

Date submitted (Alaskan Standard Time): 10/15/2018 7:13:56 AM

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Comments:

To Whom it May Concern,

I am the owner operator of a sailing vessel that has travelled within the Tongass National Forest since 1996. During the 22 years of my personal experience with the region, I have witnessed a dramatic interest in tourism in Southeast Alaska principally focused on the wilderness quality of the landscape. The financial benefit of tourism is a perennial industry, generating a cash flow into Alaska that will undeniably continue as long as the ecosystem is preserved for the sake of now and future generations. The Tongass National Forest, as it now stands with the protected status of its roadless areas, represents an asset of inestimable wealth to the State of Alaska, one that absolutely should not be compromised for the short term gains of clear cut logging practices.

In addition, I am well acquainted with the fishing industry in both British Columbia and Alaska. I have personally witnessed a collapse of the fishing economy in western Canada due to that nation's mismanagement of their forests and the concomitant collapse of their wild fish stocks. Salmon fishing, both commercial and sport, represents a multi-million dollar perennial industry that has benefitted the economy of the State of Alaska for generations. The fundamental backbone of this industry are the wild stocks of salmon species that ultimately depend on the ecological integrity of the forests that safeguard their spawning streams. We need look no further than to British Columbia to witness how the loss of forest habitat has precipitated a devastating effect on this crucial industry.

As we as a society look to the future for an economic strategy that will benefit our citizens for now and future generations, it is self-evident that our economic best practices would indicate that we place the highest priority of preserving the industries that will continue to produce wealth for the State of Alaska on an ongoing basis. The remaining primary forest of the Tongass, as it now stands, is a treasury of inestimable value that must be preserved in its entirety to ensure a healthy future for both people and the environment. The long term benefits of preservation far outweigh the short term gains of clear cut logging practices. As such, I strongly support the initiative to concentrate logging in only those lands that have already been cut, and condemn any attempt to weaken the Roadless Rules as they now exist which would expose primary forests to the devastating effects of clear cut logging practices.

I thus urge all those with the power to decide the fate of these forests to maintain the ongoing protection of all primary forests within the Tongass, prioritizing the long term ecological and economic benefits of comprehensive environmental preservation over the short term profits of industrial forest extraction practices.

Sincerely, William Wolf