

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/13/2025 7:16:18 PM

First name: Will

Last name: Pattiz

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

The ongoing revision of the Tongass National Forest Land Management Plan provides a unique opportunity to solidify the forest's future as a global beacon of sustainable stewardship. I urge you to prioritize the preservation of old-growth forests, a decision that aligns with the Forest Service's stated goals of balancing ecological health, economic sustainability, and cultural heritage.

Old-growth forests are not only ecological treasures but also key to Southeast Alaska's long-term economic resilience. Tourism—a renewable resource—thrives because of these ancient ecosystems. Visitors from across the globe are drawn to the Tongass to experience its unparalleled natural beauty, walk beneath its towering canopies, and witness a landscape untouched by industrialization. The preservation of old-growth trees directly supports this thriving tourism economy, which generates sustainable jobs, fosters local pride, and provides an enduring economic base for the region.

The management plan revision presents a critical moment to address the economic realities of the 21st century. Logging of old-growth forests offers only short-term economic gain while depleting a resource that cannot be replaced within our lifetimes—or even several lifetimes. By contrast, tourism, outdoor recreation, and fishing—industries reliant on intact ecosystems—offer renewable economic benefits year after year. Old-growth forests are the cornerstone of this economy, providing habitats for wildlife that attract visitors, stabilizing watersheds vital to fisheries, and maintaining the iconic beauty of the region that is central to its identity.

Moreover, protecting old-growth forests ensures the Tongass continues to serve as one of the world's most significant natural carbon sinks, a function that will become increasingly critical as we combat the effects of climate change. The management plan revision must reflect a forward-thinking approach to stewardship, one that acknowledges the unique role of old-growth forests in mitigating climate impacts while supporting sustainable economic growth.

Allowing the continued logging of old-growth trees undermines the Forest Service's commitment to long-term sustainability and contradicts the objectives of the management plan to balance ecological integrity with economic opportunity. Preserving these forests is not just an environmental imperative—it is an economic necessity and a moral obligation to future generations.

This revision is your opportunity to lead by example, demonstrating that Southeast Alaska can thrive without compromising its most valuable and irreplaceable resource. By explicitly protecting old-growth forests within the revised plan, you ensure that the Tongass remains a place of wonder, a pillar of sustainable tourism, and a testament to the values of stewardship and foresight.

Thank you for considering these comments as you move forward with this critical revision process.

Respectfully,

Will Pattiz