

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/12/2019 9:00:00 AM

First name: Alisha

Last name: Decker

Organization: Glacier Guides Inc

Title:

Comments: Roadless Rule Comments - Opposed to Repeal

Tongass National Forest

Roadless Rule Repeal

Dear Secretary Perdue;

I would like my comments recognized in the Roadless Rule repeal proceedings. I am in opposition to a full repeal of the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule. I feel that the Tongass 77 critical watersheds need to remain off limits to clear cut logging.

My family's business, Glacier Guides Inc., was the first Guide Outfitter permit offered on the Tongass National Forest. With an operation spanning from the late 60's to today we have seen the changes on the Tongass and the impacts on wildlife. In the Safari Club International record book, over 50% of all Coastal Black Bear entered in the book come from Southeast Alaska. We have seen a decrease in Black Bear population on the islands of the Tongass due to loss of habitat that has already occurred. Hunting pressure and bear sightings have both reduced over the years. Alaska Department of Fish & Game estimated Kuiu Island's Black Bear population to be at or about 7 bears per square mile in the late 90s. Today's estimate of that population is roughly 2-3 bears per square mile. As bears are an "umbrella species", they require large wide spaces, safe from roads and developments. When a bear population is healthy, their habitat also protects 80% of other species that live in the same region.

As an outfitter, I must be the voice of the traveling hunter coming to hunt in Southeast Alaska. With expectations of wild places, remote settings, and abundant game and fish; large-scale Old Growth Logging is simply not compatible. The Hunting and Tourism industries in Southeast Alaska that are based on the Tongass will be unable to coexist with chainsaws and heavy equipment flooding the sound scape. Competing loggers running around looking to stick a bear in the afternoon for an off-duty activity will diminish their experience. The USFS will provide this diminished service to public lands while no doubt maintaining high use fees. If the Roadless Rule is repealed, the USFS will consequently prioritize the logging company access and restrict public access. This practice is not new...just a repeat of the past. Logging operations don't bring the 'best of the best' to our woods. During past logging periods, we have found bears shot in the face with shot gun BB's, and seen bears run down by logging trucks left to die in the ditch; not to mention huge numbers of bears killed for no particular reason. Additionally, rivers that once ran clear, now run the color of dark tea or coffee with the slightest rain. It is not uncommon on a wet evening hunt to have rivers rise so fast that it becomes impossible to cross them, not to mention bears cannot catch fish either. The unintended consequence hunters, residents and small family operations are left with when the trees run out, outweigh the short-term "benefits" of logging.

The years that follow after an area is logged is also an important process to highlight. At years 25 and 50, the USFS has to contract thinning crews (once again spending tax payer money) to open roads closed for years to access areas to allow for thinning of timber in these past clear cuts. The USFS hopes for a second cut around 80 years, but that timing looks more like 100 years, just to produce an 18-24 inch pulp tree. That means that my kids that will watch an area cut today will never see it restored. Please stop the madness with a no action decision. If this rule is repealed, it has the potential to be the greatest destruction and loss of wildlife habitat in North America. There is no more Temperate Old Growth Rainforest.

Thank you for your time. Please listen to the communities and residents of Southeast Alaska!!

Sincerely,

Zach Decker

Glacier Guides, Inc.

Gustavus, AK

[Position]