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Comments: My name is Nancy Waterman. I am writing today to share my thoughts and feedback on the 2025 Draft assessment for the Tongass Forest Revision process.

Most important in the plan revision is to value the ecosystem services especially supporting salmon habitat, carbon sequestration, and maintaining the oldest of the old growth areas remaining in the Tongass. The Tongass National forest is important on a global scale, not just for my recreation, wild food harvesting, and small business benefit which are all things in which I participate as a Juneau resident since 1970.

The 2025 Draft Assessment should accurately reflect some of Southeast Alaskans priorities: protecting the functioning ecosystems of the Tongass National Forest, working collaboratively and towards co-stewardship with tribal governments and local communities, prioritizing subsistence harvesting, and investing in a more diversified economy that includes large and small-scale tourism, commercial and sports fishing, and recreation.

As we continue through this assessment phase, I want to re-emphasize the priorities that are especially important to me. I think that the current forest plan does not adequately address these priorities and needs to be updated accordingly and reflect the need for change.

Climate change is a top community concern across the region, and the role that the forest plays in adaptation and mitigation needs to be considered throughout the Forest Plan. The Tongass should be evaluated for its benefits as a carbon sink, while still allowing for sustainable use of the forest by local peoples for recreation, subsistence, & cultural use; and for potential renewable energy development. The Tongass should be managed to prioritize healthy salmon habitat and salmon-producing watersheds and have 300 or more stream buffers. The USDA should protect old growth forests for climate mitigation, salmon and deer habitat, and also provide pathways for traditional and cultural use of forest species like red and yellow cedar.

One thing that I believe is missing from the Draft Assessment as it is currently written is the focus on salmon as a keystone species. The Aquatic Ecosystems section in particular does not adequately document the social, economic, and cultural importance of salmon in the region. For myself, salmon represent more than food. Watershed management supporting fresh water salmon habitat is the beginning and end of salmon success. It must remain the most important aspect of Tongass National Forest management.

I appreciate that the Forest Service is investing in creating a more holistic Forest Plan with diverse community-driven feedback.

Thank you for considering my input and the input of Southeast Alaskan communities during this important process.