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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Mary Barrett and I live in Sitka, Alaska. I have lived in Sitka for 7 1/2 years and have lived in Alaska, mostly south-central for 38 years.

I depend on the forest for my spiritual health. It protects me from the rain. The way the sunlight filters through the trees is gorgeous. I love to hear all the various sounds ravens make and watching them harass eagles with their mewling cries. I love the moist sphagnum moss and the stair step moss. I wait for the first Coptis flower of spring and later watch for its amazing seedpod. I love the shy maiden flowers hiding beneath the towering hemlocks.

I don't like the crowded spindly trees of second growth forest. It makes me sad. There is no history within those trees except for man's destructiveness. No breathing room.

When I run the Cross Trail I hate the section of recent second growth which is dark and devoid of undergrowth. 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 foraging for wild foods, the peace and solitude I find in nature, recreating, the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts, the conservation of resources for future generations .

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS I support alternative 1: no action. It protects important fish and wildlife habitat from clearcutting and roadbuilding. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for 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 all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass. 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, because a full exemption is politically motivated and supports corporate timber interests which are extractive, at the expense of the fishing and tourism industries which are sustainable and don't deplete the environment.

Southeast Alaskans have already submitted comments expressing their wish to keep the Roadless Rule as it is. It is obvious that the Forest Service had to cave to the USDA and to Senator Murkowski who is stuck in the 1950's with her support of the timber industry. The Alaskan politicians such as Governor Dunleavy do not

represent Southeast Alaskans and do not care about the citizens who actually live, work, and recreate in the old growth forest and who care about not aggravating climate change.

Also cutting old growth is not economically viable as it is ultimately taxpayers who have to pay for the roads and infrastructure that don't benefit them, but corporate interests when the pulp is shipped overseas without any value added. 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 transition to second growth logging devote resources to support our fishing and visitor industries invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure 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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