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Organization:

Title:

Comments: HC610

Dear Secretary Perdue and Senator Murkowski,

I am currently on a boat cruise off the coast of the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness. The West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness was the first citizen-initiated Wilderness area in Alaska; in 1967, Sitkans who recognized the value of this area came together to protect it. This Wilderness area is rich in biodiversity and supports an incredibly productive ecosystem. Salmon are sustained by the vast freshwater stream systems that empty into fjords and inlets. Brown bears feast upon these salmon as they swim upstream, distributing their carcasses throughout the forest. These carcasses fertilize the soil and feed the Sitka spruce, mountain hemlock, and yellow cedar trees that tower over the land. Underneath this old growth canopy, Sitka Black-tail deer browse on abundant berries and shrubs.

However, the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness is not the only place in Southeast Alaska with such incredible beauty and biodiversity. The flora and fauna we find in this wilderness area also thrive in inventoried roadless areas throughout the Tongass. Intact roadless areas provide our communities with important hunting, fishing, foraging, and recreating opportunities. We depend on the entirety of the Tongass for our subsistence and our livelihoods including our commercial fishing and tourism industries. I am grateful for the Wilderness designation that the West Chichagof-Yakobi area received, and would like to see such protections extended to areas such as Ushk Bay and Poison Cove.

Outside of Wilderness areas like West Chichagof, the roadless areas we depend on are threatened by politicians and special interests pushing for short term profits that have long term ecological and economic consequences. Wilderness areas, roadless areas, and the intact habitat they support are an investment in the long term sustainability of our region. Please keep the National Roadless Rule in place on the Tongass. T77 areas are particularly important to me; these watersheds are critical to maintaining the salmon runs we depend on for jobs and food. Please do not remove protections for these areas, or anywhere else on the Tongass.

Personal Comments: I am not interested in learning more!