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First name: Deborah

Last name: Kleese

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Tongass letter

The following text was copy/pasted from an attached letter. The system cannot display the formatting, graphics, or tables from the attached original.

As a citizen of the United States I am invested in the preservation of our public lands and I support our wilderness areas. I regard the establishment of national parks and the subsequent designation of wilderness areas in the United States as positive milestones and among the proudest moments in American history. The Tongass National Forest has monumental importance in the historical and geographical landscape and should remain roadless. I write to support the roadless policy and to speak against the roadless exemption and encroachment of roads into the Tongass. I live surrounded by the Superior National Forest in Ely, Minnesota and fear that if roads are permitted in the Tongass wilderness, similar efforts for roadless exemptions will follow for the wilderness in my own backyard, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

The negative impacts of roads on habitats has been well documented; I am certain that conservation biologists will make reference to the scientific literature and I will merely highlight the main negative impacts that will be raised in this process. Roads create habitat fragmentation and a host of ensuing problems, including species mortality from road construction; species mortality from collision with vehicles; alteration of the physical environment; spread of non[shy]native species and edge effects; increased use of areas by humans; movement-barrier effects, which lead to species population fragmentation.

Roads significantly impact ecological processes. Even in a relatively stable world fragmentation due to roads is a threat to biodiversity. However, we are in a period of rapid climate change, which puts an added burden on species and habitats and further threatens biodiversity. One response to climate change is species migration. As previously mentioned, migration is negatively impacted by dispersal barriers such as roads. Roadless wilderness areas are the best examples of large, intact ecosystems, and these areas become much more valuable as both ecological and economic cushions against climate change. We must include the true economic value of these forest lands into any analysis. Ecosystem valuation becomes more and more essential to guiding future human activity, especially as the ecosystems become more rare. The Tongass is one of these rare and valuable ecosystems. A key ecosystem value, one also that needs to be factored in to any economic analysis, is its sustainability component. A valuable service provided to humans by naturally functioning ecosystems is their avoidance of adverse threshold conditions; they provide critical zones for resource conservation. If we go below the critical threshold, and the adverse impacts of road construction and ensuing activities pose just such a threshold threat, we face risks to this vast area that put us at substantial risk. The short-term value afforded by roads is not as acceptable an economic payoff as the long-term value of clean water and a special wilderness ecosystem.

[Position]

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