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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I strongly support "No Action" on the Roadless rule for Alaska. Especially now, in light of growing climate change concerns we need to increase protections for our environment. The few remaining large stands of old growth in the Tongass need to be protected under the roadless rule.

I have lived in Sitka, Alaska for over 29 years. My wife and I have raised two kids in this beautiful town surrounded by the beauty of the Tongass and healthy maritime environment. We would not have chosen to live here had the Sitka pulp mill stayed open because of concerns about air and water quality, and our daily concern for senseless habitat destruction of pristine forest.

The reasons for keeping the roadless rule intact for the Tongass are many. I will highlight a few:

As a commercial fisherman. I fully realize the value of protecting Tongass old growth as the nurseries for our very valuable renewable resource of salmon.

As a subsistence food gather I depend on old growth forest to maintain a healthy deer population so that I am able to provide my family healthy organic meat at affordable prices. Other foods which we collect from the Tongass include goat, berries, mushrooms, and salmon which were reared in its nurseries.

As evident during the first comment period regarding the roadless rule in the Tongass during the post Clinton days, the public is overwhelmingly in support of the roadless rule. Records show it was one of the largest public comments made nationwide with more than 2.5 million comments and something like 95% in support of the roadless rule. The "public servants" of this country need to heed such strong public interests rather than cave to private corporate interests.

One of the main reasons for keeping the Roadless rule is very simple. It comes down to economics. Studies have shown a huge backlog of forest service road maintenance needs. Building and maintaining roads in the Tongass is very expensive and often is done at tax payer expenses. It makes no economic sense.

The Tongass now carries the additional value as a Carbon sink. With climate change now confronting humans and all species with very real likelihood of famine, resource based conflicts and mass extinctions, we need to refocus our energies on every possible positive step toward carbon neutrality. Keeping old growth growing in the Tongass is a sensible first step.

Let us also not forget the huge economic value of the increased visitor and recreational use which the Tongass has seen over recent years. People do not come to the Tongass to see more clearcuts!

As for the economic drivers favoring clearcutting more of the Tongass. Let us remember that the cost of roadbuilding and remote logging in the Tongass often mean that monument trees are being cut down at a taxpayers loss or for very little gain if any. The slow rate of growth of the Tongass forests means that this makes even less economic sense. Let us also remember that most of the forest products harvested in the Tongass are exported in the round which results in far less economic gain than a value added product.

My final reason for keeping the roadless rule intact for the Tongass has less tangible economic benefits but its value is immense. I strongly believe that the human soul has much to gain through visits to old growth forests or through simply knowing they exist.

Again, I strongly urge you to favor "No Action" on the Roadless Rule for Alaska[hellip]. helping protect the few remaining old growth stands of the Tongass.

Sincerely,

Roland Wirth

[Position]

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