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Organization:
Title:
Comments:
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Andrew Ravenelle
North Oxford MA, 01537
November 25th, 2019

Docket ID: FS-2019-0023

Attn: David Bernhardt
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Mr. Bernhardt,

I am strongly against exempting the Tongass National Forest from the roadless rule and opening up roadless areas to the prospect of logging. The forest is vitally important to the local economy, and as such must remain how it is. Increased logging in the area, while helping the logging industry in the short term, will cause undo harm to the salmon/fishing industry as well as tourism and local indigenous communities in the long term.

The Tongass is a temperate rainforest, and as such sequesters more carbon per acre than most other forest types on the planet. We vitally need this resource to help in the global climate effort. Though this is especially important, there are many other reasons for keeping the Tongass National Forest as is. The Tongass is an old growth forest which preserves the soil and prevents erosion, providing clean fresh drinking water to the local communities. The erosion of the soil will wash away the nutrients needed for future tree health and growth. This will prevent the trees from sequestering these nutrients needed for them to grow for years to come. In addition to this, the forest helps to keep the river waters cold in summer with shade. This allows young salmon to survive in the forest's rivers on their way to the ocean, which in turn increases the quantity of the salmon harvests later. The forest and salmon live in a mutually beneficial relationship, where the forest helps the salmon by keeping the rivers cool, and in return the salmon provide nutrients to the ecosystem from the sea when they die. By opening over half of the old growth forest in the Tongass to logging, the health of the forest,

salmon, and the seafood industry will be put at risk. Eight percent of southeastern Alaska's jobs are presently in the seafood industry, whereas less than one percent of jobs are in timber and logging. Putting those jobs in jeopardy to increase logging does not seem economically favorable.

With the exemption of the roadless rule in Tongass National Forest, half of all old growth forest will be considered for logging. The whole of the old growth forest in the Tongass provide a critical wildlife refuge for animals such as the Brown Bear and Sitka Black Tailed Deer. Increased logging will decrease the amount of available forest habitat for these animals, putting them at risk.

Tourism is another benefit the Tongass National Forest gives to the local economy. They provide 17 percent of the jobs in southeastern Alaska. Many people from around the world come to visit the forest for its undisturbed wilderness. A decrease in the amount of people visiting may occur due to the logging, which will especially hurt the local people who work in this sector. I know that as for myself, I will heavily consider which national public lands to visit based on preservation efforts and how degraded the forest has become through logging. In addition to the local population being affected, the area in and around the Tongass National Forest is home to many Native American tribes who have lived in the area for thousands of years. Many of the tribes who live here have expressed concerns over logging in the forest. Their concerns for the well-being of the forest should be heavily considered in the review process. I stand with the local indigenous tribes in saying alternative one, as shown in the proposal, should be chosen to keep the roadless rule intact.

When looking at the other alternatives, compromises between the preferred rule and leaving the forest intact can be found. Of all the proposed additional alternatives, if alternative 1 cannot be chosen, which does not add or remove any land from roadless rule status, alternative 2 is the next best choice; having a net gain of 20,000 acres. This compares to a net loss of over one and two million for alternatives three and five, respectively. Your preferred sixth option removes all 9.2 million acres from roadless rule status and is no way suitable for the Tongass National Forest.

Please strongly consider keeping the roadless rule of the Tongass National Forest intact instead of the proposal to exempt this rule in the forest. I feel also that the benefits of having the old growth forest of the Tongass stay intact is more beneficial to the local economy in the long term than logging of the forest in the short term.

Thank You.

Sincerely,

Andrew Ravenelle

[Position]