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Attn: Thomas Bay Young-Growth Timber Sale

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Submitted electronically at:

<https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=60639>

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments for the Thomas Bay Timber Sale project EA. We applaud the agency for the preferred alternative that reduces the size of clear cuts, and increases focus on habitat. The scale and ecologically focused design of the project is a step in the right direction. We are encouraged that the proposed project is responsive to local concerns about fish and wildlife habitat, includes conservation and restoration management actions such as fish habitat work, culverts removal, thinning, clean-ups, and invasive plant treatments. As the Forest Service moves into more integrated management projects following the direction of the Sustainability Strategy, we are eager to see the agency focus more resources and agency action on recreation, restoration, and climate resiliency.

Under the preferred alternative, Alternative 3, the prioritization of habitat improvements across the landscape rather than timber production is encouraging. The project could increase habitat heterogeneity and efforts by the agency to avoid large clear-cuts are worthy of consideration and commendation. We are glad to see that the project will exclude old-growth harvest, consistent with the approach of the Sustainability Strategy.

Thomas Bay is an important destination for commercial tour companies, particularly small boat cruises. Through the Visitor Products Cluster Working Group Sustainability Strategy investment, the Forest Service has obtained vessel tracking information which should allow the agency to consult those tour companies and organizations to ensure that any logging would not adversely impact commercial operations and recreational uses.

The recognition in the preferred alternative of the need to prioritize fish and wildlife habitat demonstrates that the agency is listening and responding to the concerns of Southeast Alaskans. The USDA Sustainability Strategy provides a good path for the agency to successfully work with local communities to listen to locally led vision for the important projects. We encourage the agency to continue listening to Southeast Alaskans as we ask for the agency to manage the forest for local uses like hunting, fishing, subsistence, recreation.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Dan Kirkwood

Southeast Alaska Futures Program Manager

Salmonstate