

# Stop the assault on Tongass forest

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Once again, President Donald Trump has decided to threaten cataclysmic damage to a prized Alaskan natural resource and beyond.

On the heels of the abhorrent rollback of protections for salmon-rich Bristol Bay, Trump has set officials to work on stripping the Tongass National Forest's protection against wide-scale logging. By mid-2020, Trump [wants to cut back protections](#) that block logging across the 16 million-acre old-growth forest and a total of [nearly 60 million acres in 39 states](#).

This is bad governance and abusive stewardship of a unique American resource. Alaska's political leaders have shown disappointing judgment in pushing for the protection to be lifted. And Trump, true to form, has amplified a poor decision by big-footing U.S. Forest Service plans that carry a less disastrous impact.

Trump's attack on Tongass threatens to have an immense impact far beyond the forest. [According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture](#), more wild salmon come from the streams, rivers and lakes within Tongass than from every other national forest. The fishery produces 80% of Southeast Alaska's commercial salmon output, [the base for about 10%](#) of the region's total jobs. Native bears and the northern resident orca population depend on this ample salmon supply just as much.

The Trump plan would affect the two-thirds of Tongass, nearly 10 million acres, not officially preserved as wilderness lands. It exempts [Alaska](#) from the roadless rule, instituted in the waning days of Bill Clinton's presidency, which restricts road building and logging in national forests. Granting state-specific exemptions to this national conservation policy — [which Utah has also requested](#) — is haphazard governance, in addition to the potentially catastrophic impact on America's largest national forest.

In nearly two decades under the roadless rule, Tongass has partially recovered from the aggressive greed of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century logging industry. According to one estimate, half of the towering old-growth trees within Tongass were clear-cut before the ban. In 2013, when federal leadership conscientiously pursued preservation, [nature advocates identified 77 key watersheds](#) covering 2 million acres of Tongass as critical salmon- and trout-spawning grounds that development could threaten.

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Rather than the rollback Trump proposes, the Forest Service should continue its [current policy of reviewing Tongass proposals case-by-case](#). This process has authorized nearly 60 projects on Alaska's protected roadless lands. America's forests and salmon need more protections, not evisceration.

The roadless rule is long overdue to be given the full force of federal law, as both of Washington's U.S. senators [have proposed](#). The nation's forestlands, and the wildlife dependent on them, require too much time to recover from damage to be vulnerable to whipsawing presidential policies. When the political climate changes, this legislation must be revisited.

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