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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern:

The proposed rule would establish a new land classification system designed to conserve roadless area characteristics on the Tongass National Forest while accommodating timber harvesting and road construction/reconstruction activities that are determined to be needed for forest management, economic development opportunities.

This would be bad for the local indigenous people, including the Tlingit and Haida, who have lived in this region for centuries and rely on the forest's healthy natural resources for survival. And it would be bad not only for Alaskas forests but states economy and American taxpayers, who would end up subsidizing, through road building etc., the exploitation of these landscapes.

The Tongass includes some of the most productive and valuable fish and wildlife habitat in the world. A report by Southeast Conference, a regional economic development organization, shows that Southeast Alaskas tourism industry supports 17 percent of all jobs while the seafood industry, mostly commercial fishing for salmon, accounts for 9 percent of jobs. The Tongass National Forest makes up 78 percent of the land base in Southeast Alaska and is the mainstay of the regions economy. Twenty-five percent of all the salmon caught on the West Coast come from streams on the Tongass. Maintaining healthy salmon runs should be the priority for the future management of the Tongass.

The Tongass is a magnificent place. The Forest Service itself describes it this way: Comprising the largest intact temperate rain forest in the world, the Tongass is a place filled with islands and salmon streams, where towering mountains sweep down into thick old-growth forest and granite cliffs drop into deep fjords. During the later part of the last century, stands of trees 200 to 500 years old were routinely clear-cut in Alaskas national forests especially in the Tongass. Federal subsidies for roads and bridges made the cutting profitable for industry, and most of the wood was exported to Asia. By the 1990s, both tourists and Alaskans were outraged by the unsightly scars. Prince of Wales Island became a symbol of the damage caused by large-scale clear cutting of old-growth forests. Multiple lawsuits sought to block the liquidation of Alaskas old-growth forests. Further protections for the Tongass were added in 2016, when a management plan was finalized after years of analysis and input from the public and affected interests. It provides for moving away from cutting old-growth forests while maintaining a sustainable level of harvesting of second-growth forest on already cut land.

The roadless rule is an intensely conservative regulation. It saves taxpayers money and keeps the few remaining wild remote public lands intact. Most important, it maintains options for future generations. The proposed rule would only maintain some minor characteristics of roadless areas but would allow timber harvesting and road construction activities all over the Tongass National Forest. The roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest are critical for providing habitat for wildlife species found only in America's rainforest, and are deserving of strong and permanent protection. Intact areas of the Tongass National Forest are the foundation of the unparalleled Southeast Alaska quality of life and of the fish and wildlife that make this forest a global treasure.

I strongly urge you to reject the proposed rule.

Thank you for considering my opinion..

[Position]

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