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First name: Mike

Last name: Bethers

Organization:

Title:

Comments: HC3048

December 2, 2019

Re: Comments for the record

Dear Sirs:

I was born in and raised in a logging community in Western Oregon and have spent the last 50 years in northern Southeast Alaska. I have a degree in Wildlife Management from Oregon State and worked a career in fisheries for the ADF&G in northern Southeast Alaska. I consider myself a conservationist- not an environmentalist and have spent as much of my life as possible outdoors working, fishing, and hunting to keep the freezer full and to just enjoy life.

From what I've observed in regard to timber management and its impact to other non-timber uses on the Tongass, I would never support the USFS offering another stick of old growth for harvest or building another road for logging. Large scale clear cut logging on the Tongass has devastated fish and wildlife habitat wherever it's been done. The government paid millions in subsidy annually to the logging industry in Southeast Alaska to destroy thousands of acres of public fish and wildlife habitat. And in some places they spent more millions in trying to patch up the damage.

Ten years or so after an area is clear cut it basically turns into a biological dead zone as the closed canopy of regrowth progresses. There are many examples of this spread throughout Southeast Alaska where one can easily see the difference in productivity between a clear cut and adjoining old growth leave strip. The old growth has patches of brush/understory which provides cover for natural occurring food chains starting with insects, birds, small mammals, fur bearers, deer and bear. Tracks show that animals pass through old cut areas but they don't stay or meander much because there is nothing there for them. I've seen examples in northern Southeast Alaska where scores of deer winter kill on the high elevation side of clear cuts because they couldn't get through the deep snow in the clear cut area. Once an area is clear cut, it's not worth a damn for anything except timber production at the expense of other public uses.

Another issue is public access. One of the USFS's original big selling points supporting logging was all the wonderful public access we would have from the logging roads. In most places, public access we would have from the logging roads. In most places, public access was a real short term gain as the USFS found they couldn't take care of the roads and began to destroy them. Some of the logging roads remained as roads some reverted to ATV trails and some to foot trails. Then the USFS spent more millions to pull culverts and water bar miles of old roads and trails used for public access. This left many favorite areas much more difficult to access than before the original logging roads were built.

In closing, I'll say, I support small scale logging sales in areas already logged, from existing roads and on second growth timber. There are sufficient areas of second growth, large enough to cut and roads already in place to support small scale logging on a local scale. This type of logging is much more compatible with fish and game production, wildlife habitat, tourism and other outdoor public uses that drive the Southeast Alaska economy and it doesn't take millions in annual subsidy to make it work.

The only option for the Roadless Rule in the Tongass is to keep it in place "as it is."

Thank you.

[Signature]

Mike Bethers

CC: Sec of USD - Sonny Perdue

[Position]