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First name: Doug

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to express my opposition to the proposed Alaska Exemption of the National Roadless Policy. I have lived most of my life in Southeast Alaska and I am voicing my concerns about the Alaska Specific Exemption plans which will impact the Tongass National Forest.

I was raised in Sitka and have lived in Southeast Alaska for over 50 years. I have lived on Prince of Wales Island for the past 37 years, and am a commercial fisherman. I have seen the days of the big pulp mills and industrial scale logging all over Southeast Alaska.

I have also hunted and trapped for the past 50 years on the Tongass and have witnessed first hand how the clear cuts and the logging roads have impacted our wildlife on the Tongass and Prince of Wales Island specifically. I can name drainage after drainage that I once hunted and trapped that are now gone and will never be back in my lifetime, and I just want to get my perspective out there.

Prince of Wales Island has taken the brunt of most of the industrial logging that took place from the 1950's through the 1980's, and as a result there is a huge road system across the island. Native Corporations also selected much of their lands on Prince of Wales Island as a result of ANCSA, and lately we have had many thousands of acres of land on the island selected by the State of Alaska. All of these various owners have turned the island into a hodge podge of private and public lands, and is threatening the health of the entire ecosystem of the island.

Every time the state wants to select land in Southeast Alaska, the rest of the region screams about how it will affect their back yard. Then the state works out some trade for land on POW Island which is then clearcut! This is in addition to all of the ANSCA lands that were logged and removed from the Tongass and POW Island.

Most recently a collaborative group on POW Island was working together with the Forest Service on how to provide timber for the mill on the island while working WITHIN the Roadless Rule framework. This group worked on a compromise to log portions of areas that were left as wildlife corridors and important habitat for animals on the island. With the "Alaska Exemption" logging companies would get more access to timber in addition to harvesting those key habitat areas that were saved from past logging.

I also hear that we need to cut on Prince of Wales Island because that is where the one mill is located. There is plenty of timber in Southeast Alaska that can be accessed to support our mill, but it may require utilizing some young growth as well as cutting on some of the other islands.

In addition, much of the timber harvested in the Tongass can be exported in the round out of Southeast. What good does that do for keeping the mill operating on the island! Instead, if an exemption of any kind is granted, it shouldn't allow any of the timber to be exported round!

Again, I want to say that I am opposed to any change in the Roadless Rule on the Tongass. I know that my one voice will probably not matter or influence anyone, but I feel that I have to try. I have attended several meetings and I have heard 90 percent of the residents at those meetings say that they want to keep the Roadless Rule in place. Yet, what do we get for all of our time and efforts involving ourselves in this democratic process? We get the Forest Service proposing alternative 6 which is a total exemption of the Tongass!

Please pay attention to all of the people that have taken the time to try and conserve a place they live in and love.

Respectfully,

Doug Rhodes

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