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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mr. Stewart:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Twin Mountain II Timber Sale Project during the early stages of project development. I am sending these comments as a concerned citizen and long-time resident of Prince of Wales Island. I have enjoyed over 30 years of recreating and harvesting the bounties of the Tongass National Forest on Prince of Wales Island and surrounding islands. I cherish the idea of having public lands to enjoy and an avenue to have some voice in their management.

My concerns for the Twin Mountain II Project reflect my serious concerns for the level of old growth harvest on Prince of Wales Island and the cumulative impacts of previous, current and future harvests by the USFS, State Forest, Alaska Mental Health Trust, University of Alaska, Sealaska, and other Native corporations and private landowners harvesting timber adjacent to and near the project boundaries. I hope that future analysis and mapping made available to the public for review will indicate such land boundaries and condition so that insightful comments can be made. Cumulative impacts to wildlife, especially Sitka Black tailed deer and watershed health are not given enough consideration. It is difficult at best for the public to keep up with the status of land exchanges and timber harvest by other landowners, much of it on Prince of Wales Island.

Both the Staney Creek and Red Bay areas have been clear-cut extensively during the days when timber from Prince of Wales Island supplied the pulp mills. These harvested areas are in a stem exclusion stage that provides little habitat for wildlife. It surprises me that the FS proposes to go back into these impacted watersheds to harvest what little old-growth remains. The sad future for Prince of Wales Island might be that the only old growth will be the buffers along anadromous streams. This hardly represents an intact forest ecosystem or healthy watersheds.

Another concern is that no harvest of young growth is proposed for this project during the next 5-10 years of its implementation, even though both areas have plenty of young growth stands. There are small mill operators on Prince of Wales who have stated a desire for young growth timber. Incentives should be given to make more timber available to smaller operators who are adding value to the timber harvested, instead of granting waivers so that more can be exported in the round. If economic stability is one of the goals of this project then more effort should be made to prop up these smaller operators. Reductions to old growth harvest from this project should be made to account for the contribution of other landholders to the needs of the timber industry. I would support alternatives that increase the ability of smaller operators to harvest smaller stands of available timber.

In preparing the EIS for this project there should be less emphasis on the increased export of round logs and the targeting of yellow and red cedar stands on Prince of Wales Island. Prince of Wales Island has made its contribution to the timber industry. It's time to place more emphasis on watershed health and restoration along with recreation projects that can mean a long-term future for the residents of Prince of Wales Island.

The emphasis for the Forest Service on Prince of Wales Island should rely less on timber production and more on other uses and benefits of the forest that could improve forest ecosystem health and contribute to a diverse economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I look forward to future opportunities to comment on this project.