

TRANSCRIPT OF ROADLESS RULE  
ANILCA SUBSISTENCE PUBLIC HEARING

WRANGELL, ALASKA  
11/6/2019

## 1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (Wrangell, Alaska - 11/6/2019)

3 (On record)

4 MR. HEITHECKER: Good evening. This is a public  
5 meeting for Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation  
6 Act, ANILCA 810 hearing for the Alaska Roadless Rule.  
7 My name is Troy Heithecker and I've been delegated by  
8 the United States Forest Service as the hearing officer  
9 for this proceeding. I'd like to welcome everyone who  
10 came tonight and to those who called in. I appreciate  
11 your interest in the Alaska Roadless Rule and your  
12 effort to attend this subsistence hearing.

13 For the record today is November 6, 2019 and  
14 the time is just after 7:00, 7:02 p.m. This hearing is  
15 being held in Wrangell, Alaska. The purpose of this  
16 hearing is to receive your views on the alternatives  
17 proposed for the project and how they may affect your  
18 subsistence use. The hearing hours this evening are  
19 from now until 9:00 unless we don't have anyone else  
20 that comes in for testimony we might try and wrap  
21 early.

22 If you have not done so, please sign in on the  
23 sign-in sheet. Clearly put your name, address and if  
24 you're representing anyone and indicate if you would  
25 like to give oral testimony tonight. Written testimony

1 will also be accepted. There are pens and paper  
2 available over at the sign in table.

3 When giving testimony please begin by stating  
4 your full name. During the hearing no questions can be  
5 answered other than those concerning the hearing  
6 procedures. Any questions related to the hearing at  
7 this time?

8 (No comments)

9 MR. HEITHECKER: Hearing none, we'll go ahead  
10 and get started. I think maybe at this time it would  
11 be good for John to introduce himself for the audience  
12 here so they know who's on the phone.

13 MR. YEAGER: Hi. Good evening. This is John  
14 Yeager from Wrangell, Alaska. I'm with the Southeast  
15 Regional Advisory Council to the Federal Subsistence  
16 Board and I'm currently attending our fall meeting in  
17 Ketchikan.

18 MR. HEITHECKER: Thank you, John, for taking  
19 the time and calling in. All right. First up is Maria  
20 Byford.

21 MS. BYFORD: Oh, I'm right here.

22 MR. HEITHECKER: Oh, hi. Do you mind? Can we  
23 shuffle you over here just so John can hear and get you  
24 on the recorder.

25 MS. BYFORD: Should I sit down beside you?

1 MR. HEITHECKER: Sure. Yeah, you can use this  
2 chair.

3 MS. BYFORD: Oh, okay. Well, first up, huh.  
4 Okay. Well, I was late tonight because -- oh, Maria  
5 Byford, Wrangell, Alaska. What else do you need to  
6 know? Is that it?

7 MR. HEITHECKER: Yes.

8 MS. BYFORD: Okay. I was late because I was  
9 canning venison, you know, and it is such a joy to be  
10 able to live a subsistence economy. We have been  
11 enjoying that, the Tlingits, the Natives, the Haida.  
12 We've all been enjoying this subsistence economy. I  
13 oppose the Roadless Rule on the basis that we live in a  
14 subsistence society and this is very important to us.  
15 We depend on deer as a food source.

16 What does that have to do with logging? Well,  
17 studies have shown that once land has been clearcut,  
18 and I presume this is clearcut where we're talking  
19 about. The second growth equal-aged trees come up to  
20 create a forest with trees too close together to  
21 encourage the shrubs that deer feed on. It becomes a  
22 food desert and does not support any wildlife other  
23 than maybe some red squirrels and a few birds.

24 Deer occupy old-growth forest in the winter  
25 because the old-growth forest provides a canopy to keep

1 the snow from becoming too deep underneath and they  
2 need that canopy for their winter forage to survive and  
3 they need the shrubs that exist in a forest with many  
4 aged trees, not all trees the same age.

5 I wanted to say that today we mourn the death  
6 of Richard Nelson, who was a cultural anthropologist  
7 here in Alaska that we all loved to listen to. I've  
8 been reading one of his books called Heart and Blood,  
9 Living With Deer in America.

10 On page 120, if I could just read a few lines,  
11 he says that the earliest studies that showed how  
12 clearcutting damages deer habitat in the Tongass were  
13 done by Olaf Wallmo, David Klein, John Schoen and  
14 Matthew Kirchhoff. Their conclusions did not rest well  
15 with the U.S. Forest Service apparently because  
16 economic and political pressures for large-scale  
17 clearcutting outweighed ecological concerns and for  
18 over a decade government officials tried to prevent  
19 these researchers from writing about their conclusions.  
20 For several years pressure by Forest Service officials  
21 also prevented John Schoen and Matt Kirchhoff from  
22 giving public slide presentations about deer and  
23 old-growth forest.

