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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

My name is Kimberly Bakkes and I live in Sitka, Alaska. I have lived in Southeast Alaska for 13 years. My children were born here and I am raising my family here. We depend on the Tongass for recreation, subsistence fishing and hunting, and to support our small boat business of taking people whale watching and transport around the Tongass. We also depend on the Tongass for climate mitigation. Planting trees is the most realistic solution I have read to mitigating climate change. The economic cost in real estate alone to rising sea water will far out match the economic benefit of logging. 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 fishing, recreating, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts.

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS I support alternative 1: no action. It shows the Forest Service is responding to the needs and voices of Southeast Alaskan communities. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for economic livelihood, healthy fish habitat, recreating and enjoying nature, carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation. 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, Kupreanof Island, Kuiu Island, Yakutat forelands. 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 will harm our existing economic drivers. You are essentially asking us to pay the price for the economic gain of a few.. 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 devote resources to support our fishing and visitor industries transition to second growth logging invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects rather than rehashing old conflicts.

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.