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Comments: My name is Cameron Highfill and I live in La Mesa, CA. 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 affect the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest.

I am involved with regenerative agriculture and understand the impacts and benefits of maintaining wild lands. Biodiversity and carbon sequestration are two important areas that sustain the function of life on this planet.

I urge the Forest Service to select Alternative 1, the no action alternative, for the final decision on the Alaska Roadless Rule. This alternative protects the inventoried roadless areas in Alaska that are full of pristine wilderness and provide important fish and wildlife habitat, and already allows for important community and economic development projects. As an American citizen, I value the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest for its wild salmon populations and the world-class fishing opportunities, its huge swaths of intact ecosystems and all the biodiversity it contains, its status as the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, the high density of incredible wildlife it contains, to keep public lands wild for future generations, the lifestyles of the indigenous communities that the forest supports its status as America's best natural solution to climate change and its sequestering of millions of metric tons of carbon and mitigating climate change. A full exemption does not protect these priorities, nor does it effectively balance economic development with the countless other benefits provided by roadless areas. I would like the Forest Service to manage roadless areas for low-impact recreation (camping, hiking, hunting, foraging, etc), passive/active watershed restoration (stream and habitat) to improve/maintain roadless characteristics (culvert removal/replacement, improve fish passage, wildlife thinning, etc). It is important to me that high-value intact habitat including the T77 watersheds and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections in any alternative selected.

The Forest Service is wasting taxpayers' valuable time and money by trying to prop up a failing timber industry in Southeast Alaska. The nonpartisan, independent taxpayer watchdog Taxpayers for Common Sense reported that the Tongass timber program has losses of over $600 million of taxpayers money in the past 20 years. I would rather see my taxpayer dollars used to restore salmon habitat that was hurt by past logging practices, perform restorative actions that support wildlife populations on previously degraded landscapes that support wildlife populations. We need to stop subsidizing the clearcutting of old growth on the Tongass through taxpayer funded roadbuilding. If a full exemption were chosen, it would not create opportunities and would instead prioritize the special interests of one industry over the interests of the entire American public.

The Tongass is Americas homegrown natural solution to climate change. The forest sequesters 8% of the carbon stored in forests throughout the contiguous US states, some 3 billion metric tons of it. We must take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and maintaining the Tongass in a roadless state is critical for a sustainable future.

I urge the Forest Service to listen to the voices of the American people and prioritize them over corporate interests. The Forest Service should strengthen public involvement in developing land management policy and focus on broadly supported work rather than allowing special corporate interests to guide policy changes. Attempting to exempt inventoried roadless areas on the Chugach National Forest from the Alaska Roadless Rule adds further insult to injury, and this proposal has not received any sufficient environmental impact analysis or public input. Choosing a full exemption will not create a long lasting, durable solution for roadless areas in Alaska it will only increase the legal challenges, uncertainty for businesses, and conflict over these forests going forward.