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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Gentlefolk,

I was born in Petersburg, Alaska in 1959 at the dawn of statehood, and grew up in Sitka and Wrangell (both pulp and logging towns). For the past 30 years I have lived with my wife on the waters of the Alexander Archipelago, sailing without engines.

In my short span of life I've seen vast inroads made into the Tongass Forest. Logging, privatization and more logging, the clearing out of lease-holders and homesteaders and yet more logging. Large swathes of our home forests have been converted to pulp, exportation in the round and lumber of diminishing quality, generally misused in shortlived structures.

Moving about as we do puts us in a unique position to see the effect of clear-cutting practices across the Tongass.

Despite being assured by one EIS after another that "the best silvacultural practices will be followed", we observe that:

* Older clear-cuts do not recover to anywhere near their original state.

* Thinning has been largely underfunded and underperformed allowing terribly choked undergrowth and stunted trees.

* Despite the predictions and schedules that supported the pulp era contracts and still inform management practices, boreal rainforests recover much slower than those in more temperate zones. Viewing the Tongass as a 'renewable resource' has not been borne out on the timescale of our present institutions.

* Extensive percentages of clear-cuts have grown back in alder, undercutting the narrative and time table of "harvest cycles".

* In areas where timber has regrown to usable diameters, the annular ring spacing is an order of magnitude wider than that of old growth, severely reducing the quality of any lumber that might be produced from it.

* Many of the rivers and creeks running through clear-cut areas are strikingly low on fish return, especially in recent hot and droughty years.

Our involvement with many logging communities has provided ample evidence that the unbid-for reaches of the Tongass are "economically unsuitable for harvest". I.e., that, without the preponderance of high value trees found in old growth stands, large scale commercial logging cannot break even. This continues to lead to the targeting and decimation of remaining, old growth. As evidence, see the proportion of old-growth to other growth acreage in the present proposal.

My friends, old growth is not renewable, at least on a time scale available to our present institutions and society. Old growth forest and the ecosystems of which timber is a foundational support are finite.

To our friends in the USFS, I ask you to remember that you became foresters for love of the forest. How many of you spend happy days in a clear cut?

To our friends at the top of the State Government, I ask you to remember that in the 'harvest' of the Tongass, you are in effect extending the I-5 corridor to our state. Washington, Oregon and California were also formerly lands of pristine abundance, and fell to the same, false economic imperatives.

I ask, too, that you remember your Republican aversion to subsidy (counter to free market principles). The taxpayer has been subsidizing the logging industry by paying for road construction. Is there any reason to think that, were recreational access their sole function, they would ever be funded or built?

I'll end by quoting Edward Abbey from *The Fool's Progress*... "An economy is a machine for turning resources into garbage." As things are going, the Tongass is destined for the dumpster.

We can preserve the living Tongass for ourselves and those who come after, or we can cut it for short term gain to no lasting benefit.

As an Alaskan, I say NO to more roads in the Tongass. I say YES to conserving what remains, especially the old growth.

Respectfully yours,

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