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Comments:

As a resident of Southeast Alaska, I am concerned by the proposed plan to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule. I understand the Forest Service and the Department of Natural Resources are seeking areas in the Tongass that residents feel should be protected. I think all of the areas in the Tongass National Forest that have been designated "Roadless Areas" should remain protected.

We Southeast Alaska residents depend on our wild, unaltered forests for salmon, deer, mushrooms, and berries. Southeast Alaska also benefits from tourism and fisheries, which depend on protected wild lands where fish and wildlife habitat remain pristine. Our wild lands provide the scenic natural beauty that sustains local residents and attracts thousands of visitors to our region each year.

An exemption from the Roadless Rule would allow road-building and the opening up of more old growth forests to logging. Up until 2001, Southeast Alaskans saw continuous logging in the Tongass and the resulting destruction of thousands of acres of precious old-growth forests, owned by all Americans, for the financial benefit of a few companies. The industrial logging paradigm is destructive and wasteful. Clearcuts obliterate habitat for many plants and wildlife that depend on old growth forests for shelter.

The logging industry represents less than 1% of the regional economy but has resulted in a huge, decades-long drain on the US Treasury. From 1982-2012 the Forest Service spent \$1,193,521,560 more to log the Tongass than it received in timber revenues! There is no reason to return to that era of blatant financial waste.

The proposed exemption to the Roadless Rule will force tax payers to further subsidize round log exports to China and elsewhere in support of their manufacturing base-not Alaska's. Enactment of this proposed exemption would continue the trend of managing Tongass public lands to benefit two logging exporters, one of which is based in Canada. This is wrong.

Southeast Alaskans treasure our forests, especially the roadless areas that have not been plundered by the timber industry. We support the Roadless Rule and oppose the exemption because of the destructive impacts of logging on Southeast Alaskan cultural values, as well as fisheries, wildlife, and scenic beauty of the Tongass.

Thank you for your attention.

Tania Lewis