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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Secretary Perdue, Cheif Christensen, and the Alaska Roadless Rule Planning Team

My name is Anthony Beck and I live in Washington, DC. 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 affect the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest.

At this time of ecological degradation, it is more important than ever to honor and respect nature, and let it do its work without unnecessary interference. The Tongass is the largest temperate rainforest left in the world, and is infinitely more valuable as a carbon sink than as lumber. It is also an important home for wild ecosystems and indigenous people, who have existed in Alaska since long before the arrival of Europeans. It is time to honor and respect the time-won wisdom of those indigenous people, and to follow their lead in care for the Tongass National Forest

I urge the Forest Service to select Alternative 1, the no-action alternative, for the final decision on the Alaska Roadless Rule. This alternative protects the inventoried roadless areas in Alaska that are full of pristine wilderness and provide important fish and wildlife habitat, and already allows for important community and economic development projects. As an American citizen, I value the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest for a myriad of reasons. As the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, the Tongass is this country's best natural solution to climate change. The Tongass sequesters millions of metric tons of carbon, which is a huge contribution to the mitigation of climate change. The Tongass also contains vast swaths of intact ecosystems, which contain important and inherently valuable biodiversity, including a high diversity of incredible wildlife. I also value the recreational opportunities provided by the forest, as well as its support of wild salmon populations and the world class fishing those salmon populations allow. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Tongass Rainforest is essential to the lifestyles of the indigenous communities that live there. These communities have cared for the land they live on for countless generations, and we would do well to follow their wisdom and respect their wishes to leave the forest relatively undisturbed.

A full exemption does not protect the priorities I have listed, nor does it effectively balance economic development with the countless other benefits provided by roadless areas. I would like the Forest Service to manage roadless areas for low-impact recreation (camping, hiking, hunting, foraging, etc), passive and active watershed restoration (stream and habitat), and to improve and maintain roadless characteristics (culvert removal/replacement, improve fish passage, wildlife thinning, etc). It is important to me that high-value intact habitat including the T77 watersheds and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections in any alternative selected.

The Forest Service is wasting taxpayers' valuable time and money by trying to prop up a failing timber industry in

Southeast Alaska. The nonpartisan, independent taxpayer watchdog Taxpayers for Common Sense reported that the Tongass timber program has losses of over \$600 million of taxpayers' money in the past 20 years. There are countless better uses of my tax dollars than to support a dying logging industry, which we would do well to allow to subside. Instead, public money should be used to restore salmon habitat that was hurt by past logging practices, as well as other important wildlife habitats that have been previously degraded. Tax dollars could also be used to develop more recreational opportunities (like trails and cabins) that will inspire more care and respect for the forest in its visitors. Effort should also be given to establishing the economic value of the carbon stored by the Tongass National Forest, which is without a doubt significant.

We must stop subsidizing the clearcutting of old growth on the Tongass through taxpayer-funded roadbuilding. If a full exemption were chosen, this would be to prioritize the special interests of one industry over the interests of the entire American public, which would be a disappointing and even reprehensible decision.

The Tongass is America's homegrown natural solution to climate change. The forest sequesters 8% of the carbon stored in forests throughout the contiguous US states, some 3 billion metric tons of it. We must take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and maintaining the Tongass in a roadless state is critical for a sustainable future.

I urge the Forest Service to listen to the voices of the American people and prioritize them over corporate interests. The Forest Service should strengthen public involvement in developing land management policy and focus on broadly supported work rather than allowing special corporate interests to guide policy changes. Attempting to exempt inventoried roadless areas on the Chugach National Forest from the Alaska Roadless Rule adds further insult to injury, and this proposal has not received any sufficient environmental impact analysis or public input. Choosing a full exemption will not create a long-lasting, durable solution for roadless areas in Alaska - it will only increase the legal challenges, uncertainty for businesses, and conflict over these forests going forward.

Regards,

Anthony Beck

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