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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

My name is Nicole Frank and I live in Fairbanks, AK. I have traveled throughout the state, and lived in both rural and urban Alaska. I've visited Southeast Alaska several times, including a trip to Yakutat, where I went surfing and hiking in the Tongass National Forest. 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 fishing, hunting, subsistence harvesting, foraging for wild foods, 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, and the conservation of resources for future generations.

Out of the alternatives described in the AKRR DEIS, I support alternative 1: no action. The rule is working fine as it is by balancing the conservation of our fish and wildlife habitat with important development projects. We all depend on roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest to keep public lands wild for future generations, for fiscal responsibility and saving taxpayer dollars, and for carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation, as well as climate change mitigation in the world. The Tongass National Forest is a carbon sink, along with the tundra and permafrost. Alaska is warming on a faster scale than the rest of the US. 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 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 ignores climate change and the interconnected ecosystems in Alaska and the world. It discounts the voices of Alaskans, especially those who have cultural ties to the region. It is a poor economic decision with negative repercussions overall. 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 cultural traditions, as well as the tourism 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, helping small business opportunities and help with local food production and storage, invest in high-speed internet and good cell service, and invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure and the Marine Highway.

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.