

Hello,

As an Alaskan resident, an outdoor guide, an ex-logger, USFS volunteer on the Arapahoe Forest, and most importantly as a human being I would like to voice my opinion against opening up large swaths of the Tongass NF to logging. By removing the roadless rules and protections we would be kissing one of the last, if not the last, stretches of wild, virgin, old growth rainforests in North America. I have never been to the Tongass, but I have in the last 5 years living, working and exploring the Price William sound, and the Chugach NF. But the fact that I have never been there is irrelevant, as Wallace Stegner wrote in a defense, and as an argument for, the idea of Wilderness;

"Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the last clear air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence, so that never again will Americans be free in their own country from the noise, the exhausts, the stinks of human and automotive waste. And so that never again can we have the chance to see ourselves single, separate, vertical and individual in the world, part of the environment of trees and rocks and soil, brother to the other animals, part of the natural world and competent to belong in it. Without any remaining wilderness we are committed wholly, without chance for even momentary reflection and rest, to a headlong drive into our technological termite-life, the Brave New World of a completely man-controlled environment. We need wilderness preserved—as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds—because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed. The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we never once in ten years set foot in it. It is good for us when we are young, because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest, into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there—important, that is, simply as an idea."

It does not matter that I have never been, I know it exists and the fact that it does is good for my soul, and the souls of millions of Americans.

Right now, starting in the Chugach with Kachemak SP, Kenai fjords NP, and Chugach NF, and extending through WRSTNP and GBNPs through Tongass NF, we have one of the most incredible, pristine and largely Wild stretches of Temperate Rainforest in the world. In fact one of the largest Old Growth forests anywhere in the world, regardless of its uniqueness as a Temperate Rainforest.

The USFS has a very difficult job, and has been doing admirable work, for the most part, of balancing its mandates of conservation and use. But in this instance, this movement to open the forest up to logging, development and roads comes amidst a crisis that we face as a global community. These trees are more valuable and helpful to us as an area of carbon sequestration, as a protected environment for salmon and all the wildlife and ecosystems that

depend on those fish. Removing the roadless rules will hurt our already severely damaged and struggling salmon populations. Without the salmon, and the animals who eat them, the forest would not be as it is today.

The only arguments for opening up the Tongass NF come from industries that have been declining for a lot longer than since the rule was put in place. The logging industry in Alaska employs less than 300 people. That's not even 1% of the economy of S.E, compared to 25% for tourism. And here's the biggest irony in this proposition, by removing the roadless rules, you may increase the logging rate a few percentage points but your would be slashing the tourism to the area. Furthermore, there has been a larger impact on the logging industry by President Trump's trade war with tariffs increasing costs for US timber production by 20%.

If we maintain the rules as they are today we can only expect tourism to increase and become a larger and larger post of the economy. It is sustainable and based on the Wilderness. Other arguments come from mining companies and hydroelectric companies, where both industries have incredibly checkered pasts, and, along with logging, are almost always harmful to the salmon populations by preventing salmon from moving freely in streams, by adding, at the very least too much sediment and suffocating eggs and fry, to the very worst of leaching toxic mine tailings into the streams affecting all living things including humans. The added fact that they would have to build roads to these sites that would further affect those streams And the salmon populations.

All data on the economy of S.E.Alaska had been showing a decline in logging, and an increase in fishing and tourism, as percentages of the economy, opening Tongass to roads will adversely affect the two most important parts of our economy with a negligible positive for the others.

From my perspective it is easy to see who wants this rule overturned, and who doesn't by looking at a few facts. Firstly, the signatories of the suit against the rule by the state of Alaska include: Alaska Electric Light & Power, Alaska Marine Lines, Alaska Power and Telephone, Alaska Miners Association, Citizens Pro Road, City of Craig, Durette Construction Co., Hyak Mining, Inside Passage Electric Cooperative, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Ketchikan Public Utilities, Northwest Miners Association, SE Roadbuilding, SE Stevedoring, and Chris Gerondale, while not including any native corporations, nor any non industry groups.

These corporations do not have Alaska, Alaskans or the world in their Best interests, they are only seeking to profit and any other reason they give for this proposal is a guise.

I strongly voice my support for either alternative 1 or 2.

Do not let the Tongass become yet another failed attempt at saving Wilderness for the sake of Wilderness, for saving our planet for our children, for saving salmon, bears, deer, and everything else, all so a handful of people can make a ton of money off of Our Public Lands.

Sincerely,

Aidan Shafland