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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Stephanie Harold and I have lived in Hoonah, Alaska for 27 years. The immensity of old growth trees gives me spiritual nourishment and provides the muse for my on-location sketch art. I also value the forest for its critical role in the Southeast ecosystem around which this entire community is culturally and economically organized. Finally, I know that the Tongass National Forest, the last temperate rainforest on the planet, absorbs around 10 percent of U.S. carbon emissions. As a parent, I value the role those trees play in preserving our climate for my daughter and her children.

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 the peace and solitude I find in nature, while recreating, fishing, subsistence harvesting, and foraging for wild foods. The Tongass is a national and global treasure which sequesters carbon and mitigates climate change impacts. It is essential that our government take the lead in conserving 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 such as tourism, hydro-electric power, and value-added logging. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for the following:

healthy fish and wildlife habitat

foraging for wild foods

recreating and enjoying nature

carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation

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.

All of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass are important to me, either personally or for the overall health of the ecosystem. I want the roadless areas 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 the Full Exemption Alternative discounts the overwhelming support by Southeast Alaskans for maintaining the current Roadless Rule. Today tourism, fishing, and subsistence play a far greater economic role than does logging. Value-added logging operations such as the one in Hoonah do not require great amounts of timber to continue their important place in our community. Moreover, the full exemption would direct USFS resources (tax payer dollars) away from supporting the contemporary economic drivers.

The State of Alaska says that a full exemption is needed for rural economic development opportunities. However, a full exemption would actually harm rural economic opportunities because it is based on an outdated economic model of old growth clearcut harvesting for export. This 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 instead

devote resources to support our fishing and visitor industries

transition to second growth logging where it is commercially viable

invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure, and

improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects.

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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