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Title:

Comments: public comment on the Alaska Roadless Rule.

USDA Forest Service

Attn: Alaska Roadless Rule

Juneau, AK 99802

Dear USDA Forest Service:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the exemption for the Tongass from the 2001 Roadless Rule. The opportunity is appreciated.

I support the State of Alaska's petition to the Secretary of Agriculture to exempt the Tongass from the 2001 Roadless Rule. I recommend the adoption of Alternative 6, the full exemption, as the preferred alternative.

The reason I support Alternative 6 as the preferred option is for increased access between communities and isolated populations here in S.E. Alaska. Any policy change that improves access, including the building of roadways, is an improvement to the current situation.

To put the above comment into perspective, I'll add a few personal details. I am a small business owner working on the development of a new sportfishing lure called Scent Striker[reg]. Product development has taken several years, and the initial rollout of the product was in Nov. 2019. This comment illustrates that startup is at its infancy, and success is not guaranteed.

One significant challenge is that of shipping into and throughout S.E. Alaska. For example, shipping costs for the purchase of a packing machine and associated supplies to package the product here in Juneau averaged 28%, not a small issue. Further, the process from the time of the order to a machine and other material arriving on hand in Juneau was eight weeks - planning and warehousing costs are increased. Also, in early November 2019, I intended to secure a ride on the Alaska State Ferry to begin sales calls in Hoonah. To my surprise, the ferry system chose the first weeks of Nov to skip sailings and the trip did not take place - delaying business opportunity and community connection.

Starting a new business anyplace in the U.S. is challenging; however, starting up a new enterprise in S.E. Alaska is challenging times ten. One way to help increase small business success in our region is to expand community connectivity through reliable surface transportation. Federal policy should, therefore, begin with the premise that roadways are a preferred community connection alternative. Doing so won't minimize all the start-up challenges here, but it certainly is an excellent place to start.

Sincerely yours,

Don Habeger

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