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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I manage a small engineering and surveying firm in southern southeast Alaska and employ about 15-20 full time employees. The roadless rule has definitely had an impact in our region and not just in timber. We have seen very good projects halted or severely impacted by the roadless rule. Projects such as providing power connections to the Niblac and Bokan Mountain mining projects. Access to geothermal and hydro projects here within our region. Access to additional multi use recreation, tourism and hunting lands here on our island in Ketchikan. It's difficult to realize the vast quantity of forest lands that will continue to remain untouched old growth forest. Removing the exemption will change little in terms of forest preservation but give us a tremendous amount of latitude to further meaningful projects in our region.

I urge you to fully exempt the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule. We have enough land permanently set aside already and the National Forest Management Act planning regulations are the proper way to manage the remaining areas on the Tongass as a multiple-use forest.

Other points to consider: Exempting the Tongass from the Roadless Rule will not cause harm to the region's fisheries. Fish habitat is already fully protected on the national forest. Wildlife habitat is also fully protected on the national forest and wildlife is thriving in the young growth stands were timber harvesting has taken place over the last 65-years. Mining, energy development and community access are inhibited by the Roadless Rule.

We need a larger timber supply in order to restore more year around jobs. Timber harvesting has not harmed the tourism industry. Most outdoor recreation on the forest takes place in or near the previously harvested areas because of the access provided by the logging roads.

Please restore the Roadless Exemption so that Southeast Alaska can have the same economic opportunities as communities in or near other national forests.

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