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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Erin Fulton and I live in Sitka, Alaska. I have lived in Sitka for seven years. I work for a locally owned small cruise ship company, where I am an onboard naturalist and expedition leader. The most common reason people come to Alaska as a tourist is a chance to see and experience wild places because they are so rapidly disappearing around the globe. Tourism is a big part of our economy in Tongass communities, and keeping the Roadless Rule intact helps to ensure those wild places remain that way and will continue to attract tourists.

Beyond my day job dependence on an intact Roadless Rule, I also rely on healthy, intact ecosystems in order to get food and as a place to recreate and be a happy/healthy human 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, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, the peace and solitude I find in nature, recreating, the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, 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, 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 all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass. 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 The vast majority of public comment from the people who live and work and depend on the Tongass are in favor of No Action. A Full Exemption would be a slap in the face of all of us who live here, effectively ignoring the overwhelming public opinion. As the Rule exists now, we can still work to explore new projects and business opportunities. There is no reason for the Rule to be removed. It helps a scant few people who live here, if it really helps any at all.. 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 improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects rather than rehashing old conflicts invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure transition to second growth logging devote resources to support our fishing and visitor industries.

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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