24 And then down here, I asked Schoen why he'd  
25 risk -- well, it says that, you know -- why he'd risk

1 so much over the issue of deer and logging. The  
2 biggest problem I've had, said Schoen, is not how we're  
3 going to impact Black-tailed deer, he replied, the  
4 reason I stayed with this so long is because it was  
5 hard for me to accept that governments working for the  
6 people weren't telling the truth.

7 Of course this is from the '90s, but anyway  
8 that's my comment.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maria, did you mean to  
10 say you oppose the Roadless.....

11 MS. BYFORD: I do oppose.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: .....or did want to say  
13 you oppose changes to the Roadless Rule?

14 MS. BYFORD: I oppose any changes to the  
15 Roadless Rule. As does 90 percent of all the comments.

16 MR. HEITHECKER: Thank you. Appreciate it.  
17 Next on the list is D.J. McConachie. Did I get that  
18 right?

19 MR. MCCONACHIE: Yes. D.J. McConachie,  
20 Wrangell, Alaska. I don't have a big fancy speech or  
21 anything. When we talk about logging, I believe it's  
22 misunderstood. I want us to think about the people,  
23 the people that this affected. I wish I could find my  
24 notes.

25 Either way many years ago there was 225 people

1 working in our mill. That was 225 families here. That  
2 was jobs directly. This isn't the indirect job. This  
3 isn't going downtown and buying groceries. This isn't  
4 all the other trickle-down effects that everything had.

5 So when we think about logging, I think we're  
6 putting too much emphasis upon the act, so that's why I  
7 think we need to think about the people. So when the  
8 Roadless Rule went through, it was November 23rd at  
9 4:00 o'clock. At that time -- it was after that  
10 Wrangell went into I guess a deep recession. We had a  
11 59 percent unemployment rate.

12 So what that meant was that there was people  
13 that worked in that mill year round except for when it  
14 got too cold and had to get shut down for Christmas or  
15 Thanksgiving or whatnot. There was people that worked  
16 there for 30 years and there was people that had their  
17 sons, their daughters. A lot of good came from this.  
18 I think that's what we need to think about, not about  
19 the clearcutting, which this is a renewable resource  
20 that needs to be used.

21 So when I think about logging, I don't think  
22 about the clearcuts, I think about the people. I think  
23 about the towns that need this employment. I think  
24 about the booming economy. I think about the people.  
25 So, with that, that's what I have. Thank you.

1 MR. HEITHECKER: Thanks for coming, D.J. Next  
2 on the list is Brenda Schwartz-Yeager.

3 MS. SCHWARTZ-YEAGER: Brenda Schwartz-Yeager,  
4 Wrangell, Alaska. I'm an ardent subsistence user and  
5 supporter and love where I live because we have really  
6 bountiful subsistence opportunities here. I hunt and  
7 fish and gather. I am a supporter of leaving the  
8 Tongass as a roadless designation. I very much oppose  
9 the direction leaning towards Alternative 6.

10 I feel like it would be a great compromise to  
11 the sort of lifestyle that we live here and our  
12 subsistence values. I feel like, particularly for  
13 Wrangell, if you look at the areas that could be  
14 impacted here, there's certainly some key  
15 fish-generating watershed areas and wildlife nurturing  
16 areas.

17 I think there's a lot of documentation to  
18 substantiate that large-scale logging is not always  
19 really compatible with those sort of ecosystems and I  
20 feel like we have a fragile one and it would jeopardize  
21 our lifestyle here.

22 Some subsistence users say, well, I like the  
23 roads for access. They can be, but I think most --  
24 it's important to know that most of the roads that are  
25 generated during timber extraction are set aside just

1 for timber extraction and they're not allowed -- a  
2 majority of them are not really open for public use  
3 after that.

4 Furthermore, I've witnessed even on the areas  
5 that I go that roads and fish culverts and things like  
6 that, infrastructure that was supposed to protect those  
7 habitats, is in much need of repair and there's a huge  
8 backlog in maintenance on those roads. Even though  
9 they say they're going to protect these habitats in the  
10 process of timber extraction, if you walk those areas  
11 that were previously done, that isn't always true.

12 I feel like we could exchange some possibly  
13 short-term timber job benefits, but we would probably  
14 simultaneously sacrifice fishing and visitor jobs that  
15 are here now long term and sustainable.

16 I prefer to live in a community that has  
17 sustainable jobs, that is not going to extract  
18 shrinking old-growth timber and that's going to leave  
19 those places available for subsistence use now and for  
20 generations to come.

21 MR. HEITHECKER: Thank you. Thanks for coming.  
22 Next on the list is Bonnie. I'm not going to even try  
23 on the last name here. I'll let you provide it because  
24 I have a challenging last name as well.

