the timber industry. Even with aspirations of promising environmental protections with development, how can these be reasonably enforced given the remoteness and contradicting interests of developers? Why are we risking such significant long-term benefits such as tourism and fishing industries in exchange for the short-term and short-sighted gains of extensive development in the Tongass?

Thank you,

Rob Osterman

[See attachments containing pictures of mountains]

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