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Organization:

Title:

Comments: [CAUTION: Suspicious Link]Please Take No Action on the Tongass Roadless Rule

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Questions: Spam.Abuse@usda.gov

Dear Secretary Perdue,

I am writing you today to ask that you take No Action or Alternative 1 on the Roadless Rule for Alaska's Tongass National Forest. I am asking you to consider this on behalf of tourism businesses like mine. I own and operate a small cruise ship that relies on the Tongass National Forest's intact ecosystem to provide scenic beauty, a rich diversity of wildlife, and space for our guests to experience their public lands. Tourism brings in approximately \$1 billion to the economy in Southeast Alaska. Allowing the Tongass to be exempted endangers this economy.

As someone who relies on the Tongass for my business, I have come to know a wide range of other people who operate businesses and also rely on the Tongass. These include commercial and recreational fishermen, whose combined industries contribute another \$2 Billion to Southeast Alaska's economy. I buy my seafood first-hand from a small fishing family. When my guests wish to catch halibut or salmon, I refer them to local sports-fishing guides. This money helps their community. I also buy my vegetables directly from a couple who operates a remote organic farm. My business contributes to their success. These are examples of other businesses that rely on the Tongass being an intact ecosystem that supports healthy rivers, streams, and saltwater for fish, and for seaweed that our farmers use to amend their soil.

Our guests come to Alaska for the main reason of seeing unspoiled nature. Nowhere else in North America or maybe even on earth is there an equivalent. To choose short-term gains for the economically insignificant logging industry over long-term sustainable industries is poor management. During the recent comment period over 90% of the formal comments requested that the US Forest Service take No Action to change the Roadless Rule. This is because the Roadless Rule helps the vast majority of Southeast Alaskans.

The wildlife that is part of the Alaskan experience, especially brown bears is another reason to take No Action on the Roadless Rule. The one animal most people expect us to show them when they come to Alaska is a brown bear. An exemption to the Roadless Rule could have devastating impacts on these iconic animals. A recent letter in the Juneau Empire from a retired bear biologist stated that females with cubs rely on old-growth habitat for safety. He also stated that they use old-growth trees for their dens. A female with cubs uses more energy and could be less fit at denning time if she and her cubs have to negotiate clear-cuts. Part of the reason this is important is that brown bears are slow to reproduce. He also mentioned that with more roads in the Tongass, there is more opportunity for bear-human conflict. This rarely ends well for the bear.

If brown bears are pushed from their environment and decline in population it will take away from the mystique of Southeast Alaska. We regularly contract with a bear guide service to give our guests the opportunity to see brown bears in the wild. It is a unique way for people to come to understand the connection between the forest, the streams, the saltwater, and the wildlife, from bears, to salmon, to sea birds, eagles and a whole host of other animals. By taking No Action you preserve this kind of tourism that supports, not just my business, but the guides, and a float plane company.

I am urging you to step back and look at how tourism in Southeast Alaska is supported by the Roadless Rule. Tourism is like a web, with so many small businesses relying on one another to provide the best experience for visitors to Southeast Alaska. The proposed exemption would have a devastating impact on the industries that contribute the most to Southeast Alaska. Please take No Action. The lives of so many people depend on an intact Tongass National Forest.

Respectfully yours,

Christine Smith

[Position]