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Last name: Kaelke

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Choose the 'No Action' alternative: Conserve the Roadless Rule in Alaska

Dear Comment Period Alaska Roadless Rule,

Please accept the following comments on the Roadless Rule DEIS and register my strong support for the "no action" alternative and continued protections for the Tongass 77 watersheds.

As a 31-year resident of Southeast Alaska, my family and I have benefitted greatly from the intact, roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest. My children grew up harvesting and eating deer, salmon and berries from these areas and they are now in college with their expenses being paid by money I earned operating a fly-out, fly fishing business on the Tongass under a USFS Outfitter/Guide Special Use Permit from 1995-2007. That business was largely dependent on streams in Roadless areas where clients could experience great fishing in a wild, natural setting. However, the fact of the matter is there's great fishing to be had all over the United States, but very few of those places offer great fishing and an experience in a completely undeveloped setting. People come to Alaska and take trips like the ones I offered for the scenic beauty, wildlife viewing and solitude as much as they do for the fishing. As the world continues to get more developed, wild places, free of roads and the trapping of human society, will continue to become more rare and more sought after. The no-action alternative supports businesses, families and their clients who seek experiences in wild places now and in the future.

The no-action alternative is also the most sensible way forward fiscally. At present the Tongass has over 5,000 miles of logging roads with a maintenance back-log on them pegged by the Congressional Budget Office of some \$60 million dollars. New logging roads on the Tongass cost roughly \$200,000 per mile to construct and the back-log for the restoration of watersheds damaged by past logging totals about \$85 million. So essentially, the Tongass already has more roads and logging impacts than it can take of care now. It has more restoration needs than it has resources to pay for AND according to a study done by Taxpayers for Common Sense, American already subsidize the Tongass timber industry to the tune of \$30 million annually --all to prop up an out dated industry that provides less than 1% of jobs in the region. The Forest Service can end this fiscal lunacy by selecting the no-action alternative and forcing the timber industry to focus its efforts on sustainably harvesting second growth from existing roads. Doing otherwise is simply nonsense.

The State of Alaska and the Alaska Congressional Delegation have opposed the Roadless Rule on the Tongass since its inception in 2001 on the basis that it constitutes federal over reach, hampers development and isn't the right fit for Alaska. I'm at a loss as to how a federal rule applied across all applicable federal lands, which defines how those federal lands will be managed on behalf of all American citizens using federal funds to do so, can be construed as 'over reach" but I do know that 58 development projects have been permitted under the Rule on the Tongass and that Roadless Areas are a great fit for our growing fishing, recreation and tourism industries. The fact the State and our delegation dislikes something or the fact our Governor and our President held hands and pledged to make things "great" again simply does not obligate the Forest Service to change a thing. The court system has upheld the rule and hasn't caved in to political pressure or worn-out, tired rhetoric. Neither should the Forest Service!

Putting aside the foregoing lifestyle, fiscal and political arguments that support the no-action alternative, the Tongass National Forest should remain intact with the Roadless Rule in place, for no other reason than its utility to all citizens of the world as a carbon sink. The Tongass stores at least 8% of the carbon captured by all US forests making it a place where trees are worth far more standing than cut. Should anyone doubt that, they should look to the 165,000 acres for-profit, former logging corporation, Sealaska has set aside for use as in a California carbon banking program. Leave a forest completely upright and intact and do nothing but retain a sound rule which has been in place for nearly 20 years, what a novel concept.

The out-pouring of support for maintaining the Roadless rule on the Tongass has been massive. The public, businesses, conservation groups and outdoor organizations overwhelmingly support the no-action alternative. Your backs are well-covered, now just do the right thing and select the no-action alternative.

Sincerely,

Mark Kaelke

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[POSITION]