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Organization: Chrome Chasers LLC

Title: Owner, Manager

Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

I am submitting comments regarding the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan revision. I appreciate the opportunity to provide input during this initial scoping period.

As a business owner, guide, and year-round user of the Tongass based in Wrangell, I strongly encourage the Forest Service to prioritize the long-term ecological and economic value of maintaining roadless areas across the forest. Any revision to the current plan should be grounded in best available science and reflect the realities of Southeast Alaska's modern economy, which is driven by intact ecosystems and sustainable use.

The existing Roadless Rule has proven to be one of the most effective conservation policies in the National Forest System. It protects approximately 58.5 million acres nationwide while still allowing for active forest management, including wildfire mitigation, habitat restoration, and infrastructure projects where appropriate. Importantly, it does not prevent access, recreation, or responsible economic activity.

From a fisheries perspective, the science is clear. Roadless areas consistently support the highest quality watersheds and the most productive fish habitat. Research shows that roadless areas are nearly twice as likely to contain properly functioning watersheds compared to roaded areas. The absence of roads reduces sedimentation, prevents fragmentation from undersized culverts, and maintains natural hydrologic processes that are essential for salmon and trout throughout all life stages.

This is particularly relevant in the Tongass. More than 70% of salmon and over 65% of steelhead habitat in Southeast Alaska occurs in roadless areas. These intact landscapes provide the spawning and rearing conditions necessary to sustain wild fish populations at a global scale. The Tongass produces more wild salmon than all other national forests combined, and this productivity is directly tied to the integrity of its roadless watersheds.

These ecological values are inseparable from the regional economy. In Southeast Alaska, fishing, guiding, tourism, and related industries generate approximately \$2 billion annually and support a significant portion of local employment. In contrast, the timber industry represents a very small percentage of current economic activity. Management decisions that prioritize short-term extraction over long-term ecosystem function risk undermining the very resources that sustain communities like mine.

My business, Chrome Chasers, operates primarily in roadless areas of the Tongass. These areas are essential not only to the health of fish populations, but also to the quality of the experience we are able to provide to clients who travel here specifically for world-class, wild fisheries. The value of these landscapes is not theoretical. It is directly tied to livelihoods, local economies, and the continued viability of small businesses throughout the region.

It is also important to note that maintaining roadless areas does not equate to a lack of management. The Roadless Rule explicitly allows for fuel reduction, forest health treatments, and other active management strategies. In fact, data from the Forest Service shows that significant fuel treatment work has already occurred within roadless areas. Additionally, the majority of human-caused wildfires originate near roads, and expanding the road system introduces additional long-term costs, including maintenance burdens that already exceed available budgets.

Given these considerations, I respectfully recommend that the revised Tongass Forest Plan:

- * Maintain strong protections for existing roadless areas
- * Prioritize watershed integrity and fish habitat as foundational management objectives
- * Recognize and support the economic importance of fishing, guiding, and tourism industries
- * Focus management investments on restoration and maintenance of existing infrastructure rather than expansion of new road systems
- * Continue to allow targeted, science-based forest health treatments within the framework of roadless protections

The Tongass is a globally significant ecosystem and one of the last remaining strongholds for wild salmon and trout. Its future management should reflect both the best available science and the lived experience of those who depend on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. I look forward to continued engagement throughout this process.

Sincerely,
Dori Matney
Wrangell, Alaska