

Date submitted (Alaskan Standard Time): 10/12/2018 12:00:00 AM

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Point Baker Community Association

PO Box 31

Point Baker, AK 99927

US Forest Service

Attention: Alaska Roadless Rule

PO Box 21628

Juneau, AK 99802

October 12, 2018

The Point Baker Community Association would like to take this opportunity to make comments for the environmental impact statement to develop an Alaskan specific roadless rule.

First, we would like to thank the Forest Service and State personnel who came to Point Baker to inform us of the process and to engage in a discussion on the roadless rule and what the results may be if changes are made to the present management of roadless areas. We would like to make one comment about the meetings held throughout the region, however. The Forest Service should have provided an opportunity for local residents to make comments at that time. It is important to understand that people in rural villages tend to communicate orally, and their stories can relate important information. You will not always get that in written comments.

We remain convinced that efforts to weaken the Roadless Rule are primarily to allow access to old growth timber for the timber industry, which is increasingly becoming reliant on a round log export market. This is a very short sighted economic strategy with limited benefits to the local economy and major impacts to other sectors of the economy as well as negative environmental consequences. The rational that changes to the Roadless rule are necessary for power-line construction, community connections, and mining development have been shown to be misleading.

At a special meeting of the Point Baker Community Association held on October 4th, 2018 members voted unanimously to endorse the No Action Alternative, believing it unnecessary to wait for the recommendations of the Road less Advisory Group to come to this conclusion. The Roadless Rule as it is now is working very well for us, and any changes to it will be detrimental to our economic and social well-being.

The advisory group recently convened under State guidance is not, in our opinion, composed of a fair representation of stakeholders for our region. There is no voice for the recreational industry, very weak subsistence and commercial fishing representation and over-representation by the timber industry. Also, we do not think that an advisory committee that does not adhere to the Federal Advisory Committee Act should have standing in a National Environmental Policy Act process. Point Baker is a community whose economy is based in commercial fishing and tourism and held together by the strong cord of subsistence harvest which pervades all of our activities. Being situated on the north end of Prince of Wales Island, Point Baker has been significantly impacted by timber harvests and the roads built to facilitate that harvest. It is not possible to relate in one letter all of the ways our way of life has been affected by the hundreds of miles of roads in our area, but if you were to listen to the stories told at our recent public meeting, stories that should be part of the public record, you would hear the scope of impacts to our way of life.

As a forest-dependent community, we are also acutely aware of the importance of a fully-functioning, ecologically-intact forest, such as what remains in the roadless areas of the Tongass, to the long-term health of

our regional as well as global ecosystem. We believe that the State administration is completely ignoring the significance of our forest in this regard, and the Forest Service should not be complicit in their malfeasance. Keeping the Roadless Rule as it is now will be beneficial to our local economy and way of life. There are ample provisions in the existing rule to allow for responsible, necessary development within the roadless areas. The Roadless rule is the right policy for our National Forests, especially the Tongass given the realization of the importance of intact old growth forest to mitigating climate change.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,