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Title:  
Comments:  
HC6394

Dec. 14, 2019

\*ATTN: Alaska Roadless Rule\* [text underlined for emphasis]

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Roadless Rule.

I am in opposition to such an unnecessary and arbitrary rule. I feel that such a thing was a mistake at its very conception and it should not have any place in policy. This "rule" is really just another tool in the antidevelopment arsenal to obstruct activities and prevent future development. This roadless rule is especially insidious. Denying surface access prevents just about any kind of meaningful resource development or necessary infrastructure for transportation and power, even to established communities. In a way it's somewhat like sanctions imposed upon unfriendly countries, then a part of land planning.

Obstructive policies like this and others such as strategic withdrawals and land classifications positioned to block access to areas of resource potential or communities, need to be seen for what they really are. They should be scrapped or greatly modified. They have no place in orderly development and legitimate use of public lands. Projects and activities should be judged on their merits, not subject to obstructive standards.

Eventhough the roadless rule is a detriment to any project on the Tongass, I feel that the most pertinent effect may be on the future of the ferry system. In the early days of the ferry system, mailboats, tenders freighters, etc., were being phased out and there was a movement to connect the larger communities of southeast with relatively large ferries. This coincided with the growth of logging roads and the notion developed by connecting communities by roads and the road systems to the ferry system. Voters were willing to subsidize this to an extent, as it was felt that the large expensive boats would be phased out as the program evolved to smaller shuttle boats connecting the various clusters of road systems.

With the demise of the timber industry by the Green Movement, road construction ceased. On Prince of Wales Island the road system was fairly well developed. Most of Southeastern, especially the northern area has a limited patchwork of logging roads that lack connection. From Sitka several logging roads are aligned from Katlian Bay, Nakwasina and Fish bay towards the Narrows of Peril Straits. Others exist eastward along northern Baranof Island in the area of Rodman Bay, Hanus Bay and Catherine Island. The False Island system extends a few miles northward towards Hoonah sound, but eastward to Chathau and Corner bay. The Hoonah system extends nearly to Tenakee and nearly to the head of Tenakee inlet. If these systems were joined, Hoonah, Tenakee, Pelican and Sitka would be connected, Dock facilities exist at Hoonah and shuttle ports could be established at either Chatham or Manus bay for a short crossing to Angoon. There has been some talk of extending the roads from Sitka to Manus bay to avoid the long voyage through Peril straight. Nothing has come of it.

Affordable transportation within the panhandle is sorely needed. The ferry system was a good fix, but I don't think anyone really considered it to be a permanent stand-alone solution. Also, it is not the same system of 40 or 50 years ago. For many reasons costs are becoming unattainable. The oil boom is over and I feel that the voters are not in the mood to support large subsidies that don't produce something tangible. They would likely support reasonable subsidies for roads, at least for a while, especially if it facilitated commerce and development through access.

Before statehood, Southeast Alaska was the most stable and main economic driver for the territory. Southeast Alaska probably has more resources and variety of resources than many countries. It has every species of Pacific salmon that I know of (and probably a few from the Atlantic), a large variety of other seafood, timber and minerals. Opportunities exist for the growth and development of tourism, recreation, hydro power, and many

other things. With all this, we struggle to support a population of about 65,000 people or so. Without a viable transportation system, power corridors, and access, the development and utilization of the areas bounty can not occur. Stopping development is obviously the goal of some people, but most strongly support the multiple-use concept.

I do not have much sympathy for those who oppose road connections to their communities because of "life-style choices". I may respect their choice, but they should not expect the rest of use to subsidize an ever increasingly expensive ferry system, just so they can continue their "life-style "at other's expense. This especially applies to the Juneau which has repeatedly and successfully opposed a road connection for decades in favor of expanded ferry service. We don't have either. This stand may very well result in eventual loss of the capital.

In closing, I again favor outright abolition of the roadless rule. There are many other obstructions that need to be dealt with in order to create a viable transportation system for Southeast. Land classifications are one among many things that need revision. I believe the current process of permitting and implementation of projects, which has evolved by various means over the years, is fatally flawed and should be outright replaced, even at the necessity of statutory change. When it takes decades to permit a project, something is very wrong.

Thank you.

[Signature]

Floyd Branson

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