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Organization:
Title:
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Only 7% of forests in the United States are considered old growth. Clearly these forests are a dwindling asset, but why should we care? Why does it matter? Old growth forests provide resources found nowhere else, they sequester more carbon than any other type of ecosystem, they are arguably more valuable to scientific research than any other type of ecosystem, and they hold more biodiversity than any other type of ecosystem. Biodiversity is especially important, far beyond the intrinsic value of any individual species. Biodiversity allows for more sustainable, healthier ecosystems, which in turn allows the forest to better fulfill the services it provides.

The Tongass itself is especially important in all of these aspects. It contains 1/3 of the world[rsquo]s temperate old growth rainforest, the ecosystem with the most biomass per acre of any on earth. It sequesters 8% of all carbon contained in the US national forest system. It forms a significant part of the Pacific Northwestern rainforest, a once-contiguous ecosystem which stretched from Oregon to Alaska. Thousands of animal species rely on the Tongass, including vast quantities of salmon who use its rivers as spawning grounds.

The proposed rule would remove large swaths of the forest from being a defined [ldquo]roadless area[rdquo] opening up the forest for exploitation by the logging industry. The introduction of new roads alone can do significant damage to the ecosystem: animals could be injured by passing vehicles, the likelihood of an invasive species being introduced increases as vehicles potentially harboring invaders pass through, roads disrupt animal movement patterns which has the potential to completely alter the food web, and roads are also a source of sediment pollution which can contaminate water supplies, and that[rsquo]s without taking into account the effects of the deforestation which the roads would enable.

Expansion of the timber industry into Tongass national forest obviously goes hand in hand with deforestation, which contributes to habitat loss along with many of the same problems already mentioned with road construction. The reasoning behind opening up Tongass to the timber agency according to this plan is to stimulate economic development in the area, but it wouldn[rsquo]t even accomplish that. The timber industry provides only about 1% of southeastern Alaska[rsquo]s jobs and a similarly small portion of the economy. Meanwhile logging practices threaten to damage both the tourism and fishing industry, which make up 17% and 8% of southeastern Alaska[rsquo]s jobs respectively. Federal subsidies for the timber industry also costs American tax payers millions of dollars per year. It really just seems like the government is trying to prop up an inconvenient industry for no apparent reason, other than maybe to line their pockets with money from the timber industry and so Trump can anger some liberals at the expense of the environment.

[Position]

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