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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Alaska Roadless Rule. 12-17-2019

I support keeping the Tongass National Forest included in the Roadless Rule.

The US Forest Service cannot afford to maintain its existing plethora of roads, let alone new ones.

The primary reason for most Tongass roads has been timber access.

It will take decades, indeed centuries for the already-logged watersheds of the Tongass to heal themselves beyond anything but diversity-starved monocultural tree farms.

Tongass timber, while valuable in grade and quality is remote, far from major markets. Most of the commercially valuable easy pickings have already been exploited during the pulp mill era from mid-1950s to mid-1990s. Native Claims timber took a big chunk out of Federal control and most of it was exported as round logs. Value added, to some extent afforded by the pulp mills is now a miniscule piece of the timber picture. Even helicopter-logged areas are left with substantial wasted wood because of the high cost of competing in a world market.

Massive clearcuts in no way mimic natural events on the Tongass, with the possible exception of the Lituya Bay landslide and resultant tsunami that swept clean hundreds of acres of timber from that inlet.

Some wind events and landslides have taken down patches of timber, but nothing on the scale of industrial timber liquidation from whole watersheds during the past several decades.

Wildfires, rare on the Tongass, are not part of natural forest succession as they are in other parts of the Pacific Northwest.

Hunters, trappers and motorized vehicle recreators complain of water-barred roads, but don't seem interested in user fees sufficient for and dedicated to maintaining a road once it's built.

Mining operations are guaranteed access by the 1872 mining law.

Roadless Rule does not prevent hydropower projects or other essential community access from being constructed.

Few, if any road proposals have been denied since the Roadless Rule was implemented.

Thousands of public comments, the vast majority of which supported the Roadless Rule have already been tallied when the Roadless rule was first proposed. Even a vast majority of comments from SE Alaska communities supported that rulemaking including many who wanted even more restrictions on road building than the Rule afforded.

Commercial fishing and tourism can only suffer from rescinding the Roadless Rule.

Engineered wood products and kelp farms designed to sequester carbon may be on the horizon but should not be relied upon as an excuse to reduce the carbon sequestration we already have with existing Tongass Forest.

Climate change would suggest the Tongass National Forest, one of the world's last great carbon sequestrers, should be managed as a source of carbon credits, not a perennially non-competitive wood source.

I support the No Action Alternative. Keep the Roadless Rule intact on the Tongass.

Mike Sallee

[Position]