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Organization:
Title:
Comments: My name is Jill Hayden and I live in Sitka, AK. I have only been fortunate enough to reside in Southeast Alaska since this past August, and since the first day I arrived I have been overwhelmed with the abundance here, & I am beyond grateful to share in it. From picking berries in the alpine and below, to indulging in fresh and wild salmon, and learning how to harvest seaweed - all of this natural sustenance fuels my physical ability to run for miles through the Tongass, and explore the wonders below the surface of the waters that surround our islands. I have always been in awe of how perfectly land and sea intersect and intertwine. Living here, you can see how much the ocean and the forest rely on each other, and need each other. I thrive when I feel most connected to my natural environment. I have never felt more connected to my natural environment than I do here living in Sitka. There are so few places left on this big blue planet where the land feels still so untouched, so pristine, and so raw. It is of utmost importance to me that the places like such that are still intact stay this way. The Tongass is absolutely no exception. I am writing a comment on the Alaska Roadless Rule DEIS because I am concerned with how the Rule and the proposed full exemption will impact my fishing, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, the peace and solitude I find in nature, recreating, the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts, the conservation of resources for future generations .

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS I support alternative 1: no action. It protects important fish and wildlife habitat from clearcutting and roadbuilding. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for healthy fish habitat, foraging and gathering wild foods, recreating and enjoying nature, carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation, viewing wildlife, keeping public lands wild for future generations, fiscal responsibility and saving taxpayer dollars economic livelihood. A full exemption does not protect these values, nor does it effectively balance economic development and conservation of roadless area characteristics. A full exemption from the Roadless Rule and increased logging and roadbuilding will negatively impact the Tongass and what I and many others use and depend on the forest to provide for us.

The Roadless areas on the Tongass that are especially important to me are those on or around Baranof Island, all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass. I want the roadless areas in these locations to stay in roadless status in any alternative selected by the Forest Service, and be managed to provide for the uses and activities I listed above. It is important to me that the T77 and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections.

I do not support the Forest Services preferred alternative of a full exemption. A full exemption is not in the interests of Southeast Alaskans who live in and use the Tongass National Forest, because It discounts the voices of many Southeast Alaskans that spoke out in support of a no action alternative. It will harm our existing economic drivers, and it does not take the future generations or their livelihood and reliance on a thriving natural environment into account. The State of Alaska says that a full exemption is needed for rural economic development opportunities. However, a full exemption would not help create more rural economic development opportunities, it would instead harm our existing rural economies that are based on the visitor industry and commercial fishing industry.

It would further harm rural economic opportunities because pursuing the same outdated economic model of old growth clearcut harvesting for export stifles innovation and possibility in other sectors, such as mariculture, sustainable young growth harvest, and rural agriculture. If the Forest Service wants to support rural economic development, they should devote resources to support our fishing and visitor industries transition to second growth logging invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects rather than rehashing old conflicts.

I urge the Forest Service to prioritize the voices of Southeast Alaskans over those of our political representation and corporate interests. Choosing a full exemption will not create a long lasting, durable solution for roadless areas on the Tongass. It will only increase the legal challenges, uncertainty for businesses, and conflict on the Tongass going forward.

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