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Comments: Relaxation of the Roadless Rule in all or any of the Tongass National Forest is a substantial and determined assault on the largest intact stretch of temperate rainforest in North America and represents a substantial threat not only to Alaskan fisheries but also to a vast and growing network of tourist venues which support both local and distant economies.

The intrusion of roads into previously pristine riparian environments, already an extreme rarity in an over-developed world, will hasten ecological degradation, the fragmentation of crucial habitat and eventually the impoverishment of species-richness in a landscape where ecological health is of local and national economic import as well as maintaining vital importance in the global health of Earth. Road construction, incursion and maintenance will most effectively serve to choke local waters with sediments released by erosion and to isolate species which are dependent upon large uninterrupted territorial space.

In addition, the development of roads will allow an invasion of profit-seekers looking for short term gain in lumber and mineral extraction which will further degrade an extremely well balanced ecosystem potentially to a catastrophic degree. Even now there are visible scars on areas of the Tongass which in decades past were opened to the remorseless greed of lumberers and other environmental profiteers. Ecosystems subject to lumbering and mining may appear to recover over time - in many cases centuries - but while they may regain some of their previous function, they will never fully be restored to the vast power of their pristine co-function with salmon, wildlife, hydrological, carbon and climatic cycles to name a few.

In an time when extinction rates are increasing geometrically and biotic systems are being plundered for limited short-term goals, America must protect her sacred ecological treasures so that our natural wonders are not sold in the blink of an eye to the highest bidders, leaving our children an environment which is neither awe-inspiring nor able to sustain worldwide ecosystem function.

As an American citizen I feel that it is my mandate to dissuade the greedy and short-sighted grab for those resources which make our country so abundantly awe-inspiring. I also feel that opening the Tongass National Forest to short-sighted economic interests represents government thievery of our communal, national resources and an attack on American ethics.