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Organization: Washington State National Forest Committee, Sierra Club

Title:

Comments: Alaska Roadless Rulemaking #54511

Good morning,

The below comment was recorded on November 23, 2019 at the REI Flagship Store in Seattle, WA as part of a community meeting regarding the Alaska Roadless Rule. Washington Wild was given permission by the individual to submit this comment to the United States Forest Service on their behalf. Please add their comment into the record.

Thank you.

Harry Romberg, Washington State National Forest Committee, Sierra Club

Seattle, WA 98125

I'm Harry Romberg. I'm a volunteer but I co-chair the Sierra Club's Washington State Chapter, National Forest Committee and I'm also on the national wilderness and wild lands team as one of the key organizers of our annual law public lands lobby week in Washington, DC every year where we bring volunteers and others from across the country to lobby for our public lands in DC. This past several years we've worked for codification of the roadless rule because it makes it more difficult for the administration to arbitrarily undermine the rules on a whim, such as this administration has been doing. Once again, I reiterate that Senator Cantwell has been a champion on this as she has in many other good measures to protect our public lands. I've been advocating for the roadless rule since before President Clinton signed it almost 20 years ago. I personally gathered four to 500 signatures on comments on the roadless rule. That's just a small percentage of the over well over 1 million comments that were submitted, which at the time, was the largest number of comments that had been submitted on any single administrative rule. The Tongass is our nation's largest national forest, and it has over 9 million acres of roadless land, one of the last remaining intact ecosystems in the world and the crown jewel of the entire national forest system. As such, it is by the best carbon storage value of all the national forests and has undergone relatively little logging over the years. Almost all of the forest of the Tongass is old growth. So the main purpose of building more roads is to increase logging. So what would they really be doing but logging more old growth? Which in this day and age in the climate change, that's outrageous. Furthermore, the infrastructure, namely mills and jobs processing those logs, is actually diminished over the years. So it seems likely that they'll minimally mill those logs so that they can export them overseas. So not only where are we logging our old growth forests, we're shipping the logs elsewhere. There were over 600 public meetings across the country for the original rule and now only one outside of Alaska. In reality, nothing has changed over almost 20 years, except that perhaps the importance of timber to Alaska's economy has diminished and the value of the intact forest has become even more apparent. Furthermore, the Tongass is largely a coastal forest that provides clean water and includes vital salmon habitat. That's important to both Alaska and Washington economies. As we know, many salmon runs here in Washington depend on Alaskan waters and our fish runs here are declining. Further disturbing their habitat through road building and subsequent logging on other develop or other development even all the way up in Alaska exacerbates that problem. The incredible scenery in Alaska includes much of the magnificent force of the Tongass, which is largely a coastal forest and much of that is on islands. The tourism

industry now includes many thousands of people who cruise to Alaska from right here in Seattle. This cruise is actually on the bucket list for many people from around the world and it substantially contributes to the economies of both Seattle and many ports in Alaska. I actually worked for the cruise industry this last summer for the first time, and I did a rough estimate of how many sailings we had and how many passengers approximately that I thought we had and I estimated four to 500,000 people cruised out of the port of Seattle up into Alaska. But they didn't go up there to see clear cuts and roads everywhere. They came up here to see the natural scenery. And many of those people I saw were indeed from red States and I even saw a few "Make America Great Again" hats. I think the value is obvious. So in closing, the irreplaceable values of the Tongass can't be measured in board feet. And this rule ensures that these values are preserved for generations to come. The Sierra Club has a longstanding and deep investment in the roadless rule and the target is our crown jewel, and we need to seek further protections for these public lands. Not rolling back the ones we already have.

Hillary Sanders, Member and Engagement Manager

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