25 MS. DEMERJIAN: Not so challenging really. My

1 name is Bonnie Demerjian. I live at Five Mile,  
2 Shoemaker Bay Loop Road in Wrangell and I'm a retired  
3 teacher and writer.

4 I'm speaking today because I've lived amid the  
5 Tongass National Forest for the past 47 years and in  
6 that time I've come to know and care about it deeply.  
7 I use the resources of the forest constantly. Fishing,  
8 berrying, hiking Rainbow Falls every day and birding.

9 As a serious birder I was stunned to learn  
10 recently that bird populations have fallen by 29  
11 percent since 1970, a loss of three billion birds.  
12 Preserving the remnants of intact forests, such as the  
13 Tongass, will play a critical role in the preservation  
14 of wildlife habitat for all species, our own included.

15 We already know the importance of habitat  
16 protection for salmon. For decades I've loved to fish  
17 the waters around Wrangell island and in the north Kuiu  
18 Island area when I lived in Kake. The Tongass provides  
19 spawning grounds for roughly a quarter of the West  
20 Coast's salmon fishery.

21 Our water quality is already being threatened  
22 by internationally-owned upriver mines such as the  
23 Galore Creek Mine on the Upper Stikine. Now our own  
24 government is proposing further degrading waters  
25 through costly road building and clearcutting that are

1 the final destination of our iconic fish.

2 Why do the demands of the timber industry  
3 outweigh the concerns of sport, subsistence and  
4 commercial fisheries, not to mention the ever-growing  
5 tourist industry?

6 I'll end by repeating that preservation of the  
7 Tongass National Forest is of the utmost personal  
8 concern. Many people scoff at the idea that birds and  
9 fish deserve our commitment in the face of what may  
10 seem to be more pressing issues, but, as we're learning  
11 to our dismay, all of us, all life, is bound in an  
12 interactive web of dependency.

13 I ask you to select Alternative 1, no action,  
14 on behalf of all of us.

15 MR. HEITHECKER: Thank you, Bonnie.

16 MS. DEMERJIAN: You're welcome.

17 MR. HEITHECKER: Sorry if I offended you about  
18 your last name.

19 MS. DEMERJIAN: No.

20 MR. HEITHECKER: That's all we have on the  
21 list. If there's anyone else that would like to sign  
22 up or provide testimony at this time.

23 MS. DELONG: Hi. My name is Mya DeLong. I  
24 live here in Wrangell, Alaska. We are in a subsistence  
25 area. We hunt for mushrooms, deer, moose. A lot of

1 our food comes from our natural habitat here and I  
2 oppose the Roadless Rule because it will affect our  
3 well-being and the way we live our life here in  
4 Wrangell and throughout Southeast. It's one of our  
5 primary food sources and the way we feed our family.  
6 It's important that we keep our way of life here.

7 MR. HEITHECKER: I think, as Meredith  
8 mentioned, just to clarify for the record, you propose  
9 changes to the Roadless Rule?

10 MEREDITH: You oppose the Roadless Rule or you  
11 oppose changes to the Roadless Rule?

12 MS. DELONG: I oppose changes to the Roadless  
13 Rule.

14 MR. HEITHECKER: Thank you. I wanted to  
15 clarify.

16 MR. GUGGENBICKLER: Chris Guggenbickler from  
17 Wrangell. I support probably Option 2 or 3 to the  
18 Roadless Rule. I do not want to compromise salmon  
19 streams, however I access deer through logging roads.  
20 I was on a logging road today. I'll be on one  
21 tomorrow. In resource extraction, one industry  
22 shouldn't compromise another.

23 However, that access that's created by these  
24 logging roads I'd like the Forest Service to consider  
25 sustainable extraction. The Designated Hunter Program

1 and other programs, the access that's created through  
2 these roads to areas could potentially overharvest  
3 through the Designated Hunter Program and such.

4 So as we're opening up areas and salmon streams  
5 as well to subsistence users, we need to make sure that  
6 those resources are sustainably extracted. Thank you.

7 MR. HEITHECKER: Thanks.

8 MS. FLICKINGER: Hello. My name is Angie  
9 Flickinger. I also live here in Wrangell. I oppose  
10 changes to the Roadless Rule. I definitely do not  
11 support Alternative 6. I think it's very extreme.  
12 It's very short-sighted.

13 I live here in Wrangell because it's a  
14 subsistence lifestyle. That's why I think most of us  
15 live here. We appreciate being able to harvest clean,  
16 healthy, sustainable food to feed our families. We  
17 enjoy the recreation opportunities that our forest  
18 affords us.

19 It's not exactly subsistence related, but both  
20 my business and my husband's business, our entire  
21 income relies on a healthy forest and healthy  
22 sustainable resources and appropriate use of those  
23 resources.

