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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Lione Clare and I live in Sitka, Alaska. I was born and raised in Sitka, so for my entire 23.5 years on this planet, the Tongass has been my home and playground. I both depend on and value the forest not only for exceptional recreational, fishing, wild food-gathering, wildlife watching, and photography experiences, but for work in the tourism and nature photography fields. It relates to and sustains my whole way of life, both for personal enjoyment and making an income to support myself, and all of that is dependent on it staying exactly how it is. I am writing a comment on the Alaska Roadless Rule DEIS because I am concerned with how the Rule and the proposed full exemption will impact my fishing, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, the peace and solitude I find in nature, and recreation opportunities, as well as the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts, and the conservation of resources for future generations.

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS I support alternative 1: no action. The rule is working fine as it is by balancing the conservation of our fish and wildlife habitat with important development projects. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for healthy fish habitat, economic livelihood, foraging and gathering wild foods, recreating and enjoying nature, carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation, viewing wildlife, keeping public lands wild for future generations, fiscal responsibility, and saving taxpayer dollars. A full exemption does not protect these values, nor does it effectively balance economic development and conservation of roadless area characteristics. A full exemption from the Roadless Rule and increased logging and roadbuilding will negatively impact the Tongass and what I and many others use and depend on the forest to provide for us.

The Roadless areas on the Tongass that are especially important to me are those on or around Baranof Island, and Chichagof Island, because I have firsthand experienced these places; however, I know that indirectly, all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass are important. I want the roadless areas in these locations to stay in roadless status in any alternative selected by the Forest Service, and be managed to provide for the uses and activities I listed above. It is important to me that the T77 and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections.

I do not support the Forest Services preferred alternative of a full exemption. A full exemption is not in the interests of Southeast Alaskans who live in and use the Tongass National Forest. Even though I am not that old, I can sense a transition towards tourism being the most important economic driver in Southeast Alaska, NOT roads and timber harvests, and I think many others sense that as well. We cannot slash the last intact old growth stands that are important carbon stores and necessary for healthy forest ecosystems simply for short-term gain or benefits. They are too important for the growing tourism industry as well. Visitors come to Southeast Alaska to see how wild and pristine it is, not to see scars of clearcut forests from their cruise ship or excursion they take from one of their ports. There is too much at stake on the long-term outlook that a full exemption would threaten, and I think most Southeast Alaskans realize this and that it is worth more to keep the Roadless Rule intact. The State of Alaska says that a full exemption is needed for rural economic development opportunities. However, a full exemption would not help create more rural economic development opportunities, it would instead harm our existing rural economies that are based on the visitor industry and commercial fishing industry.

It would further harm rural economic opportunities because pursuing the same outdated economic model of old growth clearcut harvesting for export stifles innovation and possibility in other sectors, such as mariculture, sustainable young growth harvest, and rural agriculture. If the Forest Service wants to support rural economic development, they should devote resources to support our fishing and visitor industries, invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure, and improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects, rather than rehashing old conflicts.

I urge the Forest Service to prioritize the voices of Southeast Alaskans over those of our political representation and corporate interests. Choosing a full exemption will not create a long lasting, durable solution for roadless areas on the Tongass. It will only increase the legal challenges, uncertainty for businesses, and conflict on the Tongass going forward.

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