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First name: Dave

Last name: Squibb

Organization: Point Baker Community Association

Title: Chairman

Comments: Dear Mr. Stewart,

The Point Baker Community Association would like to submit comments on the proposed Twin Mountain II Timber Sale. The Point Baker Community Association (PBCA) is a non profit corporation formed to insure and improve the physical, social, environmental, health and wellbeing of the community and to provide a voice for community concerns and aspirations.

The PBCA has a long history of involvement in planning for projects which affect the forest ecosystem of Prince of Wales Island. We are a community which is completely dependent on the harvest and utilization of the natural resources of our National Forest for our commercial and subsistence needs. It is crucial to our health and wellbeing that the forest lands of Prince of Wales Island provide healthy salmon spawning habitat, and an abundance of high quality deer habitat. To this aim we have always advocated for the conservation of old growth forest. Unfortunately the health of the forest in our area has been diminished in the past by excessive clearcut timber harvest during the pulp company era. The forest has not recovered from that past logging and will not recover for many more years. Another consequence of the intensive harvest in the past is an extensive road system which is heavily used by deer hunters from throughout Prince of Wales Island as well as non subsistence hunters from Ketchikan. This access has caused the depletion of deer populations in our primary subsistence area as well as a lot of competition with our local hunters.

In more recent years we have become concerned with a new threat to our health and wellbeing. We are witnessing and being impacted by a changing climate. Although direct effects on our forest are subtle, they are evident and it would not take too much of a continuation for them to become devastating. It is hard to ignore the effects of hotter dryer summers which we experienced in two previous years on our salmon streams, as well as the dead trees as a result of insect infestation. There are also changes happening in our ocean environment. In recent years we have experienced significant declines in salmon runs. These run failures are attributed to warmer ocean temperatures. Although it may be inconvenient to connect a warming climate to forest management on the Tongass, we believe that the old growth forest in Southeast Alaska is a crucial source of sequestered carbon and should be preserved.

For these reasons we are asking that there be no large scale clearcutting of old growth forest associated with this project. We recognize the need for some harvest of old growth trees to provide for the wood product needs of local communities. Personal use harvest which provides some employment at local mills and small sales for local mills to provide lumber and value added products to local markets is acceptable. These needs could be met with individual tree selection and small sales of less than 100 hundred thousand board feet, which would be more similar to the natural processes of the forest ecosystem. There would also be no need for new road construction.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to working with you to achieve the goal of ensuring that the way of life for our island communities can continue for many generations to come.