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Organization:

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Comments: I understand the Forest Service is planning yet another old growth timber sale on the most heavily logged landscape in all of Southeast Alaska, Prince of Wales Island, in 2 areas which are specifically important for tourism and recreation, Staney Creek and Red Bay. I am a Tongass National Forest stakeholder; I was formerly a TNF employee. Now I am an Outfitter-Guide, permitted through TNF, and I work in partnership with the USFS frequently on recreation-related matters. I live and work on Prince of Wales Island, and have since 2004.

I am totally and unarguably opposed to this timber sale and all others like it on Prince of Wales (POW). We as subsistence users are seeing deer numbers dwindle and stream systems degraded due to widespread clearcutting over the entire Island over the past 30 years. We as Recreation lovers keep seeing more and more clearcuts visible from Recreation areas. According to NEPA, that isn't supposed to happen; a visual buffer zone should prevent clearcuts from being blatantly obvious at Recreation sites. That guideline hasn't even been acknowledged here.

With the POW Landscape Level Assessment, we were told as a community that the FS, while planning a few small Old Growth sales, would also be working to increase and improve Recreation facilities and programs on the Island. To date, the opposite has occurred; the Rec program has been gutted. Facilities are rotting and staff is non-existent. The USFS blatantly lied to us as a community when they told us that other Forest activities, such as recreation improvements and watershed work, were being considered with the same attention that timber sales were, as part of the POW LLA. In fact, ZERO plans for new Recreation facilities (or even upkeep of the existing facilities) have been forthcoming since the POW LLA was finalized some 5 years ago. Yet more timber sales are planned constantly. I have zero trust or confidence in Forest leadership as a result. As I see it, Forest Leaders lied to everyone that participated in the POW LLA planning process knowingly, especially regarding the Recreation section of the POW LLA document. I cannot argue loudly or passionately enough against this timber sale. I especially disagree with continued Old Growth logging, something the USFS TNF was supposedly getting away from by this point in time.

Red Bay area has some of the last remaining stands of Old Growth which are easy to access from the road system. Tourists visit Red Bay Lake Cabin frequently. My Outfitter-Guide service provides transport and equipment rentals to this area, making it even more accessible to visitors. Staney Creek is an even more frequently used recreation and subsistence area, for freshwater sportfishing and deer hunting. Recreation (tourism) stands to be the only industry that could help replace the lost economy of the timber age here, and the USFS has pledged to support and encourage Recreation in this area; this new sale proposal is the opposite of that pledge. I see no support for Recreation vs. Timber on POW; in fact, the opposite is true, even as POW's economy gets worse and tourism keeps gradually increasing.

Quit destroying our Island's ecology for a net loss and absolutely no gain, Tongass National Forest!

Respectfully,

Katie Rooks

Owner/Operator, Prince of Wales Excursion Outfitter LLC