

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/31/2019 8:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Lauren Bell and I live in Sitka, Alaska. I grew up in Southcentral Alaska, but moved to Southeast 5 years ago. Part of the reason I love it here it because of that vast shorelines of uninterrupted old growth, stretching from shore to mountaintop. I estimate I spend 30% of my time in these forests - hiking for pleasure as well as subsistence hunting and gathering. These Intact forests are critical routes of transport around the impenetrable bands of recently-logged regrowth. They also provide substantial stabilization of hillsides that protect against landslides, whereas road cuts and logging work against this. I am a marine biologist by profession - the health of the coastal oceans is intimately tied to the health of the forests and streams that connect them. Logging increases sedimentation and nutrient loading in the nearshore ocean, negatively affecting productivity, biodiversity, and thus subsistence opportunities around logging areas. We need intact forests to maintain intact coastal oceans, which I depend on for food and well being. 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, hunting, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, the peace and solitude I find in nature, recreating, 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. 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 economic livelihood, healthy fish habitat, deer habitat and subsistence hunting, 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, Chichagof Island. 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 It ignores the majority of Alaskans who have spoken out against the full exemption! We voted for you, Listen to us!. 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 transition to second growth logging 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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