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Comments: All the researchers at the Tongass Genomics Initiative, a consortium of more than 20 researchers established to study invertebrate biology and microbial ecology in the caves and karst of the Tongass National Forest, oppose the proposed Twin Mountain Harvest.

We emphatically request that the proposed sale to be stopped (no action) to protect several species of stygobiontic (cave-adapted) flatworms, *Sphalloplana* spp., found only in caves and springs of Prince of Wales Island. These flatworms have a unique ability to change color (from white to brown) under stress, despite lacking photoreceptors. Further, when maintained under stable conditions, the stygobiontic flatworm reverts to its original unpigmented presentation. Occasionally, flatworms observed in springs can flip between pigmentation states in real time. Facultative color change is common among birds, rodents, and some reptiles, but most often results in a seasonal color change. Real-time reversible color changes are exceedingly rare in the animal world and are usually observed in relatively complex animals, such as octopuses. The exhibition of this exceedingly complex chemical stunt by an organism the size of a grain of rice is globally unique and suggests a novel circuit in these flatworms, specifically. Real-time reversible color changes in biomaterials represent a promising research avenue in their own right; these biological circuits could be leveraged to create biochemical sensors with clear visible readouts.

Cave-adapted flatworms require very specific pH, temperature, salinity, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen concentrations, and are typically found only in pristine cave environments. We are concerned that any more logging in already heavily harvested areas of Prince of Wales Island, and especially the construction of more than 30 miles of "temporary roads" outlined in the proposal, could both threaten these globally unique organisms and prevent further research and potential commercialization of the novel biochemical sensor that enables reversible pigmentation. For context, the annual salmon run on the island and the resulting sediment destabilization lead to a massive die-off of river-resident flatworms each year. These cave residents are globally unique; they are not found anywhere else, and if the logging project proceeds, we fear they will not be found anywhere.

In addition to the proposed road construction, we are concerned that standard karst buffering will not be sufficient to prevent erosion around cave entrances, particularly those where high winds are a consideration. We urge the removal of all karst units from the sale. If this is not possible, we suggest implementing enhanced karst buffers and minimizing road construction to protect the very delicate balance in which these cave-adapted flatworms live. Thank you for your attention to this matter.