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Last name: Evans

Organization:

Title:

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

Dear Tongass Plan Revision,

I am writing to express my strong support for maintaining an intact, healthy Tongass National Forest through the upcoming Revision Plan, and for specific components of the draft assessment centered around this goal. The plan must protect intact land and water resources to ensure long-term ecosystem health, biodiversity, and carbon storage, in addition to supporting resilient, thriving cultural resources, sustainable economies, and communities in the region.

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

- The temperate rainforest and associated ecosystems
- Salmon runs and other wildlife habitat
- Homelands, sacred places, and traditional harvesting grounds of Alaska Native people
- Subsistence - both customary and traditional uses
- 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 strong co-stewardship model for managing the Tongass honors the rights and sovereignty of Tribal Governments and helps to ensure ecosystem stewardship into the future.

Temperate old growth forests like the much of the Tongass - including their undisturbed soil and other ecosystem components -- are unequalled in their capacity to capture and store carbon. A forest such as this is a critical national resource that must be protected intact as an irreplaceable part of any sensible plan to moderate climate.

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 as well as local knowledge and support for a balanced approach, including protections for small timber mill operators that sustain communities across Southeast Alaska. By doing so, the Forest Service will safeguard the long-term sustainability of this vital forest.

I thank you for considering my input and urge you to prioritize protection of the irreplaceable Tongass in this forest plan revision.

Sincerely,

Mr. James Evans