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First name: Ashley

Last name: Ruis

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to you today in support of higher protections for the mature and old growth forest of the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska. The Tongass is so important to our ecosystem here in Southeast. The oldgrowth provides areas for deer to bed down and are the only eating habitats for the Marbled Murrelet. The salmon populations, which are already under so many other threats, return to the streams of mature forests. Once an area is logged or disturbed it can completely change the stream habitat and make it unsuitable for salmon to lay their eggs.

Along with the flora and fauna that call the Tongass home, this forest and pristine ecosystem is important for all of us that choose to call this area home. Oldgrowth and mature forests are important for recreation as we see over one million visitors come to this area each year to see the untouched wilderness, which boosts our economy. It is also important for food security for the people who have called this land home for thousands of years and new comers like myself. We can reduce our grocery bill by over 50% or more with the inclusion of wild harvested foods in our diet. This includes deer, salmon, berries, wild herbs, and sea veggies; all things that thrive in pristine areas of our old growth forests. And with the rising costs of groceries in todays world, these wild sources are more important than ever to the people of Southeast Alaska.

I hope you take the time to understand the perspective of someone who lives in Southeast Alaska and truly loves her home. I may not be from here originally but I have learned from the generations of Tlingit and Haida people who have called this land home for thousands of years. Please take the time to consider putting in higher protections on the mature and oldgrowth forest of the Tongass, the largest National Forest in all of North America. Thank you for your time.

Ashley