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Democracy Dies in Darkness

Tongass roads would be just another giveaway

By **Letters to the Editor**

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In her Sept. 26 Thursday Opinion essay, “It’s time to lift the Tongass ‘roadless rule’,” Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) conveniently ignored who will bear the cost of exempting the Tongass National Forest from the national roadless rule: all federal taxpayers from Florida to Washington. That’s because the roadless exemption in Alaska is really about corporate welfare for the timber industry.

This week, my group is releasing a new report that details \$600 million in money-losing timber sales in the Tongass over the past two decades. We’ve been working on this issue since the early 2000s, and it’s still mind-blowing that we actually lose money “selling” the timber we all own. We’re already losing on the sales happening outside roadless areas; opening up millions of acres more to timber harvest in the hardest-to-access places will cost taxpayers a whole lot more. And it saddles Americans with all of the liabilities associated with maintaining roads, runoff and more that comes with all that logging.

We already have a road-maintenance backlog of more than \$3 billion in our national forests. Let’s tackle that and reform the timber program before moving forward on this latest giveaway.

Autumn Hanna, Washington

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