

November 19, 2018

Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Alaska Roadless Rule

Since time immemorial, we, the indigenous peoples of Southeast Alaska, have enjoyed an intimate connection with *Haa Aani* (Our Land). The land and waters of our homelands are integral to, and inseparable from, our culture, community vibrancy, rural subsistence lifestyles, and economic opportunity. The signatory tribes have their roots in the Tongass National Forest and have continued to defend the integrity of our ancestral lands.


The granting of the State of Alaska's petition for an Alaskan exemption to the 2001 National Roadless Conservation Rule on the Tongass in 2018, without consulting any affected Native peoples, represents the most controversial and potentially destructive assault on our way of life to date. It was clear from the outset, that an Alaska Specific Roadless Rule would not leave current roadless protections in place.


In an unprecedented show of unity, six federally recognized tribal governments stepped forward to engage as Cooperating Agencies in the Alaska Roadless Rule process with the State of Alaska and consult with the US Department of Agriculture. While some Tribal Cooperating Agencies advocated for the No Action alternative, others were working on finding a compromise that best fit their respective communities. No Tribal Cooperating Agency advocated for full-exemption, and their comments and participation were ignored and disregarded.

Recently revelations that a full-exemption of the 2001 Roadless Rule may become the preferred alternative have confirmed our worst fears - the feedback of Tribes, consensus of all Alaskans, and majority of public comments received during the public scoping process were disregarded in their entirety. Blatant disregard for any of the needs of the Tribal Cooperating Agencies disregards the mandates of the NEPA process. The only voice being used "to the maximum extent possible" is the voice of industry and lobbyists looking to maximize the short-term gains of extraction industries in the Tongass National Forest.


Our tribal governments aim to work constructively with all elected officials of any political party without partisanship. We aim to be collaborative partners, working together in the best interest of Alaska- our homelands. Yet today we are challenged by our disagreement with elected officials that support the proposed full exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule. Any elected official in Alaska who supports a full exemption, is disregarding their constituents, undermining the public process, and ignoring the sovereign Tribal governments.

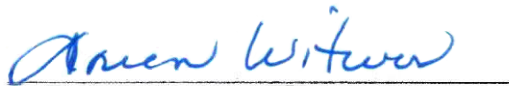
We appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss this issue with Undersecretary Hubbard during his visit to Juneau. We respectfully request an opportunity to meet and discuss this further with you, Secretary, as the decision maker on this important issue before a final decision is made. Gunalchéesh/Háw'aa, thank you for your consideration.

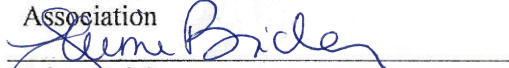

Jeanette Kookesh, President
Angoon Community
Association

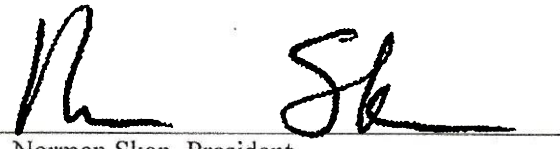

Richard Peterson, President
Central Council of Tlingit
and Haida Indian Tribes of
Alaska



Clinton Cook, Sr., President
Craig Tribal Association



Robert Starbard, Tribal
Administrator for President
Frank Wright, Jr.
Hoonah Indian Association

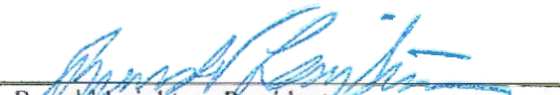

Doreen Witwer, Tribal
Administrator for
President Sid Edenshaw
Hydaburg Cooperative
Association



Jaime Bricker
Skagway Traditional Council



Norman Skan, President
Ketchikan Indian Community


Yodean Armor, President
Klawock Cooperative Association


Joel Jackson, President
Organized Village of Kake


Ronald Leighton, President
Organized Village of Kasaa


Lee Wallace, President
Organized Village of Saxman


John Buller, President
Yakutat Tlingit Tribe