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First name: Michael

Last name: Lee

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 1600 WILLOW CV

Address2:

City: LAWRENCE

State: KS

Province/Region: KS

Zip/Postal Code: 66046

Country: United States

Email: mookiefel@yahoo.com

Phone: 7853930397

Comments:

Passing a new Roadless Rule must include provisions making it more restrictive than the rule passed in 2001. It is of the utmost importance that the Tongass National Forest is preserved and kept free of mining, hydro-dams, logging, and geothermal development to preserve this pristine environment for future generations of Americans.

The new and updated Roadless Rule should protect all inventoried roadless areas on Baranof and Chichagof Islands that are already protected. The total area protected cannot and should not be reduced to allow further resource extraction in this fragile environment and ecosystem.

The importance of the Tongass forest to salmon, deer, and tribal populations cannot be contested. This is one of the only temperate coastal rainforests left in the world that has not been logged and cleared for resource extraction and should be preserved as a national treasure. This area has a cultural and religious significance for the indigenous Americans of the region and should also be protected to prevent further degradation to their history. The US government should not waste taxpayer dollars to build roads to support an industry that requires subsidies to function.

Instead of logging and resource extraction, minimal impact activities such as hiking, hunting, camping, and subsistence foraging should be allowed. These activities would provide opportunity to the American people to enjoy and appreciate this unique habitat without degrading it.

I ask that the new Roadless Rule include all T77 watersheds and Audubon Ecological Priority Areas to protect these ecosystems from logging and development. Prior to building new roads, the Forest Service should invest in maintaining the roads that already exist. The Forest Service can also invest in hiring outfitters and guides to support and develop a low-impact tourism industry in the area, rather than logging and other extractive industries.