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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Ian Johnson. I live in Hoonah year around and actively hunt and fish to provide for my home and lifestyle. From the Tongass National Forest I primarily rely on deer, salmon, blueberries, thimbleberries, and cranberries. I'm not alone. ADF&G household surveys show 89% of people in Hoonah use deer and 70% use berries. These foods are healthy and offset the high cost of living we experience in Southeast Communities - Imagine if the 897 average pounds per-house harvested in Hoonah were multiplied by the in-store cost. Imagine further if the over 250,000 pounds harvested annually were quantified in real-world cost. Subsistence harvest is necessary for socio-economical wellbeing in Hoonah. I do not believe Alternative 6 will support this harvest level, particularly in the future under uncertain climate conditions. I oppose Alternative 6 and support Alternative 2.

This is my statement.

I hunt deer in the lands surrounding Neka Bay. I hunt and collect berries near Suntaheen Creek and in the upper watershed of Hippleback. I rely on subsistence regulations extending the hunting season, and hunt deer during January in the old growth of Forest Service lands and on beaches abutting old growth. All of the areas in Port Frederick and NE Chichagof I have listed are slated for removal of Roadless protections in preferred Alternative 6. Removal of protections from large blocks of old growth could place those lands into a familiar pattern of young growth recolonization. Post-logging, young growth stands can be productive for deer in the summer, but do not provide for deer in the winter when they are the most vulnerable. Stand productivity waxes and wanes as the forest grows up and are treated, but until they reach maturity at about 150 years one thing is consistent : they do not provide cover in winter. Old growth forests provide the cover necessary to intercept snow and protect deer during years of heavy snowfall. Our deer are snow-limited, not food limited. Deer numbers are good now, but that has not always been the case. Folks in Hoonah talk about the last big winter in Hoonah in 2007 that left our deer populations starving, dead, and decimated. If our surrounding forests had been intact the deer kill could have been much less. It is critical to give Hoonah's deer the best chance of survival in winter possible.

I would be remiss if I did not reflect on what I've heard about how Alternative 6 would impact subsistence in other communities in Southeast Alaska as the focus on old-growth logging may be more prevalent there. On Prince of Wales Island, 94% of old productive growth has been logged and 1,500 miles of road dissect the landscape and impact salmon migration by blocking passage and increasing sedimentation. Community members say that has impacted their fish runs and streams are still recovering from logging in the 1970s to 1990. At a broader scale than Price of Wales we cannot afford to provide access to the remaining 34% of the Tongass classified has large-tree, old growth areas that remains untouched. Those trees are more valuable to deer, fish and the people that rely on those resources over the next 50 years and are likely to be targeted if Alternative 6 is published as the Final Environmental Impact Statement. It is easy to live and think in the present, but we need to think about the future. My great-great grand children will be born into the world in about the year 2080. By that time climate change is likely to have warmed the earth, warmed our streams, and heavily impacted our salmon fishery. We need intact old-growth to maintain resiliency and ensure subsistence resources are available for future generations in a climate-altered world.

Regardless of what you think you've heard in my testimony, I would like you to know my views between the need to conserve the necessity of use are balanced. I support value-added timber products such as those created at Icy Straits Lumber and support renewable timber such as second-growth logging. I also support a balanced decision that supports our local needs without broadly deregulating the Tongass leaving it open to exploitation from large-scale timber operations that do not add value to our timber. For that reason, I advocate for Alternative 2 as it's potential for road-building and timber cutting would only mildly modify the landscape and provide new opportunities to support our local, value-added mill.

A 2019 report from the United Nations stated that only 25% of the land on earth is unaltered. A shocking statistic that should cause anyone to pause and think about our collective impact as a species. They further stated that lands are centered on indigenous communities throughout the world. That UN report is talking about lands like the Tongass and directly apply to decisions like "preferring Alternative 6" which will continue to degrade the global ecosystem and significantly alter the last 25% of wild earth.

These words are the summary of the May 2019 report from the United Nations.

Current global response insufficient;

'Transformative changes' needed to restore and protect nature;

Opposition from vested interests can be overcome for public good

Most comprehensive assessment of its kind;

1,000,000 species threatened with extinction

Publication of Alternative 6 in the Final Environmental Impact Statement is the insufficient response referenced by the UN that the world doesn't need right now or ever. It does not meet the intent of the Roadless Rule, does not provide for Hoonah, will not create significant economic growth, and will only reduce economic opportunity induced through climate change. Please see the longview of management of the Tongass and compromise on this issue which impacts us all.

Sincerely,

Ian Johnson

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