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First name: Lou

Last name: Eney

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Keep the Roadless Rule on the Tongass

Dear Secretary Perdue and Chief Christensen,

Please select the "no-action" alternative on the Alaska-specific Roadless Rule and protect all inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest under the 2001 National Roadless Rule.

The Tongass contains some of the last remaining intact old-growth temperate rainforests in the world, and that alone should be reason to keep it intact. Clean water and fish and wildlife habitat are essential to the cultural and ecological health of Southeast Alaska. Please keep the 2001 National Roadless Rule intact and current protections in place on the Tongass National Forest.

Timber sales in the remote Tongass cost money, they don't make money. Save millions of dollars that might be spent to subsidize timber sales. As a trail builder here in Southeast Alaska, I know first-hand that building and maintaining roads in a rainforest is absurdly costly and not worth the low-value timber of the region. The Roadless Rule already allows for approval of some projects, and future mine access, if it becomes a high enough priority, will likely be pushed through.

Development at any scale in the Tongass ends up in environmental devastation in the immediate vicinity and degradation downstream and can drastically affect subsistence resources for native and rural inhabitants. This land was stolen by the Forest Service from natives, and now the government is essentially threatening to desecrate it further and rob natives of their cultural resources and ways of life.

Proponents of this proposed Roadless Rule rollback argue that opening this door is unlikely to result in much new logging or mining, but that shouldn't matter - why even open the door? The original Roadless Rule was a recognition of both a need to preserve the wild state of existing undeveloped areas and the lack of reasonable economic support of further development and/or extractive activities. These two factors have not changed on the Tongass since then.

The original Roadless Rule was chosen from among its alternatives partly due to a need for national, agency-wide scope of intent. Local and regional control over decisions on the development of Roadless areas within those localities was given a back seat to taking a big-picture perspective on the nation's resources on the whole. This was a sound decision - there is no need to change it now. I view this proposal as a political play set in motion by a sloppily de-regulatory administration. A decision to exempt the Tongass from the Roadless Rule could begin a landslide into increased local and regional control over development of roadless areas, resulting in the piecemeal destruction of these important resources.

For these reasons, again, I strongly urge you to select the "no-action" alternative on the Alaska-specific Roadless Rule and keep the 2001 National Roadless Rule on the Tongass.

Thank you

Richard Eney

Juneau, AK

[Attachment is a PDF version of the same comment above.]

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