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First name: Katya

Last name: Kirsch

Organization:

Title:

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

Dear Tongass Plan Revision,

I strongly support maintaining an intact, healthy Tongass National Forest via the upcoming Revision Plan. An intact Tongass forest is essential SE Alaska communities, sustaining wild fish, wildlife, and biodiversity. The plan must protect intact land and clean water resources to ensure long-term ecosystem health, support cultural resources, economies, and communities in the region.

The draft assessment highlights several priority areas which require robust protection, including:

- traditional harvesting grounds of Alaska Native people
- Subsistence - customary and traditional uses
- The temperate rainforest archipelago and ecosystems
- Wild 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.

The inclusion of protections for very small timber mill operators is important to include in the Forest Plan Revision. Very Small timber mills sustain communities across Southeast Alaska but are often outbid and forced out of timber sales that they depend on by larger mills.

Many Southeast Alaskans want to see meaningful change in the timber industry, and the entire region will benefit from transition away from archaic clear cutting to truly sustainable logging practices.

Environmental and profiteering threats would degrade the Tongass, harming ecosystems and communities. The new Tongass Forest Plan must prioritize protections that uphold the integrity of the Tongass's vast ecosystems and align with the draft assessment's findings and local knowledge and support for a balanced approach. By doing so, the Forest Service will safeguard the long-term sustainability of this vital forest.

Thank you for considering my input. I urge you to prioritize Tongass protections in this forest plan revision.

Sincerely,

Ms. Katya Kirsch

720 53rd St Port Townsend, WA 98368-1603

katyakirsch@hotmail.com