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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

My name is John Elliott and I live in Sitka, Alaska. I was born and raised in Juneau and now live in Sitka. In my time growing up, some of my most magical and formative experiences took place exploring the Tongass, including at its most remote. These woods fostered my love of exploration and have made me the person I am today because of my ability to appreciate them as remote and full of natural wildlife. I am writing a comment on the Alaska Roadless Rule DEIS because I am concerned with how the Rule and the proposed full exemption will impact my the peace and solitude I find in nature, recreating, the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts, and the conservation of resources for future generations.

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS I support alternative 1: no action. The rule is working fine as it is, by balancing the conservation of our fish and wildlife habitat with important development projects. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for recreating and enjoying nature, carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation, viewing wildlife, keeping public lands wild for future generations, fiscal responsibility, and saving taxpayer dollars. A full exemption does not protect these values, nor does it effectively balance economic development and conservation of roadless area characteristics. A full exemption from the Roadless Rule and increased logging and roadbuilding will negatively impact the Tongass and what I and many others use and depend on the forest to provide for us.

The Roadless areas on the Tongass that are especially important to me are those on or around Baranof Island, and areas near Juneau, but really all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass. I want the roadless areas in these locations to stay in roadless status in any alternative selected by the Forest Service, and be managed to provide for the uses and activities I listed above. It is important to me that the T77 and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections.

I do not support the Forest Services preferred alternative of a full exemption. A full exemption is not in the interests of Southeast Alaskans who live in and use the Tongass National Forest, because it is unfair to the Tlingit people who originally inhabited this land and knew how to sustainably live in it for thousands of year. Further, it jeopardizes the relationship that so much Southeast Alaskan feel with the outdoors recreationally, economically, and spiritually.. The State of Alaska says that a full exemption is needed for rural economic development opportunities. However, a full exemption would not help create more rural economic development opportunities, it would instead harm our existing rural economies that are based on the visitor industry and commercial fishing industry.

It would further harm rural economic opportunities because pursuing the same outdated economic model of old growth clearcut harvesting for export stifles innovation and possibility in other sectors, such as mariculture, sustainable young growth harvest, and rural agriculture. If the Forest Service wants to support rural economic development, they should invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure transition to second growth logging.

I urge the Forest Service to prioritize the voices of Southeast Alaskans over those of our political representation and corporate interests. Choosing a full exemption will not create a long lasting, durable solution for roadless areas on the Tongass. It will only increase the legal challenges, uncertainty for businesses, and conflict on the Tongass going forward.