

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/8/2019 9:00:00 AM

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Title:

Comments: Alaska Road Rule

Please consider my comments in the attached letter. I worked for the Forest Service at Rowan Bay on Kuiu Island in 1992 and saw first hand what it takes to construct logging roads on boggy ground to support the many off-highway loads and the numerous rock pits and clear cuts that occurred on this island.

Mike Burke

USFS-Ret.

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USDA Forest Service December 8, 2019

Attn: Alaska Road Rule

P.O. Box 21628

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The preferred alternative to change the 2001 Roadless Rule is way too extreme for the Tongass National Forest, where 70% of the old growth forests were removed in the last half of the last century. It takes 300 to 600 years for many of these clear cut areas to become the forests they once were, with an overstory of spruce, hemlock and cedar. How much more rock will it take to pound into the boggy ground to firm up the new roads in order to transport these logs to the ocean where they will be made into rafts for delivery to mills or to the export market.

This is the last temperate rain forest in the world that is sequestering carbon dioxide, a world being altered by a warming climate, as evident in Alaska, where native villages along the Arctic coast are eroding away and the permafrost is melting. Alaska today is more dependent on tourism and commercial fishing, which makes up 25% of the economy. Logging only makes up 1% of the economy. Is it worth risking the last great salmon fishery habitat by putting more sediment into the streams? This preferred alternative will only produce a short-term economical gain and a long-term ecological disaster. Let's not give in to the politicians with their tunnel vision, focused on the bottom line and under the influence of big money with no wider view of the environment that will be destroyed. Let's consider more thinning alternatives to restore the cut over areas of the past and utilize existing roads. What kind of world do we want to leave for the next generations?

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