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First name: Charlotte

Last name: Lenox

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The Tongass is My Home -- Leave it Alone

Dear U.S. Forest Service,

You're going to hear all the advocacy and scientific reasoning from other concerned citizens, so instead I want to make a personal appeal, because I have a personal stake in this matter.

I was born in Bartlett Regional Hospital, Juneau, Alaska, near the very heart of the Tongass National Forest. I grew up with mountains left bald by logging clearcuts, and listening to all the complaints of the loggers that they couldn't mow down every last old-growth tree in the forest. An ancient spruce makes for excellent lumber, so I hear.

But the Tongass is my home. I was born and raised there, lived there for 18 years. I was in that forest almost every day. I won't see my home destroyed because loggers refuse to transition to secondary or tertiary growth. The old-growth forests are dwindling at an alarming rate, and Juneau's forests are some of the richest old-growth that not only contribute to biodiversity--they represent the largest carbon-sink in the form of biomass in the world, even more so than the Amazon.

This forest is also important to the Native groups in the area, primarily the Tlingit and the Haida. They've suffered much persecution at the hands of white men, and they have been the stewards of our natural resources for millennia. They know how to preserve the landscape, while still making use of the riches it provides. This is no land for greed, and greed won't be tolerated.

The Tongass must remain roadless, and logging of old-growth must stop before there's none left at all and all you're left with is secondary and tertiary anyway. It would seem some of my fellow Alaskans believe logging of the Tongass would bolster economy, and perhaps it would--for a very limited period of time. What will they do when that market eventually crashes because there's no profitable old-growth left? They will leave, and let the remainder who can't leave, suffer, the poorer both financially and spiritually for it. Have a closer look at the destruction that was wrought on Haida Gwaii. Don't repeat history--it never ends well.

The Tongass has been a point of logging contention for decades. This is nothing new. But I'll tell you right now--I didn't move away from it by choice, and I will fight to the bitter end for the preservation of my home.

I am not merely a concerned bystander. The Tongass was, and still is, my homeland.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Lenox

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