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First name: Robert

Last name: Siversten

Organization: City of Ketchikan

Title: Mayor

Comments: Re: Support for Exempting the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless

Rule

Dear Secretary of Agriculture Purdue,

The Ketchikan City Council would like to express support for exempting the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Rule.

Following Alaska Governor Bill Walker's January 18, 2018 petition to the USDA Forest Service to exempt Alaska from the Roadless Rule, the Alaska Roadless Rule Citizen Advisory Committee was created and public comment was solicited. While the Ketchikan City Council appreciates this first step the USDA has made in considering the concerns of Alaskan residents and business owners, the Council finds that an Alaskaspecific Roadless Rule that allows any roadless areas to remain intact would not be adequate in addressing the economic development needs of the communities located within the Tongass National Forest, including Ketchikan.

In 2003, the USDA agreed to temporarily exempt the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule because, "the roadless values on the Tongass are sufficiently protected under the Tongass Forest Plan and the additional restrictions associated with the Roadless Rule are not required ." The Ketchikan City Council is in agreement with Governor Walker's conclusion that the reasons for the 2003 exemption and also those outlined in the 2010 USDA Brief hold true today. Placing these access restrictions on the already heavily regulated Tongass poses further economic burden on Southeast Alaska communities such as Ketchikan by limiting development opportunities critical for growth and prosperity in an already economically constrained region.

The Ketchikan City Council urges the USDA to strongly consider the negative and unnecessary impacts to the region's economy and communities as a result of continuing with any level of the 2001 Roadless Rule. Rather than apply a blanket Roadless Rule approach to Alaska, the Council recommends the USDA take into consideration all aspects of potential land use, including timber, mining, fish and wildlife, wilderness, recreation, energy and hydropower and seek public input to determine how to best manage land use on the Tongass now and in the future. To that end, the Council supports the scoping comments and efforts issued by the Alaska Miners Association and other state and regional organizations opposed to the Roadless Rule as imposed on the Tongass.

In conclusion, the Ketchikan City Council supports the State of Alaska's petition for complete exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Rule and requests that the USDA Forest Service complete a multiple use land management plan under the National Forest Management Act to determine the best uses for the roadless areas and all the Tongass lands. This process will provide the greatest opportunity for the Tongass National Forest lands to be managed for their long-term health and productivity for the benefit of the people, communities, and economies of Southeast Alaska.

[Attached is a PDF document identical to Letter text]

[Position]