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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

My name is Charles Bingham and I live in Sitka, Alaska. I grew up in Alaska and have lived all over the state (May 2020 will mark 50 years in Alaska). I have lived in Southeast Alaska for more than 20 years, with the last 14 in Sitka. I don't want to see any more loss of old-growth forests, especially through clear-cutting when they send the logs in the round to Asia for processing so none of our local sawmills can do the work. A few years ago, the major stakeholders of the Tongass came together and created the Tongass Transition Plan, which focuses on selective harvest of second-growth timber. The Tongass Transition Plan protects fish and wildlife habitat, and it brings jobs to smaller local sawmills while boosting tourism because of no clear-cuts. We need to enact the Tongass Transition Plan and stop old-growth logging. 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, practicing my culture, the status of the Tongass as a national and global treasure, the forest's ability to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts, the conservation of resources for future generations

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, deer habitat and subsistence hunting, foraging and gathering wild foods, practicing my culture, recreating and enjoying nature, carbon sequestration and local climate change mitigation, viewing wildlife, keeping public lands wild for future generations, fiscal responsibility and saving taxpayer dollars . 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 Baranof Island, Chichagof Island, Admiralty Island, all of the inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass Yakutat forelands, Revillagigedo Island (near Ketchikan), Prince of Wales Island, Wrangell and Etolin Islands, Kuiu Island, Kupreanof Island, the southern mainland from Bradfield Canal to Dixon Entrance the central mainland from Hobart Bay to Stikine River, the northern mainland above Port Snettisham (around Juneau),. 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 low-impact recreation such as camping, hiking, hunting, and fishing passive or active watershed restoration of salmon streams and wildlife habitat connections from communities. 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 As I mentioned earlier, the Tongass Transition Plan involved all of the major stakeholders (residents, timber companies, fish and game management, tourism, tribal groups, etc.).. 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 transition to second growth logging invest in creating and maintaining recreation infrastructure improve and streamline existing permitting processes for important community projects rather than rehashing old conflicts.

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.

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