

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/7/2026 4:44:52 AM

First name: Nate

Last name: LaPerriere

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Growing up in Sitka and spending my entire life in Southeast Alaska has given me a direct understanding of how important the Tongass is to the people who live here. I expect to remain in this region for the rest of my life, so the future of the forest is not a theoretical issue to me. The condition of the Tongass affects local communities, subsistence traditions, fisheries, and the long-term future of Southeast Alaska.

I believe forest management decisions should place the highest emphasis on protecting salmon habitat and maintaining healthy watersheds. Salmon are foundational to Southeast Alaska in nearly every sense. Local economies, commercial fishing fleets, charter businesses, tourism operators, and subsistence users all rely on healthy salmon populations, and those salmon populations depend on functioning forest ecosystems and clean water.

Subsistence resources are personally important to me as well. Much of the fish and game my household depends on comes directly from the Tongass through hunting and fishing. This is a reality shared by many families throughout the region. The decisions being made today will determine whether future generations are still able to depend on these resources and maintain this way of life.

For these reasons, I do not support continued large-scale harvesting of old-growth forest in the Tongass. Old-growth ecosystems take centuries to develop and cannot realistically be replaced within the lifetime of current residents or even the next generation. Once these forests are removed, the ecological value they provide is lost for an extremely long time. These forests are one of the defining characteristics of Southeast Alaska and contribute heavily to both the region's identity and economy.

Maintaining intact old-growth forest provides greater long-term value to Southeast Alaska communities than continued industrial-scale logging. Industries such as tourism, recreation, commercial fishing, charter fishing, and subsistence all depend on healthy ecosystems and undeveloped landscapes. Those benefits are more sustainable and longer lasting than the short-term economic return from additional old-growth timber extraction.

I support shifting timber management toward second-growth harvesting rather than continued reliance on old-growth logging. Any future old-growth harvest should be highly restricted and only considered under exceptional circumstances.

I also believe additional road construction should be minimized. Existing roads across the Tongass already create major maintenance costs and challenges. Expanding those systems further does not seem responsible when current infrastructure is already difficult to maintain. Road building also increases long-term environmental impacts and can negatively affect watersheds and fish habitat.

I encourage the Forest Service to focus on:

- protecting remaining old-growth forest,
- preserving salmon streams and watersheds,
- supporting sustainable fisheries and subsistence uses,
- improving cumulative impact analysis,
- limiting new road development,
- and prioritizing long-term ecosystem stability over short-term extraction.

Wildfire concerns should be evaluated in the context of Southeast Alaska's climate and ecology. The Tongass is a coastal temperate rainforest and should not be managed using assumptions developed for much drier western

forests. Management decisions should be grounded in science specific to this region and ecosystem.

The Tongass is an internationally significant forest and one of the most unique ecosystems remaining in the world. Decisions made now will have lasting impacts on Southeast Alaska communities for decades and generations ahead. I urge the Forest Service to emphasize conservation, long-term stewardship, sustainable local economies, and the protection of remaining old-growth habitat.