24 So for all of those reasons we value this way  
25 of life, we value the intact forest that we have and

1 the resources that it provides. I oppose changes to  
2 the Roadless Rule.

3 MR. HEITHECKER: Thank you. Anyone else.

4 (No comments)

5 MR. HEITHECKER: John, did you have testimony  
6 or comments to provide?

7 MR. YEAGER: Yes, if that's all right and if  
8 everyone else there in the audience has had a chance to  
9 speak.

10 MR. HEITHECKER: I think we have concurrence on  
11 that, so please feel free to proceed.

12 MR. YEAGER: Okay. Thank you. This is John  
13 Yeager from Wrangell, Alaska. I'm in Ketchikan  
14 currently and we've spent the last two days taking  
15 public testimony for the Roadless Rule along with a lot  
16 of other subsistence issues.

17 A couple things that I've drawn from our  
18 conversations so far is that as Wrangell we need to  
19 guarantee that the ANILCA preference will be not only  
20 represented but it will be established in the DEIS.  
21 Yes, you came and did a hearing, but there's no  
22 guarantee that the ANILCA preference will be put into  
23 the final decision.

24 ANILCA guarantees our subsistence rights and  
25 that needs to be expressed in continuing the discussion

1 and I feel with public comments, by letters, that needs  
2 to be driven fairly strongly towards this Roadless Rule  
3 decision.

4 Another aspect that needs to be realized is  
5 that any of the alternatives require or the result will  
6 come to a change in the Forest Plan and that is a major  
7 deal because of the Forest Plan also will help dictate  
8 the amount of logging that takes place. So sometimes  
9 that information isn't passed along and people aren't  
10 aware of that, especially in such a short timeframe  
11 that most of the communities were given to receive this  
12 information.

13 Another thing that I'd like to reiterate is  
14 that access to subsistence activities is not guaranteed  
15 by any of these alternatives as we see right now from  
16 past logging roads that are waterbarred and blocked  
17 off.

18 The Forest Service doesn't have money to  
19 maintain the roads that they have now, so there's no  
20 guarantee that those roads that come from any  
21 alternative will be left open for us to gather firewood  
22 or have access for berry picking or deer hunting. I  
23 think that's something that everyone needs to be aware  
24 of.

25 We won't see a direct effect realizing the

1 logging that could take place if there is an  
2 alternative that isn't no change to the Roadless Rule.  
3 We don't see any of the logs that come in from the  
4 Zarembo logging that takes place right now. Those logs  
5 don't come into Wrangell.

6 We're not going to see a large-scale mill  
7 operation being built there either and we're not going  
8 to see 225 jobs come back. We have a hard time finding  
9 enough people to work in our fish plants during the  
10 summer. I feel that we will not see a tremendous  
11 revenue increase coming to the city of Wrangell through  
12 logging.

13 I just feel that we'll see a lot of  
14 clearcutting potentially that will affect tourism,  
15 which is becoming one of our main sources of revenue  
16 and income to Wrangell and it's providing a lot more  
17 job opportunities.

18 Who wants to come to Wrangell and watch High  
19 Island being logged as your first sight as you take a  
20 tour up the Stikine River. I don't think there's many  
21 people that would pay for that. Once they log it it's  
22 done, then we're stuck with the logs, the trees that  
23 grow back that who knows when we'll see those.

24 I commend everyone in Wrangell for showing up.  
25 We are talking to all the other communities. I have

1 representatives here in Yakutat. I heard about how  
2 their meeting went last night. I commend everybody for  
3 coming out in Wrangell and speaking.

4 I encourage you to take full advantage of the  
5 comment time that we have until December that we can  
6 even write more written comments and express more  
7 thoughts that you may have after you have a chance to  
8 go home and go through some of this that you heard this  
9 evening.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. HEITHECKER: Thank you. Does anybody else  
12 wish to provide testimony this evening?

13 (No comments)

14 MR. HEITHECKER: Going once. Okay. Do we want  
15 to wrap it now or hang on for a few minutes and answer  
16 questions offline?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can, but we can close  
18 the hearing.

19 MR. HEITHECKER: Close the hearing. Peace.  
20 All right, John, we're going to wrap up here. Again,  
21 appreciate you calling in. Thank you.

22 MR. YEAGER: Yep. Thank you. Have a good  
23 night, everybody.

24 MR. HEITHECKER: Thanks. You too.

25 (END OF RECORDING)

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Salena A. Hile, hereby certify that the foregoing pages numbered 02 through 18 are a true, accurate, and complete transcript of ANILCA PUBLIC HEARING, WRANGELL, ALASKA transcribed under my direction from a copy of an electronic sound recording to the best of our knowledge and ability.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SALENA A. HILE, (Transcriber)