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Organization:

Title:

Comments: HC316

I stand as a sovereign Tlingit Woman. **Haaa Aaani Ah Yeh,** [text italicized for emphasis] this is our land.

My name is Kasy yah gei, Ernestine Hanlon Abel. I am Tlingit, Raven Dog Salmon, and my family has been in the Tongass Forest from the beginning of time. I am a member of the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, WECAN International. The Tlingit people are part of the ecosystem, and eat, drink and breathe from the land, air and water around us. The trees in the forest have witnessed generations of my grandparents thriving off of this land.

Secretary Perdue, keep the 2001 National ROADLESS RULE intact, and do not allow a weakened exception for Alaska's Tongass National Forest. This RULE will allow the areas that have been logged a time to heal, but the healing has just begun. I support the NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE so that we will continue to be protected from more resource extraction.

I have been weaving spruce root baskets for 40 years. I also do Chilkat weaving. I am wearing a spruce root hat and a Chilkat apron that I wove. I have a long personal experience with logging and harvesting for weaving, a customary and traditional use under ANILCA, the law which allows us to continue to receive and offer the best from our land. The impacts of the climate crisis are intertwined with the logging.

Before any logging, I could harvest spruce roots close to home. I need an old growth canopy to get the proper spruce roots for baskets. Moss prevents other vegetation from intertwining its different roots. The moss used to be a really thick carpet, but I have witnessed it getting thinner each year until now the moss is often gone and there is different vegetation.

Even areas away from the clear cuts could feel the distress from the trees. When a tree is in distress, nearby healthy trees send out healer or medicine roots which have tiny hair-like growth shooting off from the main root. I was taught to not harvest medicine roots so that they could heal the other trees. Thirty to 40 years ago, it was rare to see a medicine root. Since the massive logging here, I see a lot more medicine roots, even miles away from the cuts.

There are also no more areas where I can harvest grass for designs I place on my baskets. The forest service brought tall, invasive grass, planted it around town and out the logging roads. Indeed it did invade.

To harvest roots, grass, and other materials, we relied on all 4 seasons of the year, as shown by the design on my vest. When the snow melted and the ground thawed, we could harvest the roots. But the climate crisis has changed our weather patterns. The new weather patterns and massive clearcuts made the ground drier which means that the spruce roots have a lot more pitch to deal with. Cleaning the roots is harder on your hands and the pitch makes splitting the roots more difficult. The roots that I harvested more recently are not as pliable as they used to be.

Chilkat weaving uses two other things that the land provides. I use yellow cedar to spin with mountain goat wool for my warp. Now on Chicagof Island we have massive stands of dead yellow cedar which even appear on the maps in the forest service office. Alarmingly, this is our canary for the climate crisis because of declining snowpack. I also use mountain goat wool. This summer there were 2 sightings of mountain goats, one on the beach in Ketchikan and one in a neighborhood in Sitka. Goats should never come down to sea level in the

summertime. They are receiving wrong signals.

The logging and climate crisis shows themselves here in additional ways. Bears are confused and come into the community to be killed by the cops. The water for salmon has warmed to the point of fish dying off before they can spawn and fertilize the next generation. The tides have risen to the point the Alaska marine ferries cannot always land at terminals when the tides are too high to allow the ramps to function. This summer was extremely hot; the mountains were bare of snow, something we have never seen before.

In the 1980-90s we faced additional negative impacts from the clear cut logging industry that began in the 1950s. It was a boom and bust approach that we were helpless against one example that still remains are the many substandard homes in Hoonah.

The process of this Roadless Rule Exemption has been a farce. The United States Forest Service is not *"Smokey the Bear"* [text italicized for emphasis] here to protect the forest. Repeating Tlingit & Haida President Richard Peterson, we cannot help but believe that the entire federal process has repeatedly disrespected and ignored tribal sovereign input. For example, the U.S.D.A. has compensated the Alaska Forest Association and timber industry lobbyist group with \$200,000 for their time and "expertise" on engaging in the ROADLESS Rule process. The State of Alaska received \$2,000,000! And yet despite Tribal and Indigenous representation of our village communities embedded within the Tongass Forest, we received nothing - no compensation for our participation in this same process. In 2018, 143,900 people commented to the Forest Service *"scoping process"* [text italicized for emphasis] on the ROADLESS RULE, a majority of which opposed any changes to weakening it, same as for this *"comment period"* [text italicized for emphasis]. Many people are speaking in mass and must not be ignored. Imagine how we feel seeing our own Alaska congressional delegation undermine our existence - once again - as well as Alaska's governor and the White House.

Thank you, the tribal governments of Kake, Hoonah, Hydraburg, Kasaan, Angoon, and Tlingit & Haida Tribes of S.E. Alaska, and the N. W. Coast Affiliated Tribes, for speaking up against the weakening of the 2001 ROADLESS RULE. Tenakee Springs Conservation group and Skagway, we appreciate you too. We are thankful for the S.E. Long Line Association's support with more than 220 fishermen's signatures. Thank you SEACC, Earth Justice, and Green Peace for your hard hitting support.

Nothing will replace the trees that have been cut down in mass. Only standing trees are a forest. The Amazon Forest was the largest carbon sequester of the world. The devastating man-made forest fires this summer in S. America have dramatically changed that, making the Tongass temperate rain forest more important than ever to this earth, and must now be seen as such.

But I do not need to point to the map of the Roadless Areas to show you how I will be affected. Anyone area cut will affect the others still standing because it impacts the entire surrounding ecosystem - a domino effect.

We stand in solidarity with the Tongass WECAN delegation testifying today in Washington, D.C. We seek our indigenous sovereign voices at the planning tables - for the first time in history. This is a matter of mitigation, our place at the planning table. When our grandchildren come into the forest, the trees will witness their presence, as will their grandchildren. This is our vision.

Gunal'cheech!

[Position]