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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Tongass Roadless Rule

I am writing to convey my concerns regarding the seemingly imminent total exemption of the Tongass from the existing roadless rule. This despite the strong opposition of the bulk of the residents in Southeast Alaska.

I grew up in Sitka, and can well remember the crisis created when APC shut their pulp mill down here. The mill had been the largest employer in town for a generation or more, and although the clear cut logging of old growth practiced at that time was controversial, most residents here appreciated the employment and tax revenue the mill provided. But that was over 20 years ago. Since then Sitka and the other communities of southeast have developed more diverse, mature economies. Industries such as tourism and commercial fishing have supplanted logging, and we have come to rely on a different vision of the Tongass.

The Tongass of today, and the Tongass that can and should continue into the future, is one in which the non-consumptive utility of the Tongass is valued for what it is: the lifeblood of the region. Our salmon fisheries, our tourism, our hunting and recreation, these things are all in jeopardy should the vast tracts of old growth that are currently protected be opened up for logging.

Logging as it is practiced today in most of Southeast Alaska is a compatible and complimentary industry in the region. Small scale, high value logging that is largely able to utilize second growth and selective logging within the current management regime is providing jobs and value. Seeking to go back to large scale, low value operations, reliant on forest service road building and publicly funded remediation and restoration seems like truly a step back in time.

Please consider the economy and culture that has developed in the wake of the last logging boondoggle. We have adapted and begun creating a sustainable vision for the future of our region. Please let our region work towards that vision and leave the Tongass management as is. I support alternative 1: NO ACTION.

Matt Lawrie

[Position]