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Comments:

I request that the Forest Service maintain the existing roadless areas and classifications as specified in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Act and actively review Tongass National Forest lands to expand the roadless area designation to include all T77 and TNC/Audubon ecological priority areas. Furthermore, I request that old growth logging, mining, road reconstruction, and powerline corridors be disallowed in roadless areas. Renewable hydro or geothermal power development under the current restrictions should be allowed but only so long as the power is used locally and does not destroy critical wildlife or fisheries habitat. Improving access to roadless areas should be done for recreation and hunting and fishing through trails, cabins, mooring stations, and access to low cost water transportation. Low impact ecotourism activities should be encouraged in the roadless areas.

As a former environmental scientist who studied climate change, it is obvious that SE Alaska is being negatively influenced by warming trends that will only be exacerbated by industrial fragmentation of the forests and concomitant destruction of critical watersheds that support fisheries and wildlife. The Forest Service should be actively trying to understand climate change influences in the Tongass, the importance of maintaining old growth components in ameliorating long term adverse changes, and socio-economic benefits of carbon sequestration. Carbon sequestration by forests is an important aspect of the Paris Climate Accord and one in which the Tongass as the US' largest national forest may play a critical role for not only SE Alaska but the nation. The role of the Tongass in carbon sequestration should be economically and environmentally accessed. Societal benefits should far outweigh the short-term economic gain of old growth logging and mining when properly accounting for their long-term ecological devastation and economic impact on fisheries and other biome-friendly activities. The Forest Service should prepare and publish accurate cost estimates for roadbuilding, logging, and mining that clearly indicates the short and long-term socio-economic and environmental benefits and costs plus how much Alaskans receive vs. out of state or multinational companies.

In short, the forest service should maintain or expand the 2001 roadless act and actively assess the climatic benefits of carbon sequestration in the Tongass while encouraging low impact recreational, subsistence, tourism and banning old growth logging, mining, and power-corridor activities.