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Last name: Hawk

Organization:

Title:

Comments: HC5436

U.S. Forest Service Alaska Roadless Rule Committee:

Dear USFS Officials,

I understand that the US Forest Service is considering a plan to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the National Roadless Rule. I am extremely concerned about such a plan and want to tell you why.

Between 1990 and 2000 I had an opportunity to visit Sitka and Petersburg on three occasions. I flew over the Tongass National Forest, took the ferry through its waters, kayaked, and travelled in a small boat with friends. I have many memories from these visits but I remember most vividly the contrast between areas that were protected and areas that were exploited. I have seen steep, eroded slopes where roads failed, muddy sediments in the ocean below such failures, and I have walked the length of Indian Creek with salmon too numerous to count and trees too tall to see their tops. As a result of these experiences I ask you not to abandon the protections provided by The National Roadless Rule, especially in such areas as the Tongass 77.

I understand the pressure you face to offer up the Tongass to the remaining logging communities. At the same time, as a Montansan, I see how intact public lands are becoming a necessity for people from all over the world who want to visit intact ecosystems, fish, hike, climb, and explore the world as it used to be. Economic and social trends make roadless areas more precious, not less. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that forest communities are indispensable for storing carbon and protecting non-human species in the age of rapid climate change.

Having stayed in touch with some of the people I met in Alaska, I was shocked when some of them expressed concern about food insecurity. In a land of such abundance, I asked myself, how could this be? If we do not protect forests, rivers, and coastlines, if we build more roads for short-term gain, food insecurity in a generous environment will become more of a problem rather than less. Therefore, I think it is imperative that we continue to protect the Tongass and not abandon its protections under the National Roadless Rule.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Gary W. HawkSincerely,

Gary Hawk

Missoula, MT 59803

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