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Comments: My name is Zofia Danielson, and I was born and raised in Sitka. I received my B.S. in environmental science, and returned to Sitka to work in my field of study. I am writing today to share my thoughts and feedback on the 2025 Draft assessment for the Tongass Forest Revision process.

My family commercially trolls for salmon which depend on healthy forests and streams. I harvest wild foods from the forests and beaches, such as berries and beach asparagus. I also camp and recreate in the Tongass National Forest.

The agency has heard the priorities of Southeast Alaska communities through extensive outreach and engagement processes over the past 6 years. The 2025 Draft Assessment should accurately reflect 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 regional economy.

As we continue through this assessment phase, I want to re-emphasize the priorities that are especially important to me.

The new Forest Plan should recognize the Tongass as the traditional homelands of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples who have lived here since time immemorial. Subsistence, harvesting wild foods, traditional uses, and food security are the highest priorities for many people on the Tongass, and the Forest should be managed accordingly. 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 Forest Service should prioritize opportunities for outdoor recreation on the Tongass. I would like to see the Forest Service focus on uplifting local workforce development, partnering with local entities and Tribes, and drive their forest management by community priorities. I want to see traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous values incorporated into the Forest Plan. 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. The Forest Service should continue to support a transition to a young growth harvest timber economy. The Tongass should be managed to prioritize healthy salmon habitat and salmon-producing watersheds and have 300 stream buffers. 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 more. The Forest Plan should seek a balance in creating opportunities for sustainable tourism, and protecting local priority areas from overuse.

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. Across rural Southeast Alaska, residents use an average of 75 pounds of salmon per person each year, and nearly 90% of rural households here use salmon. Commercial salmon fishing in Southeast Alaska supports a global economy and food chain and employs 15% of Southeast Alaskans, more than any other private sector. For myself and other Southeast Alaskans, salmon represent more than food: they represent a way of life that is tied to our ways of life and our economies.

My family owns and operates a commercial troller in Sitka. We catch coho and king salmon and deliver at a local processing plant, which, in turn, supports local, regional, state, national, and international economies and food security. We also eat personal use salmon throughout the year.

I am grateful that the Forest Service is investing in creating a more holistic Forest Plan with community-driven

feedback. I appreciate that the Forest Service is bringing in extra resources to support tribal engagement.

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