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First name: John

Last name: Peterka

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is John Peterka and I live in Kake, AK. I've lived in Southeast since 2017, and I moved here for the incredible outdoor experiences you can only get on the Tongass National Forest. This planet is the only one we have, and we need to take good care of the earth so future generations can experience the same world that we have. I am writing a comment on the Alaska Roadless Rule DEIS because I am concerned with how the Rule and the proposed exemption will impact my ability to fish, hunt, recreate, and find the peace that I seek in the outside world. I am further concerned with the rapid rate of climate change and worried about how changes to the Alaska Roadless Rule, especially a full exemption, could impact the Tongass's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate the rate of climate change. Old-growth temperate rainforest stores more carbon per acre than any other type of forest, and the Forest service should study the impacts of old-growth logging on the carbon storage.

I urge the Forest Service to listen to the voices of Southeast Alaskans who have continued to speak up and select Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative. It protects important fish and wildlife habitat from clearcutting and roadbuilding. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass for healthy fish, deer, and moose habitat for my subsistence hunting and fishing. I also harvest mushrooms on roadless areas - these areas are especially important. All of the inventoried roadless areas around Kake are important to our community. I hunt deer and grouse on south of Kake and to the west of Kake. Many of these areas are Development LUDs, so it is important to me that they retain Roadless Rule protections in any alternative selected. If they lose their Roadless Rule protections, then there will be increased logging and roadbuilding in these areas. This will hurt the habitat for wildlife, especially for deer who depend on old growth for forage and snow protection in the winter.

I do not support the Forest Service's 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 would increase clearcut industrial logging and roadbuilding. 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. To help create more rural economic opportunities, we need more innovative ideas - we do not need to go backwards to the days of clearcuts and conflict. If the Forest Service wants to support rural economic development, they should devote resources to support our fishing and visitor industries invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure. 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.

I want the roadless areas around Kake and across the Tongass 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 under any alternative selected the T77 and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections.

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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