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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I was born and raised in Sitka and have lived in Southeast Alaska my entire life. I plan to stay here for the rest of my life as well. The Tongass is not an abstract issue to me. It directly supports my way of life, my community, and the future of Southeast Alaska.

I strongly believe that protecting salmon habitat and healthy watersheds must be the top priority in any forest management plan. Salmon are one of the most important resources we have in Southeast Alaska, both economically and culturally. Commercial fishing, charter fishing, tourism, and subsistence all depend on healthy salmon runs, and healthy salmon runs depend on intact forests and watersheds.

I rely heavily on subsistence foods myself. Most of the meat and salmon I consume comes directly from the Tongass through hunting, fishing, and subsistence use. Many families in Southeast Alaska depend on these same resources. Decisions made today about forest management will directly affect our ability to continue living this way in the future.

I strongly oppose continued large-scale old-growth logging in the Tongass. Once old-growth forest is cut, it is effectively gone for generations. These forests will not recover on a meaningful human timescale. They will not come back for my children or grandchildren. Old-growth forests are part of what makes Southeast Alaska unique, both ecologically and economically.

The long-term value of intact old-growth forests far outweighs the short-term value of continued large-scale logging. Tourism, recreation, commercial fishing, charter fishing, and subsistence all rely on maintaining healthy ecosystems and the natural beauty of the Tongass. These industries and ways of life provide far broader and more sustainable long-term benefits to Southeast Alaska communities than continued old-growth timber extraction.

I support a full transition away from large-scale old-growth logging and toward second-growth timber management instead. Any remaining old-growth harvest should be extremely limited and carefully justified.

I also believe the Forest Service should limit additional road construction. Many existing roads in the Tongass are already difficult and expensive to maintain. It does not make sense to continue expanding road systems when current infrastructure is already struggling with maintenance needs. New roads also create additional long-term environmental impacts and watershed concerns.

I ask the Forest Service to prioritize:

- permanent protection of remaining old-growth forests,
- strong protections for salmon streams and watersheds,
- subsistence uses and sustainable fisheries,
- more thorough cumulative impact analysis,
- reduced road construction,
- and long-term ecosystem health over short-term extraction.

Wildfire concerns should be considered realistically in the context of Southeast Alaska's rainforest climate. The Tongass is fundamentally different from many drier western forests, and management decisions here should be based on science specific to this ecosystem rather than assumptions carried over from very different regions.

The Tongass is one of the most valuable and unique forests left in the world. Decisions made now will affect

Southeast Alaska communities for generations. I urge the Forest Service to prioritize long-term stewardship, intact ecosystems, and sustainable local economies over further loss of old-growth forest.

Thank you for your time,

Blake Laperriere