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First name: Elsa

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Supervisor Nelson:

I am writing to oppose the Twin Mountain II Timber Sale as proposed, and in support of the No Action Alternative. I grew up on Prince of Wales Island and continue to return annually to hunt, fish, and spend time in the area. My husband and I own a cabin on Northern Prince of Wales. After reviewing the DEIS, I believe this project would cause significant impacts to wildlife habitat, subsistence resources, and karst ecosystems while providing very little benefit to local communities.

The justification for this sale doesn't make sense for local communities-the transition to a second-growth economy is a played-out rationale for logging ecologically sensitive forests. The reality is that the existing old-growth industry is not transitioning to a second-growth industry. Any second-growth industry that brings value to this region would need to be cultivated separately from the existing old-growth industry and would require a new set of economic ideas and an eagerness to practice ecologically principled forestry. The idea that an industry currently dependent on old-growth timber needs to be helped on its way to a young-growth economy is farcical. Besides a few cottage industries that could survive without these types of massive old-growth sales, there is only one sawmill in southern Southeast that depends on large inputs of old-growth timber-Viking Mill-and the owners of that mill have gone on the record and are often quoted by the media threatening to shut down their mill within very short spans of time if they lose consistent access to old-growth timber. Viking Mill has no desire to transition to young-growth logging, and it is illogical to continue to reference the second-growth transition for the sake of a company that has done nothing to position itself to ever transition to a second-growth economy and effectively refuses to do so. Logging any more of Prince of Wales old-growth forests for the sake of companies that rely solely on timber export is obviously not a desirable proposition for anybody who lives in Southeast, with the exception of the small minority who are employed by the timber industry (according to 2025 Southeast by the Numbers, the timber industry currently represents 0.61% of the jobs in Southeast Alaska).

This timber sale is too big and too damaging to wildlife. Even though Alternative 3 was proposed to mitigate the wildlife impacts of these sales, the on-the-ground reality for both the Staney Creek and Red Bay areas is not encouraging for wildlife. These are some of the most heavily logged areas on Prince of Wales. Habitat and connectivity are already seriously jeopardized by heavy roading, dense second growth, and unmitigated effects of past logging, including impassable slash adjacent to logging roads and in past clearcuts. The remaining pockets of old-growth forest are invaluable in these heavily logged areas, providing many benefits to wildlife, including winter deer habitat and secure denning sites for bears and wolves. There are many other species that rely on this habitat as well, and in the Red Bay and Staney Creek areas, significant old-growth stands are few and far between.

I grew up on Prince of Wales, and even though my permanent residence is now in Haines, I return to Prince of Wales every summer to hunt, fish, and enjoy the unique characteristics of this beautiful place. Many of my neighbors and friends on Prince of Wales rely on these areas, especially Northern Prince of Wales, for hunting blacktail deer. The populations of deer that live in ecologically damaged areas, like Red Bay and Staney Creek, are vulnerable to hard winters and also to wolf predation. Clearcut logging and road building make it easier for wolves to hunt deer and limit deer habitat available in the winter. Both of these things, especially when taken together, threaten the viability of this critical food source for rural communities. Even though I live in Haines, much of the food in my freezer comes from Prince of Wales, and northern Prince of Wales is my favorite place in the world to hunt. I hope to be able to hunt here with my daughter when she is older. For the people who live in this place, and for those who don't live here full time but look forward to visiting, the remaining populations of wild animals are a precious part of the landscape. Deer are critical for our food, but all of our animal neighbors have

intrinsic value, including bats, black bears, flying squirrels, marten, brown creepers, and goshawks.

This sale is also too damaging to karst. Table 59 shows that 24,325 acres, or 88%, of forested karstlands within the project area have already been harvested. Road building and timber harvest on karst can be devastating and can include soil erosion, disruptions to groundwater connectivity, and the introduction of pollutants into salmon streams. Given the significant existing damage to karst forests in the project area, all units containing karst should not be in the sale at all. The fact that these karstlands are in the sale is another reason why the No Action Alternative is the best Alternative for local communities and for the overall ecological integrity of this unique and beautiful place.

Sincerely,
Elsa Sebastian