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First name: Esther

Last name: Ashton

Organization: Wrangell Cooperative Association

Title:

Comments: WCA Resolution in Support of Roadless Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Good afternoon,

Attached is the Wrangell Cooperative Association's resolution in support of Alternative 1 - the NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE - to keep the 2001 Roadless Rule in place on the Tongass National Forest.

The Wrangell Cooperative Association is the federally recognized Tribe under federal law serving Tribal citizens in Wrangell, Alaska. Our traditional territories include the lands of Wrangell Island, Anan, Bradfield, the Stikine River and surrounding territories. We have provided careful cultural stewardship and protection of our environmental and natural resources from time immemorial. WCA strongly supports lasting protection for all inventoried roadless areas within WCA's traditional territory as provided for in the Roadless Rule. We request the USFS select the "no-action" alternative on the Alaska-specific Roadless Rule.

Gunalchesh / Thank you,

Esther Ashton

Tribal Administrator

Wrangell Cooperative Association

The following text was copy/pasted from an attached letter. The system cannot display the formatting, graphics, or tables from the attached original.

Resolution No. 12-16-19-02

A TRIBAL RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE 2001 ROADLESS RULE / IN SUPPORT OF ALTERNATIVE 1

IN THE ALASKA ROADLESS RULE-MAKING PROCESS

WHEREAS, the Wrangell Cooperative Association (hereinafter WCA) is a federally recognized Indian Tribe under federal law and is empowered under its Constitution and By-Laws to execute agreements and contracts with the United States to benefit its members; and,

WHEREAS, WCA is further defined as an Indian Tribe in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance

Act, PL 93-638 and as such is entitled to contract with the Federal Government for the operation of any federal programs, services, activities or functions serving its members; and

WHEREAS, our traditional territory includes the lands of Wrangell Island, Anan, Bradfield, the Stikine River and surrounding traditional territories and;

WHEREAS, protection of our inherent right to harvest and use our traditional and customary foods requires careful cultural stewardship and protection of our environmental and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, our care of the lands now classified as "inventoried roadless areas" and within the Tongass National Forest stretches for millennia; and

WHEREAS, these lands not only provide our people with food, they essentially define who we are and where we come from; and

WHEREAS, inventoried roadless areas protect healthy watersheds that ensure a clean drinking water supply for our Tribal citizens; and

WHEREAS, inventoried roadless areas contain many sites sacred to Tribal citizens and other Alaska Natives who use these roadless areas for spiritual and religious practices and other customary uses and activities; and

WHEREAS, inventoried roadless areas conserve natural diversity and serve as a bulwark against the spread of invasive species; and

WHEREAS, inventoried roadless areas help ensure the continued protection of indigenous fish and wildlife habitat as it relates to our spiritual, social, nutritional, and ecological values; and

WHEREAS, given Southeast Alaska's cool wet weather and the amount of stored carbon in our intact old-growth forest and soils, the Tongass National Forest represents one of the highest carbon stores in the world and the conservation of intact inventoried roadless on the Tongass is essential for maintaining America's resilience and slowing down climate change throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, salmon and other marine resource populations are facing increased challenges from changing ocean conditions, climate change, ocean acidification, rising water temperatures in streams, and ocean warming events in the Pacific Ocean, and freshwater habitat development in the contiguous United States; and

WHEREAS, Roadless areas on the Tongass are essential to Southeast Alaska's way of life and represent some of the most spectacular and unique Roadless areas anywhere in the National Forest System and support hunting, fishing, customary and traditional uses, unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities; and

WHEREAS, according to the State of Alaska's own economic experts, Tongass timber is uncompetitive because of permanent and fundamental changes in global timber markets, high labor costs, distance from markets, and less expensive substitutes; and

WHEREAS, the Tongass timber industry represents less than one percent of today's jobs and earnings in Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS, spending millions of taxpayer dollars to build roads in inventoried Tongass roadless areas makes no economic sense, particularly given the agency's enormous road maintenance backlog; and

WHEREAS, increased logging of old-growth forests in the existing Roadless areas of the Tongass would seriously impact the ability of the forest to provide vital ecosystem services, such as clean water, clean air, stream temperature regulation, and healthy salmon and wildlife habitat.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, WCA strongly supports lasting protection for all inventoried roadless areas within WCA's traditional territory now within the Tongass National Forest as provided for in the Roadless Rule; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the economic livelihoods and subsistence harvesting of Wrangell residents would be irreparably harmed by the effects of a full exemption from the Roadless Rule on the Tongass, which would lead to increased climate change, increased threats to fish habitat, and development occurring in pristine natural areas; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, the Wrangell Cooperative Association asks that the United States Forest Service and Secretary of Agriculture adopt Alternative One - the NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE--and keep the 2001 Roadless Rule in place on the Tongass National Forest.

CERTIFICATION

The Wrangell Cooperative Association adopted this resolution during a meeting held on December 16, 2019, in Wrangell, Alaska, with a quorum present.

[Position]