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First name: Steve

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Roadless Rule Comments in favor of Alternative 1 and opposed to Alternative 6

December 13, 2019

Tenakee Springs, AK 99841

Gentlefolk:

I write regarding the proposed changes to the Roadless Rule in the Tongass National Forest. I support Alternative 1, the proposal to maintain the existing "Roadless Rules" which in fact don't prevent all road building, but rather establish strict guidelines for when and how roads may be built in these areas and limit any timber harvest.

As a resident of Tenakee Springs, I, and my fellow citizens depend on the wild characteristics of the Tongass to support jobs and livelihoods dependent on fishing, guiding, tourism, and the ability to harvest subsistence deer and plants and fish. All of these activities are best served by maintaining the existing roadless rules.

Existing road systems already provide access to adequate trees to sustain a small family operated sawmill and access to a partially completed hydroelectric project for our community. Additional road construction would damage the wild character of the inlet and create additional and unnecessary costs for construction and maintenance of roads in addition to what, in 2001, was an 8.4 billion-dollar backlog across the Tongass for road maintenance.

When the roadless rule was proposed and promulgated in 2001, it had the most extensive public involvement of any rulemaking process in history with the vast majority of over 1.6 million comments in favor of it. Alaskans were solidly in favor of the roadless rule at that time and continue to favor it in enormous majorities. Our community, with folks across a broad range of the political spectrum, supported continuance of the roadless rule unanimously in the preliminary hearings after notice of intent to amend the rule, and again at the recent public hearings after the Forest Service selected to abolish the Roadless Rule in its entirety. The people at the meetings constituted the majority of adult community members in Tenakee and as noted, all were in favor of continuing with the existing roadless rules, or more recently, in favor of Alternative 1.

As hinted at already, inventoried roadless areas provide large, relatively undisturbed blocks of important habitat for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and plants, and they contribute to healthy watersheds and clean drinking water which in turn provide extensive opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism and subsistence harvest by community members.

In addition, the Roadless Rule protects some of the last remaining tracts of old-growth forest habitat in the Tongass that contribute to the absorption of carbon dioxide reducing climate change.

For all these reasons I wish to express my support for Alternative 1, and opposition to Alternative 6.

The Roadless Rules on the Tongass National Forest should be maintained as they currently exist, and the clear and unequivocal voice of the great majority of the public should be heard by decision makers.

Sincerely,

Stephen W. Lewis

[Attachment is a Word document version of the same comment above.]

[Position]