

Date submitted (Alaskan Standard Time): 11/14/2019 12:05:44 PM

First name: Erin

Last name: Vastola

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

My name is Erin Vastola and I live in Sitka, Alaska. Ive been a lifelong SE AK resident and love getting out into nature whenever possible. The Tongass is a vital source of subsistence foods and recreation opportunities, as well as a rich ecosystem for innumerable flora and fauna. It should be preserved in its pristine condition. 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, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, hunting, 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, the conservation of resources for future generations .

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS I support alternative 1: no action. It protects important fish and wildlife habitat from clearcutting and roadbuilding. I depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest for healthy fish habitat, deer habitat and subsistence hunting, economic livelihood, foraging and gathering wild foods, recreating and enjoying nature, viewing wildlife, keeping public lands wild for future generations. 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, all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass Chichagof Island, Admiralty Island. 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 endanger our renewable resources and reduce our quality of life.. 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.