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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to you today regarding a the Tongass Draft Assessment findings

Dear Tongass Plan Revision,

I am a former southeast Alaskan who now lives in Olympia, Washington. I care deeply about the Tongass National Forest, having spent much of my youth working very hard to protect it from harmful logging practices driven by a Forest Service goal to "liquidate over-mature, decadent" forests (the actual Forest Service term for what we now call old growth). Thank goodness we succeeded in safeguarding much of the forest that would otherwise have been processed into pulp. And I am very grateful that the Forest Service itself has seen the error of its ways and become much more enlightened. I am writing today to encourage you to continue working to protect the ecological integrity and wilderness quality of the Tongass.

I remember commenting on the very first Tongass National Forest management plan and, I must say, it was not even close to the quality (and length!) of the revision that you are now working on. Thank you for all of your hard work and your sincere efforts to involve those in southeast Alaska and beyond who are affected by your land management decisions. Protecting the ecological integrity and wilderness quality of the Tongass is vital to Native communities, subsistence resource users, local economies, and future generations of Americans who value their public lands. For this reason, I endorse the following response drafted by the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council:

Quotation:

The draft assessment highlights several priority areas for me personally that are also areas which require robust protection, including:

- Homelands, sacred places, and traditional harvesting grounds of Alaska Native people
- Subsistence - both customary and traditional uses
- The temperate rainforest archipelago and ecosystems
- Salmon runs and other wildlife habitat
- Recreation and scenic beauty

I share in the draft plan's endorsement of stronger protections for these areas and encourage the Forest Service to retain these sections of the plan. I urge the Forest Service to integrate Indigenous Knowledge and subsistence rights into the plan. Traditional Ecological Knowledge strengthens conservation and ensures resilience for future generations. A co-stewardship model for managing the Tongass honors the rights and sovereignty of Tribal Governments. (End of Quotation)

I must say that seeing SEACC endorse co-management demonstrates that it is not only the Forest Service that has evolved since my earliest involvement in Tongass management planning back in the 1970s. Having studied and taught about international conservation through co-management in my career as a geography and environmental studies professor, I am convinced that this is a valuable model worth pursuing in a number of contexts.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Dr. Edward Whitesell

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