

My Turn: Save Kuiu Island forest

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FOR THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

There is an island in Southeast Alaska that the U.S. Forest Service wants you to forget about. Kuiu Island, roughly 640 square miles in size, is situated in a remote section of central Southeast. Largely uninhabited, Kuiu is remote, wild and very productive.

Heavily logged in the 1980s and '90s, logging on Kuiu Island has been dormant now nearly 20 years. However, riddled with a network of roads still viable and usable, the USFS is now desperately trying to breathe life into an industry. With a national debt topping \$20 trillion, we have a government agency spending millions laying out new timber sales. These sales, even if received by a "viable" operator, still offer little to no profit with most returning a loss given the extraordinary costs associated with the layout process in such a remote location. Many sales have been authorized for overseas shipment of logs in the round, offering no income for local mills and local families.

Kuiu Island is a target for clear-cut old growth logging as it is one of the last places in Southeast Alaska that is "off-the-radar" of the public. The ABC islands all contain high concentrations of brown bear and thus have a high profile with respect to habitat protections. Prince of Wales Island is largely owned by Native corporations, and is heavily logged.

Kupreanof Island is close to Petersburg and Wrangell as well as home to the village of Kake. These islands see a higher incidence of public awareness.

ic eyes simply do not see the millions of dollars spent in just the last year or two in new bridges, new culverts, road repair and new road truction on Kuiu.

n example, the road leading from the USFS camp located in Rowan Bay, after extensive repairs and complete resurfacing in 2015, is now a road" according to the USFS engineer that was on site! The quality and scope of these roads far surpass most villages and towns in the en :

ss than two weeks' time, the USFS plans to award a bid for an 866-acre cut of new, pristine old-growth forest on north Kuiu. Access to thi will require 10 miles of new road construction that crosses nine Class 1 streams. One hundred percent of the lumber is approved for foreign rt. The cut is governed by an outdated environmental analysis done nearly 10 years ago in 2007.

almost no public awareness, this large cut is potentially opening the door to additional new old-growth cuts to be accessed by a large netw ew roads that were hastily made when threat of the Roadless Rule was pending. Both the Security and the Kadake Watersheds are part of tl lass 77 proposal and were unanimously recommended by the Tongass Advisory Committee to be removed from old growth harvest in the fut , with millions spent constructing miles of new roads, the agency is pushing hard to sell old growth cuts.

wner and operator of a second-generation guide/outfitter business, my family and I have spent nearly 50 years operating over Kuiu Island i ntirety. In that history on the island, we have seen remarkable changes. On Sept. 1, 1996 as a teenager, I had the opportunity to personally est a bear. During that typical September day, I saw 67 different black bears! Now, on a typical September day with identical conditions, we incredibly blessed to see six to eight bears. This change is due to habitat loss from clear-cut logging and the resultant degradation of salmo: um habitats, denning sites and winter foraging for species relied upon by black bear.

e clear-cuts offer a "flash-in-the-pan" flush of berry brush growth, that boon is soon overshadowed and choked out by second growth leavin tracts of unusable mountain. It is heartbreaking to see these changes, and almost unbelievable what it used to be.

out detailed journals and personal records, I could conceivably doubt my own memories! Please help us fight against an agenda to keep cut the last strongholds of our old growth forest. We, as the public, have a right and a responsibility to dictate how our public forests are managed.

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