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First name: Johana

Last name: Goerner

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Johana Goerner and I live in Haines, AK. I grew up in Colorado, a place that continues to be devastated by the poor clean up of radioactive sites and old mine sites. I moved to Southeast Alaska five years ago for the intact ecosystem that the Tongass provides. I have come to depend on this ecosystem for subsistence fishing, hunting, and foraging. This forest is invaluable in its ability to sink carbon, a phenomena our world desperately needs now more than ever. I am writing a comment on the Alaska Roadless Rule DEIS because I am concerned with how the Rule and the proposed full exemption will impact my fishing, hunting, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, the peace and solitude I find in nature, recreating, practicing my culture, the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts, the conservation of resources for future generations.

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS I support alternative 1: no action. The rule is working fine as it is by balancing the conservation of our fish and wildlife habitat with important development projects. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for economic livelihood, healthy fish habitat, deer habitat and subsistence hunting, foraging and gathering wild foods, recreating and enjoying nature, carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation, viewing wildlife, keeping public lands wild for future generations, fiscal responsibility and saving taxpayer dollars. A full exemption does not protect these values, nor does it effectively balance economic development and conservation of roadless area characteristics. A full exemption from the Roadless Rule and increased logging and roadbuilding will negatively impact the Tongass and what I and many others use and depend on the forest to provide for us.

The Roadless areas on the Tongass that are especially important to me are those on or around Baranof Island, Chichagof Island, Admiralty Island, the northern mainland above Port Snettisham (around Juneau), the central mainland from Hobart Bay to Stikine River, the southern mainland from Bradfield Canal to Dixon Entrance Kupreanof Island, Kuiu Island, Wrangell and Etolin Islands, Prince of Wales Island, Revillagigedo Island (near Ketchikan), Yakutat forelands, and the rest of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass. I want the roadless areas in these locations to stay in roadless status in any alternative selected by the Forest Service, and be managed to provide for the uses and activities I listed above. It is important to me that the T77 and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections.

I do not support the Forest Services preferred alternative of a full exemption. A full exemption is not in the interests of Southeast Alaskans who live in and use the Tongass National Forest, because, at this time, it is simply too risky to allow corporate entities to gain a foothold in one of the last intact ecosystems in America. The Tongass, as it is, will only increase in value over the coming decades as the effects of Climate Change become ever more apparent. The State of Alaska says that a full exemption is needed for rural economic development opportunities. However, a full exemption would not help create more rural economic development opportunities, it would instead harm our existing rural economies that are based on the visitor industry and commercial fishing industry.

It would further harm rural economic opportunities because pursuing the same outdated economic model of old-growth clearcut harvesting for export stifles innovation and possibility in other sectors, such as mariculture, sustainable young-growth harvest, and rural agriculture. If the Forest Service wants to support rural economic development, they should devote resources to support our fishing and visitor industries, invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects rather than rehashing old conflicts.

We are facing more pressure than ever to hold onto the last of America's pristine wilderness!

I urge the Forest Service to prioritize the voices of Southeast Alaskans over those of our political representation and corporate interests. Choosing a full exemption will not create a long-lasting, durable solution for roadless areas on the Tongass. It will only increase the legal challenges, uncertainty for businesses, and conflict on the Tongass going forward.

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