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Comments: Roadless Rule Comments Dec 17 2019

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December 17, 2019

To: USDA Forest Service

Comments Regarding the proposed Tongass Exemption from the Roadless Rule

For over 100 years, our national forests have been destructively mismanaged, primarily for timber. Today, the situation is more dire than ever. We cannot afford to destroy what's left.

My family is strongly opposed to efforts to roll back the Roadless Area Conservation Rule in Alaska or elsewhere.

The Roadless Rule was implemented with unprecedented public support because people want to protect the country's most pristine public lands, including large parts of the Tongass National Forest.

Public lands belong to every American citizen. And there is overwhelming agreement amongst not only Americans but citizens across the world for protecting forests. The current Alaska Governor and Congressional delegation speak for only a tiny tiny tiny fraction of people. And those people primarily care about one thing: their own profit.

Standing forests provide far greater economic benefits than do logged ones. They offer scenic beauty, recreational activities, climate stability, and vital wildlife habitat. Healthy ecosystem qualities such as clean air and water, fish, wildlife and recreation generate far more jobs and economic benefits for communities than timber dollars ever could.

The government loses taxpayer's money on every tree it sells. Timber sales (roads, clearcuts, LTFs) frustrate me as a taxpayer, because the use of our money for these purposes is so wasteful and destructive. It seems incredibly irresponsible to be considering more roads and more logging given the General Accounting Office estimates the current road maintenance backlog at over \$8 BILLION. With the nation facing record deficits, it's long past time for more fiscal responsibility.

The American taxpayer should not be forced to subsidize round log exports to China (or any other country) to support those foreign manufacturing economies.

The Tongass is owned by the American people. It is public land. Yet it is managed by the Forest Service like a subsidized timber colony for the exclusive benefit of Alcan/Transpac Group and Viking Lumber. Viking is also a large-scale raw log exporter.

As of today, the National debt is over \$23 trillion (source: US Dept of Treasury). In the time it takes to read this letter, it has gone up another \$10 million. To overlook or ignore the fact that the federal deficit drastically effects

everyone, states and communities included, is just not prudent. To even think of spending funds on more destruction in light of our national deficit is irresponsible. At least spend it on restoration, maintenance or recreation.

The Tongass is North America's largest carbon sink. That is, it absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and reduces the concentration in the air. This is a vital component to addressing the most pressing issue of the planet, the climate crisis. Continuing to log forests will have long-term catastrophic environmental and economic consequences.

Deforestation of our national forests is one of the tragedies of our time. It is also one of the most preventable.

The NO ACTION Alternative is the wisest course. It is the only Alternative that my family can support.

Any other alternative poses unacceptable risks to clean water, wildlife and critical habitat.

Any other alternative would be going in the wrong direction on climate change.

Keep the 2001 National Roadless Rule. On the Tongass and ALL other National Forests.

Irene Alexakos
Haines, Alaska

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