

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

First name: Marc

Last name: Thibault

Organization: Idea(l) Convergence

Title:

Comments: The Tongass is among the worlds best carbon sinks, and its one of the largest unfragmented ecosystems in North America. Its trees hold about 650 million tons of carbon, which roughly converts to half of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions in 2017. I AM AGAINST the proposition to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, To justify development in such a critical area, the administration turns to an argument that many scientists reject: Any emissions from logging would be temporary, as the timber would sequester carbon in building materials while replacement trees recapture even more CO2. The Tongass carbon load has stabilized or possibly even increased since logging peaked in the 1970s and 80s before declining, according to the draft EIS. Potential negative effects on the Tongass may be ameliorated and may be completely reversed with time, reducing or eliminating potential negative cumulative effects on carbon and climate, the document says. Beverly Law, an Oregon State University professor whose forestry research is cited in the draft EIS, called the administrations argument misinformation. Some old-growth trees in the Tongass are more than a thousand years old, so it would take a very long time for the forest to regain such a huge amount of carbon, she said. The management mechanisms applied in all alternatives are consistent with internationally recognized climate change adaptation and mitigation practices identified by the IPCC, the draft EIS says. But that is not true: Dominick DellaSala, president and chief scientist at the Geos Institute. I was one of the reviewers of the IPCC report, and I can tell you: Nothing in that report supports what theyre claiming, said DellaSala, whose research was also cited in the draft EIS. The draft EIS warns that Alaska could see an additional 1 to 3.5 degrees Celsius of warming by 2050, but it makes little effort to grapple with the implications of such warming. There is considerable uncertainty concerning the exact scope of the effects of climate change on the forests of Southeast Alaska and how best to deal with possible changes to the many resources managed on the Tongass, the document says. Climate models show Alaska warming faster than the rest of the country the changes are already visible but the Tongass is poised to fare better than its surrounding landscapes, DellaSala said. That could make it an oasis for wildlife that feels climate pressures elsewhere. But destroying habitat by logging and fragmenting the remainder with roads undermines that option, he said. Alaskas going to be in big trouble in the coming century, so why give away the one opportunity to protect those forests that are going to help stabilize the climate? he said.

[Position]

[Position]