



# Municipality of Skagway

GATEWAY TO THE KLONDIKE

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**SENT VIA EMAIL ONLY**

November 6, 2020

USDA Forest Service  
ATTN: Alaska Roadless Rule  
P.O. Box 21628  
Juneau, AK 99802  
[akroadlessrule@fs.fed.us](mailto:akroadlessrule@fs.fed.us)

**RE: Municipality of Skagway Comments on Alaska Roadless Rule Decision**

The Municipality of Skagway is very disappointed in the decision to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 provision that prohibited road construction and timber harvests. As a Municipality, Skagway's future depends on the vitality and resplendent natural beauty of the Tongass National Forest. As one of the most visited and highly rated cruise ship destinations in the world, our economy hinges on maintaining the pristine beauty of Southeast Alaska's primeval landscape.

In October of 2019, the Skagway Borough Assembly adopted Resolution No. 19-32R (enclosed), expressing its support for Alternative 1 of the draft environmental impact statement for the management of inventoried roadless areas within the Tongass National Forest. In December of 2019, the USDA held public hearings in Skagway, at which the majority of attendees expressed similar support. The Municipality of Skagway feels that the USDA did not heed the wishes of the community in its recent decision.

What is the point of gathering community input across Southeast Alaska when the input is summarily ignored? Representatives that fail to acknowledge the input and will of their constituency are not doing the job of representation. We ask that you reconsider this decision and pay closer attention to the commentary from our residents and users of the Tongass National Forest throughout our great state.

Sincerely,

Andrew Cremata, Mayor  
[mayor@skagway.org](mailto:mayor@skagway.org)

Proposed by:	Mayor Cremata
Attorney Review:	10/16/2019
Vote:	5 Aye 0 Nay 1 Absent

**MUNICIPALITY OF SKAGWAY, ALASKA**  
**RESOLUTION NO. 19-32R**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SKAGWAY, ALASKA EXPRESSING THE MUNICIPALITY OF SKAGWAY'S SUPPORT FOR ALTERNATIVE 1 OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS WITHIN THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST.**

**WHEREAS**, the community of Skagway is highly dependent on tourism as its main economic driver; and

**WHEREAS**, tourism in Skagway, the Inside Passage, and the broader region of Southeast Alaska is dependent on maintaining pristine, wild landscapes of the surrounding coastal temperate rainforest and the iconic wildlife it supports; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2001, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) finalized a management plan for the Tongass National Forest, which includes the National Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) in response to disappearing wildlands and a road maintenance backlog of \$8.4 billion; and

**WHEREAS**, the intent of the Roadless Rule was to protect the social, economic, and ecological values and characteristics of inventoried roadless areas from road construction and reconstruction and certain timber harvest activities; and

**WHEREAS**, at the time of promulgation in 2001, the Roadless Rule had the most extensive public involvement of any rulemaking process in the history of federal rulemaking, generating over 1.6 million comments, the vast majority of which supported the creation of a strong national policy protecting roadless areas; and

**WHEREAS**, inventoried roadless areas provide large, relatively undisturbed blocks of important habitat for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and plants; contribute to healthy watersheds and clean drinking water; and provide extensive opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism; and

**WHEREAS**, the Roadless Rule protects some of the last remaining tracts of old-growth forest habitat in the Tongass that contribute to the absorption of global warming pollution and protect native animal species that rely on them; and

**WHEREAS**, roadless areas support subsistence lifestyles through hunting and fishing, and support outdoor recreation and tourism industries; and

**WHEREAS**, the Roadless Rule contains a variety of exceptions that allow roadbuilding for community access, hydropower projects, utility connectors, and other economic development projects when they serve a legitimate public interest; and

**WHEREAS**, protection of these roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest is of local and national importance; and

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**WHEREAS**, in 2018, the State of Alaska petitioned the USDA to craft a state-specific roadless rule and requested that a full exemption be pursued from the 2001 Roadless Rule; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2018 the USDA accepted the State of Alaska's petition and initiated a National Environmental Policy Act review, an environmental impact statement (EIS), and public rulemaking process to address the management of inventoried roadless areas within Alaska, and to evaluate the exemption set forth in the petition. The USDA rulemaking is administrative and separate from any action Congress may take; and

**WHEREAS**, the majority of comments received by the USDA following its notice of intent of proposed rulemaking opposed changing the Roadless Rule for Alaska; and

**WHEREAS**, the draft EIS provides an analysis of six alternatives related to roadless management in Alaska, ranging from no action to a full exemption from the Roadless Rule on the Tongass National Forest; and

**WHEREAS**, the USDA has identified Alternative 6, which is a full exemption, as the preferred alternative at this time; and


**WHEREAS**, the Municipality of Skagway opposes Alternative 6 and feels that Alternative 1, which requests no action and would maintain the 2001 Roadless Rule on the Tongass National Forest, best protects public interests while also protecting the unique ecosystem of the Tongass; and

**WHEREAS**, the USDA is seeking public comment on the draft EIS from October 18, 2019 to December 17, 2019 and will issue its decision regarding and Alaska Roadless Rule in June of 2020;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** the Skagway Borough Assembly expresses its opposition to Alternative 6, and its support for Alternative 1 of the draft environmental impact statement for the management of inventoried roadless areas within the Tongass National Forest.

**PASSED AND APPROVED** by a duly constituted quorum of the Borough Assembly of the Municipality of Skagway this 24<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2019.

  
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Andrew Cremata, Mayor

ATTEST:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Emily A. Deach, Borough Clerk

(SEAL)

