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First name: Katie

Last name: Riley

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Katie Riley and I live in Sitka, AK. I was born and raised in Sitka. I have worked in the commercial fishing industry for the past 6 years, and recently obtained my 100 ton masters license. I thought I would be a commercial tenderwoman and my passions lie on the water, but the problems that I see facing my region call for me to act upon them. It is a scary time to invest in our fisheries - climate change and unpredictable weather patterns threaten the livelihoods and resources that so many depend on. I depend on the Tongass for the climate stabilization benefits it provides and for my subsistence resources, from the fish that I harvest from intact roadless areas in the summer to the deer that I hunt in the fall. I love to harvest the flora and fauna that this amazing ecosystem provides for, including berries and mushrooms. The Tongass is one of the most unique places on Earth, and while there are many challenges that face the social, ecological, and economic prosperity of the communities located within it, the Roadless Rule is not one of them. It has become a political football, used by our delegation and elected leaders as a facade to attempt to prop up what has become a failed model of resource extraction and economic development in Southeast Alaska. 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, 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. It demonstrates the Forest Service is responding to the needs and voices of Southeast Alaskan communities. I depend on inventoried 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. 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, Kupreanof Island, Kuiu Island, Chichagof Island, all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass, and Prince of Wales Island. These areas comprise my home, places important to people I hold dear, and are major salmon producing regions. Prince of Wales has been the hardest hit by clearcut logging and it is completely unjust to continue these practices in defiance of local community priorities, as well as possibly being a violation of the E.O. 12989 related to environmental justice. 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 it discounts the voices of so many tribal governments, municipalities, fishermen, small business owners, guides and outfitters, tourism-dependent businesses, and ordinary citizens such as myself that are concerned about the future of our planet. A

full exemption will harm our existing economic drivers in the fishing and tourism industry and will preclude the development of innovative alternatives. The more that we rely on propping up outdated economic ideals and trying to make boom and bust industries of the past happen, the farther we backslide into an unsustainable future. Future generations will see these years as a tipping point, and ask us what we did to prevent the coming climate catastrophe. The Forest Service needs to listen to the public that is voicing these concerns, because they are not being represented by our elected leaders. A full exemption will not be an economic panacea for our remote, rural communities; rather, it will create a backslide into reliance on resource extraction that has negative effects upon our other industries and subsistence resources for years to come.. 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 transition to second growth logging invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects rather than rehashing old conflicts.

I urge Secretary Perdue to not bow to undue influence from political actors to make the final decision on the Alaska Roadless Rule. The inhabitants of Southeast Alaska are relying on him, and the Forest Service, to make the right decision for us. We need to focus on community priorities, community self-determination, and put land management back in the hands of those who are most familiar with the local resources, the best available science, and local priorities. Repealing the roadless rule will not benefit Southeast Alaska, but it will ensure that projects benefitting communities are delayed for years to come due to the inevitable litigation a full exemption faces.

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. The people that are taking time to write these comments DEPEND on these areas. I urge the Forest Service to listen to them, adequately consult with tribes, confer with the comments and suggestions put forth by the federally convened Southeast Subsistence Regional Advisory Committee, and listen to what the science is saying. Old growth forests are critical for our ability to fight climate change, to harbor subsistence species we depend on, to create healthy salmon habitat, the list goes on. In addition, for the record Alternatives 4 and 5 are an absolute sham and complete industry give aways. The Forest Service is not a comedic institution and the establishment of a 'timber priority' "Alaska roadless area" is a complete farce in that it does not resemble a ROADLESS area in any way shape or form due to the exceptions granted for logging and roadbuilding in this joke of a category.

Look to the future - and listen to the people of Southeast Alaska. It is clear that we will not stop fighting for what we think is right. Work with us, work with our communities to move the sensible projects forward that are already provided for by exceptions detailed in the current 2001 roadless rule.

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