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Title:

Comments: Citizen comment on Roadless Rule in AK Tongass National Forest

To: US Forest Service

From: Carolyn A Cyr

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Please accept the following comments as you consider 6 alternatives proposed by the draft environmental impact statement proposed under the National Environmental Policy Act.

First and foremost my comment is that Alternative 1 should be chosen, for the benefit of the people who live and work in the vicinity of the Tongass National Forest to conserve the integrity of the ecosystem of the Tongass National Forest, for the economic stability of taxpayers of the United States, and for the benefit of all species of life on planet earth, including humans.

You may note that I am a legal resident of New York. However i have visited my son who lives in Sitka ,Alaska numerous times over the past ten years as I assist him in his livelihood there as an employee of a fisheries organization and also as a commercial fisherman. Sitka is like my second home and it is a treasure to behold, on many levels.

Fishing is the lifeblood of the economy in places like Sitka and throughout the Tongass National Forest. Those who work in fisheries and associated economies need to be absolutely sure that there is access to fish habitat, meaning that salmon are able to spawn in healthy rivers and streams. Rather than building new roads, a priority should be placed on restoration of habitats previously impacted by clearcut logging and road building. That work can be accomplished from the already present 5000 miles of logging roads that exist in the Tongass. Commercial fishing industry inputs have already made it clear that the existing Roadless Rule is a huge positive for their businesses. Evidence of this input can be found in the fact that 90% of the formal comments received by the US Forest Service were in support of taking no action to change the Roadless Rule. Did you know that salmon DNA is found in the trees of the Tongass? This proves the inextricable link between the salmon and the trees, and this link must not be disrupted by choosing any alternative other than Alternative 1. This summarizes one aspect of my first point that Alternative 1 should be chosen to benefit the people who live and work in the region impacted by possible changes in the Tongass National Forest.

It is important to keep in mind that the Roadless Rule is working, and that exemptions have consistently been granted when needed for commercial access, mining, and hydroelectric power.

Another group of people who would benefit from Alternative 1 are the native peoples who live and work in the region impacted by the Tongass National Forest. Rather than pretending to know their thoughts and opinions, I feel rather that the needs and opinions of native peoples should be highly respected. Native sentiment prefers Alternative 1. The following groups recommend Alternative 1 which is taking no action: Ketchikan Indian Community, Organized Village of Saxinam, Craig Tribal Association, and the Organized Village of Kahu. I implore you to take the advice of these peoples and cultures who have lived here much longer than the US Forest Service has existed. This is their rightful right to the land and its bounty, making sure that it will be healthy for

generations to come.

Contrary to Senator Murkowski's reporting that most Alaskans support changes to the Roadless Rule, once again I state that 90% of the formal comments received by the US Forest Service were in support of taking no action to change the Roadless Rule.

Also to be considered is that tourism industry input has made clear that the Roadless Rule is a big positive for the continued success for this aspect of the Alaskan economy.

Now let's talk economics. Research shows that logging sales in the Tongass National Forest over the years have shown a \$600 million net loss over a period of years, when adjusted for inflation. Federal research reveals that the US Forest Service lost \$17.7 billion on timber sales in the Tongass National Forest in 2018. Taxpayer money has been used to subsidize the building of roads. Remote locations and rugged terrain drive up the costs of road building which in reality is a huge expense in logging. So should the taxpayers of the United States of America be subsidizing the building of roads in remote, rugged terrain, at an exorbitant expense? My emphatic answer is NO, and so this is another rationale for choosing Alternative 1.

Logical thinking makes me ask who would benefit by choosing an alternative other than Alternative 1. The answer appears to be the logging companies. Keep in mind that with taxpayer subsidized roads the real burden for the expense of road building would be realized by the taxpayers of the country, not the logging companies. So they in fact would be able to earn a higher profit margin due to essentially governmental funding to cover the expenses of establishing and maintaining this aspect of their business operations. This is honestly a travesty and should not be allowed to take place! Government monies must benefit the citizens, not private business!

More specifically, 2 companies would benefit in this situation. These companies are Viking Mill and Alcan Timber Resources. Changing from the current Roadless Rule would allow these 2 companies to clearcut ancient forests in areas that have been protected for 20 years now. The reality is that these two timber companies would see the only real benefits from a Tongass exemption. And remember that taxpayer subsidies as described above would line the pockets of these businesses with more profits, to the detriment of the people who live and work in and near the Tongass National Forest. Who speaks for the people, the wildlife and the trees? The answer is Alternative 1.

Another disturbing aspect of this whole process is this question - why is the state directing taxpayer monies to an industry group to support its lobbying efforts to change the current Roadless Rule? This aspect reeks of special interest corruption!

The US Forest Service should listen to the people on this issue, rather than the encroaching interests of our current United States president and Alaskan Governor Dunleavy, in their efforts to corrupt this process. The stakes are high for all involved - the people, the taxpayers, the forests, the waters, and all the living species that make up the wonders of the Tongass National Forest.

Lastly, the Tongass National Forest, as the largest national forest in the United States, provides a huge carbon sink. In order to protect life on earth in this time of climate change, Alternative 1 should be the choice made. The future of life on our planet depends upon this.

Your task is great and the implications will be important, now and in the future. I implore you to choose Alternative 1 for the greatest short and long term benefit. Please follow the science, the true economics, and your conscience rather than the politics of greed and falsely promised profits, which are not profits at all.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn A. Cyr

[Position]