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Title:

Comments: Shawaan Jackson-Gamble's Alaska Roadless Rule Public Comment

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USFS Roadless Rule Public Comment

Shawaan Jackson-Gamble (CCTHITA Emerging Leader and AFN Southeast Regional Village Alternate)

December 17th, 2019

I am submitting this comment on behalf of my future kids and the generations that are still yet to come. I want to urge Secretary Perdue to select Alternative one, No Action Alternative because of how the current 2001 Roadless Rule protects our traditional ways of life. As Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian people we have always depended on our lands for our traditional foods and medicines for over 10,000 years and our language and songs tell us about our history and relationship we have with our lands. If you really study the Tlingit language, it's beautiful to see how much our language is to our lands. A full exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Rule would negatively impact my ability to engage in my traditional ways of life and cultural practices. The mission of the U.S. Forest Service states, "The Department of Agriculture is responsible for managing National Forest System resources to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations". Let me ask you this, how does doing a full exemption of the Roadless Rule meet the resource and cultural needs for the generations still yet to come? It doesn't, this is why I am here today to speak in favor of Alternative one, no action alternative because it meets the cultural needs of the future generations. A full exemption does not fulfill the purpose and need for the Alaska Roadless Rule as stated in the Notice of Intent (found in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement) which states "the USDA desires a durable and long-lasting regulation for the conservation and management of roadless areas on the Tongass." A wholesale removal of roadless protections from the Tongass will not help conserve or manage roadless areas.

We are, as my papa calls it, "massaging our lands" after the effects clear cut logging has done to our lands and we are just now starting to see more deer populate our lands, based on information from a local trapper and from observation. I got the opportunity this past summer to be the Road and Culvert Crew leader for the Keex Kwaan Community Forest Partnership and that is an excellent way of massaging our lands, my crew and I inventoried over 700 miles worth of road and over 1,400 culverts to prioritize which culverts need to be changed to help with fish passage. Note that Kupreanof Island is only 52 miles long and 20 miles wide so what is the need of more roads if we already have roads that can stretch along Kupreanof 14 times in length. I would like to see the Forest Service continue their investments in partnerships like the Keex Kwaan Community Forest Partnership and the continued restoration of our lands and waters rather than a full exemption from the Roadless Rule We need to invest into restoring our lands and waters because salmon, deer, moose, bear, beaver, seal, trees and the list goes on do not have a voice, it's up to us to do what is right for our land and water relatives like we have for over 10,000 years.

At the 2019 First Alaskan's Institute's Elders and Youth Conference I was the resolution drafter for the Resolution 19-57 Protect Clean Water and Water Dependent Species and passed unanimously at Elders and Youth then was eventually passed at the 2019 Alaska Federation of Natives Conference. The resolution calls upon tribal governments, regional non-profits, ANCSA Corporations, state and federal leaders to protect the health of our waters and habitat for water-dependent species therefore any current or future regulation, statute change or new statute must meet a traditional standard of protecting our traditional ways of living and will use tribal consultation to do so. We as Lingit people deserve to have a voice when it comes to protection of our land, waters and ways of life because we have been here and made our lands sustainable for over 10,000 years and will continue to do so for the next 10,000 years.

We have more youth going to college for work in natural resources fields and it is the youth right now that our under the hat or aat.oo of our ancestors, as my ancestors are giving me strength to speak from my heart and be here today, if it wasn't for my ancestors I wouldn't be standing here today so I want to take a second to acknowledge those that went before us. I once again want to urge Secretary Perdue to be in favor of alternative one so that we can restore our lands and waters. It won't only help massage our lands, it will provide employment and create careers in natural resources for local people like partnerships like The Keex Kwaan Community Forest Partnership and Hoonah Native Forest Partnership provide meaningful careers to our people. I feel confident with the strong group of youth that are rising up and coming back to their people educated and ready to be warriors for our people. A full exemption will not encourage rural economic development; alternative 1 will continue investments that the Forest Service has made into workforce development with rural youth and increase economic opportunities in our villages.

A full exemption of the Roadless Rule would be a big sign of disrespect to the Lingit, Haida and Tsimshian people because it will affect our ways of life and can even alter our traditional place name meanings because of the descriptions of our place names give for our lands and waters. The Lingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people of the Tongass will be disproportionately impacted by a full exemption from the 2001 Roadless Rule because we depend on these lands for our food security and traditional way of life. We have to utilize the current roads we have now for restoration purposes so that our ways of life can continue on. I hope that my comment is heard by Secretary Perdue because it is a matter that needs to have more tribal consolation and involvement because of our experience with making our lands sustainable for those that are still yet to come. Gunlcheesh (Thank you)

[See attachment containing the following technical resource: "The Alaska Federation of Natives 2019 Annual Convention Resolution]

[Position]