

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/15/2019 9:00:00 AM

First name: Iris

Last name: Korhonen-Penn

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Secretary Perdue and Chief Christensen,

Please accept these comments on the draft environmental impact statement for the proposed Alaska-specific roadless rule. I urge you to adopt Alternative 1/no-action alternative and to keep the Tongass National Forest under the 2001 Roadless Rule. Alternative 1 supports a sustainable future for the Tongass and protects my interests in it; the preferred alternative, on the other hand, reflects an ill-guided and backward-looking plan that threatens the very fabric of life on the Tongass.

Tongass has been home to me since I first arrived in the United States in 1990. Based in Juneau, I live and breathe this amazing forest every day. Tongass defines the way I eat, recreate, work, study, pursue art, raise family, and love life. It is a place in stark contrast to the forested lands where I grew up, landscape zigzagged by roads, including those created and maintained to serve industrial forestry and monoculture forests.

I depend on Tongass, including its inventoried roadless areas, in so many ways.

I depend on its ecosystem services, clean water, clean air, wild salmon, berries, mushrooms, and even seaweed for my garden.

I depend on it as a carbon sink, a buffer against an already runaway climate change that threatens all life on Earth. Alaskans are already feeling the painful impacts of warming, from thawing permafrost, loss of Arctic sea ice, and droughts in our temperate rainforest.

I depend on Tongass for nature-based learning and recreation.

Over the years, I have spent endless amount of time experiencing the shorelines, beach fringes, meadows, muskegs, mountains, rivers and riparian areas of Tongass, from South to North, from outer coast into the transboundary rivers we share with Canadians. I've done so in kayak, sail boat, skiff, floatplane, and by foot.

My child has grown up confident and happy here, connected to the outdoors, learning to respect the lands and waters that nurture the life and culture of Southeast Alaska.

I depend on Tongass for my sanity. It is in its untouched places where my mind and body can rest and replenish, where I can connect deeply and soulfully.

All these services and values depend on a healthy functioning forest ecosystem, one that we let heal from past logging practices, one that can evolve without man's heavy hand, one that we give a chance to buffer itself against climate change.

Through study and observation, I've learned about the ways in which deer, salmon, birds, bears, wolves, and other animals depend on old growth forests. I've learned about Tongass' unique biodiversity, including insular species.

I have learned about how these animals' habitats have been altered and destroyed by our ways with the forest, notably industrial clear cutting. I have tried to walk across some of those clear cuts, felt the hurt of shaved lands, lost habitats, and the clogged pores of streams. I've walked through second growth stands knowing just how much time, hundreds of years, that it would take for that forest become truly old again. I've seen the effects of

logging from the air and on GoogleEarth. Many parts of Tongass already look like their sad counterparts further down the coast: patchwork on mowed forests, broken landscapes that have lost their ability sustain life, including healthy populations of fish and wildlife.

Intact Tongass, including its roadless areas, is invaluable to my family and I.

The future of Southeast Alaska depends of us keeping Tongass alive and well, understanding and accepting that taxpayer subsidized roadbuilding and large-scale logging no longer serve our interests whereas forward looking care, preservation, and smart and sustainable uses do. This forest has its greatest value in providing us with clean water, air, and food; as carbon sink; as habitat; as cultural and subsistence resource; and as source of sustainable fishing and tourism revenue. More than that, it has value on its own, as healthy functioning, resilient ecosystem.

Exempting Tongass from the Roadless Rule is a senseless and backward-looking move looking to continue an outdated way of being in and using our treasured forest. I urge you to vision a new future for Tongass, one that will support us for generations to come.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Iris Korhonen-Penn Juneau, AK

[Position]

[Position]