

Date submitted (Alaskan Standard Time): 11/12/2019 12:00:00 AM

First name: James

Last name: Teal

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

My name is James Teal and I have spent the last 5 summers as the captain of a charter fishing boat in Sitka. 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 affect the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest.

During my time as a captain, I have seen the unbelievable benefit of intact, old growth forests. Beyond the wildlife that live in these forests, the Tongass supports an incredibly productive fishery, and that fishery provides to me my lifestyle, from what I eat to the money I live off. Places like the Tongass have diminished worldwide, and once clear cutting is introduced, theres no getting the benefits of old growth forest back. Please look at the abundant lessons from the past, and do not exempt the Tongass from the Roadless Rule.

I urge the Forest Service to select Alternative 1, the no action alternative, for the final decision on the Alaska Roadless Rule. This alternative protects the inventoried roadless areas in Alaska that are full of pristine wilderness and provide important fish and wildlife habitat, and already allows for important community and economic development projects. As an American citizen, I value the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest for its status as America's best natural solution to climate change and its sequestering of millions of metric tons of carbon and mitigating climate change, its wild salmon populations and the world-class fishing opportunities, its huge swaths of intact ecosystems and all the biodiversity it contains, its status as the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, and the recreational opportunities it provides. A full exemption does not protect these priorities, nor does it effectively balance economic development with the countless other benefits provided by roadless areas. I would like the Forest Service to manage roadless areas for low-impact recreation (camping, hiking, hunting, foraging, etc), medium-impact recreation (FS cabins, trails, mooring buoys, 3-sided shelters), passive/active watershed restoration (stream and habitat) to improve/maintain roadless characteristics (culvert removal/replacement, and improve fish passage, wildlife thinning, etc). It is important to me that high-value intact habitat including the T77 watersheds and the TNC conservation priority areas retain their roadless protections in any alternative selected.

The Forest Service is wasting taxpayers' valuable time and money by trying to prop up a failing timber industry in Southeast Alaska. The nonpartisan, independent taxpayer watchdog Taxpayers for Common Sense reported that the Tongass timber program has losses of over \$600 million of taxpayers money in the past 20 years. I would rather see my taxpayer dollars used to restore salmon habitat that was hurt by past logging practices, perform restorative actions that support wildlife populations on previously degraded landscapes that support wildlife populations, develop more recreational opportunities, like trails and cabins, support small-scale, sustainable logging, and establish the economic value of the carbon stored in the Tongass. We need to stop subsidizing the clearcutting of old growth on the Tongass through taxpayer funded roadbuilding. If a full exemption were chosen, it would not create opportunities and would instead prioritize the special interests of one industry over the interests of the entire American public.

The Tongass is Americas homegrown natural solution to climate change. The forest sequesters 8% of the carbon stored in forests throughout the contiguous US states, some 3 billion metric tons of it. We must take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and maintaining the Tongass in a roadless state is critical for a sustainable future.

I urge the Forest Service to listen to the voices of the American people and prioritize them over corporate interests. The Forest Service should strengthen public involvement in developing land management policy and focus on broadly supported work rather than allowing special corporate interests to guide policy changes. Attempting to exempt inventoried roadless areas on the Chugach National Forest from the Alaska Roadless Rule adds further insult to injury, and this proposal has not received any sufficient environmental impact analysis or public input. Choosing a full exemption will not create a long lasting, durable solution for roadless areas in Alaska it will only increase the legal challenges, uncertainty for businesses, and conflict over these forests going forward.

[Position]

[Position]