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First name: Deborah

Last name: Maas

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom it May Concern: Thank you for considering this and other comments regarding the Roadless Rule for the Tongass National Forest. I am a life-long Alaskan from the Tongass and relish my life here primarily because of the unspoiled wilderness around me. I have worked in tourism, I'm a sport and personal use fisherman, and a wildlife/nature enthusiast. I camp, fish, and hike in the National Forest on a regular basis, as do many of my friends and family members.

I am writing to urge USDA to maintain the Roadless Rule for the Tongass National Forest. I met its implementation with great relief, believing that the remaining old growth forest in the Tongass would at last see lasting protections. The timber industry in Southeast Alaska has been on its last legs for decades and, while I feel for the participants who may be eager for new tracts of timber to open up, it is simply time to put the practice of clearcutting old growth timber aside. The incredible biological richness of old growth forest and its importance to wildlife is supported by overwhelming science, and understood intuitively by many of us who have the privilege to step into old growth stands. As a resident of Juneau and someone who has traveled throughout Southeast Alaska, I have also walked through many clear cut stands in various stages of growth, and the difference in plant diversity and undergrowth, even 100 years or more later, is stark.

Some Southeast Alaskans are concerned about access to hydroelectric sources and other important community needs. It is my understanding that the Roadless Rule does not prohibit such development, and has not prohibited it since it was implemented; I do not believe that the slightly stream-lined process to develop such projects without the Roadless Rule is sufficient reason to exempt the Tongass from it. Community benefits from logging any timber opened up by lifting the Roadless Rule would be minimal and of only short-term duration.

The United States has a history of enthusiastic resource extraction; the Roadless Rule was a great step forward in halting logging on unspoiled National Forest lands, and I fully support its continuation in Alaska. Let us leave the remaining stands alone for the use of its residents as well as the countless Alaskans and visitors who will visit it in its intact state in the decades and centuries to come. I've appreciated the Forest Service's work to restore salmon streams and decommission logging roads impacting salmon streams in recent years, and believe that this should be the emphasis in the Tongass into the future.

Sincerely, Debbie Maas

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