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First name: Christine

Last name: Klein

Organization:

Title:

Comments: HC261-A

November 6, 2019

RE: Alaska Roadless Rule Exemption, project 54511

*My name is Christine Klein, a lifelong Alaskan, raised on a subsistence homestead near Ketchikan. A homestead continuously inhabited for over 100 years by people relying on the forest for both income and food. I am ever grateful for an Alaska Loggers Association scholarship in the '80's that enabled me to attend engineering college, and be the 1st in my family to obtain a degree. *Unfortunately* [section circled], after finishing there were no longer job opportunities to return home to. I have watched the situation progressively worsen over the past 20 years, as hundreds of SE residents are forced to leave the forest we love due to unaffordability and scarce jobs.* [section highlighted]

[Star] *I'm here to support a Tongass National Forest full exemption from the national Roadless Rule.* [section bolded and highlighted]

1. In 2003, and 2010 *U.S. Dept. Agriculture previously determined to exempt Tongass from roadless rules.* [section highlighted] should be exempt *The reasoning and facts supporting that decision remain* [section highlighted] valid; however, ***the socio-economic conditions and long-term damage to lower and middle-class citizens, has only worsened across the region over that time frame** [section italicized]. An exemption is urgently needed because the continued and severe economic impacts to SE Alaska are unjustifiable.* [section highlighted] For example:

a. *3,000 jobs have been lost across the entire region* [section highlighted] reducing *economic diversity.* [section highlighted]

b. *In Ketchikan the 2nd largest city, 20% of its students and families have left.* [section highlighted]

c. *Families have had to leave for the living wage jobs elsewhere as average annual wages dropped to \$48,000 and the cost of living has risen to 100% higher than the national average.* [section highlighted]

d. *Over 41% of all children in Ketchikan are now eligible for food assistance in school.* [section highlighted]

e. *Region demographics for the 1st time have changed from a majority of a young and working* [section highlighted] age population *to one of primarily non-working, retirees, and elderly.* [section highlighted]

2. The *Forest is already strongly environmentally protected, as proven by rich abundance of wildlife. It has 19 wilderness designations (39%) and another 58% in other permanent set-asides that prohibit development. This leaves less than 3% for multiple* [section highlighted] uses, 552,000 acres + *that are tightly regulated by Tongass Forest Management Act. An exemption will restore the normal Forest Plan planning process that has worked successfully in its protective measures.* [section highlighted]

a. *Deer habitat is maintained to sustain wolves and hunters are allowed to take 4-6 deer annually. the best hunting continues to be in young growth and harvest areas.* [section highlighted]

b. *Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game's record show salmon populations doubled in the region since commercial timber harvests began* [section highlighted] in the 1950's.

c. *Wildlife habitat is fully protected and thriving in young growth stands.* [section highlighted]

d. *Timber harvests have not impacted tourism as visits and tour ships increased* [section highlighted] the last In 20 years, *grew over 15% in the past two years, and are expected to continue growing.* [section highlighted]

3. SE *communities are surrounded by Tongass federal lands making up 95% of the region. It restricts access still needed for basic roads, airports, energy transmission lines, natural resources, and infrastructure - things required for healthy communities and diverse economy. roadless rules being instituted *by default* [section underlined] has created a wilderness without authorization, and without regard to our local inhabitants and average citizens. It imposes artificially high living costs, primarily low wage seasonal job opportunities, and social instability in the region.* [section highlighted] Simply put, *Tongass being managed as wilderness or park violates the promises made to us of no more land withdrawals and set-asides,* [section highlighted]

4. *A Tongass National Forest roadless Rule exemption is needed and appropriate for SE Alaska:* [section highlighted]

a. To *maintain access to the regions many remote towns and communities which it surrounds.* [section highlighted]

b. *To provide materials for the few small timber companies that still remain and exist locally.* [section highlighted]

c. *Only 168,000 in added acreage would be considered for timber harvest. In reality, much smaller portions could be utilized due to existing management restrictions, buffer zones, topography, *[section highlighted] stream setbacks, wildlife preservation corridors, conditions, and set asides.

d. *It will not change the region timber sale quantity or demand projections previously established.* [section highlighted]

e. *It will increase USFS flexibility for how harvest goals can be achieved, *[section highlighted] and *enable foresters* [section highlighted] to *access areas where logging can occur more cost-effectively.* [section highlighted]

f. The *Tongass was created, intended, and promised to us to be a *working forest. One that is accessible and beneficial for multiple users and all socio-economic classes.* [section underlined] *[section highlighted]

Our region, communities, and families need a Tongass National Forest Roadless rule exemption for survival. [section highlighted] Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Christine Klein

ALSO- The University of AK Land Grant has had 9,000 students who've - fully funded for [illegible] full scholarships for all top 100, [illegible] from primarily its [illegible] students timber [illegible] SE AK since the 1980s! [section circled]

cc:

*Senator Murkowski

Senator Sullivan

Congressman Young* [section italicized]

[Position]