

Date submitted (Alaskan Standard Time): 11/16/2019 7:40:08 PM

First name: Aurora

Last name: Standish

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

My name is Aurora Standish and I live in Sitka, Alaska. My name is Aurora Standish and I was born and raised in the rural community of McGrath, Alaska. The past few years I have been attending boarding school in Sitka, Alaska. In my short time here in Sitka, I have witnessed the importance of the forest. People depend on this forest for cultural reasons, subsistence living, and clean air. THIS FOREST IS VITAL, it is vital to so many ways of life for the citizens throughout Southeast Alaska. We must keep the Roadless Rule intact, or else we as a nation will have to face the detrimental impacts of the forest's loss. 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, hunting, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, the peace and solitude I find in nature, recreating, the conservation of resources for future generations, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts, the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, practicing my culture.

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 economic livelihood, healthy fish habitat, carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation, practicing my culture, foraging and gathering wild foods. 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 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 Service's 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 we will lose so much that is important to our way of life. We will lose habitats, land, culture, clean air, and jobs. We will lose the world's largest untouched rain forest. 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.

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.