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Organization: Timberworks, LLC

Title:

Comments: Dear Land Managers & Foresters,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Tongass National Forest Land Management Plan Revision #64039. I appreciate your dedication to managing the resources of the Tongass.

As a resident of the Tongass in my fifth decade, I remind myself and others that the Tongass is public land belonging to all residents, Alaskans, and Americans equally.

As a professional woodworker of over 30 years, I have focused my career and livelihood on using old growth wood from the Tongass. I'm a salvage logger on the smallest scale, and one of the largest buyers of processed Alaska yellow cedar lumber and timbers in the region from sawmills on Prince of Wales, Wrangell, Hoonah, Tenakee, and Sitka.

What concerns me most about our timber industry is that the remaining Alaska yellow cedar, western red cedar, and premium western hemlock is but a fraction of what has already been exported since the 1950s.

So I advocate for keeping a healthy reserve of premium timber for regional use. There should be no exporting of round logs from Alaska. I can see an argument for exporting western hemlock cants. Not so for Alaska yellow cedar and western red cedar.

Mills that could reliably provide Alaska yellow cedar to me on Prince of Wales no longer can, because far too many round logs were exported. This is a tragedy, because the best AYC in our region previously came from that island. I haven't bought any AYC from Prince of Wales since 2019. Clearly, this is a resource that needs greater valuation of single trees. I would like to think that in a century there will still be sufficient AYC and RC to keep local woodworkers providing premium products. The harvest of the early 2000s was too great for that to be a reality.

I encourage the USFS to offer small timber sales, and disqualify any operator that intends to export round logs.

On the conservation front, living in Sitka I see the value of healthy forests for fisheries and subsistence hunting. My family and I hunt and fish for virtually all of our meat. The grocery store value of this meat to our family is thousands of dollars per year. This is only possible because we hunt healthy, intact forests and watersheds. The future will probably only see fuel and transportation costs increase, so let's do our best to maintain watershed integrity, and encourage the restoration of damaged watersheds that were previously logged.

Even though I am salvage logger and purchaser of a lot of processed lumber, I fully support the Roadless Rule. It's an investment in future generations. I do see room within roadless areas for small scale timber salvage. As an example, an Alaska yellow cedar tree that I obtained through the microsale process was scaled at 1 MBF, or 1,000 board feet. This was a premium tree that died about a decade ago. The end value of this single log for me to turn into finished products is estimated at \$50,000 dollars, or about \$50 dollar per board foot. I removed the wood from this tree entirely by hand (other than chainsaws) and the impact to the forest is minimal. The commemorative benches I build from this tree will be placed prominently around Sitka, and my partnership with Tlingit artists who carve formline relief and inlay copper formline and art is a great asset to our community and the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come to Sitka each year.

That's the kind of project we need more of! There are further opportunities to provide premium carving wood,

instrument wood (I have provided wood for instruments featured in the Sitka Summer Music Festival, premium wood boat building, and more.

Conservation and timber can work together, it just takes a bit of innovation and thinking of the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,  
Zach LaPerriere  
Timberworks, LLC  
Sitka, Alaska