

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/19/2019 8:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: We must protect our forests and wildlife if we are going to survive climate change. We must protect indigenous lands if we are going to heal ourselves and the land.

I am writing to support the No-Action Alternative for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Alaska Roadless Rule, Alternative 1. I support keeping the current Roadless Rule protections in place and intact for the Tongass National Forest, which exists within the traditional territories of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. The Tongass is the world's largest intact temperate rainforest and has been called "America's Climate Forest" as it is the single most important national forest for carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation in the United States.

Globally, deforestation (8-15%) and forest degradation (6-13%) contribute more greenhouse gas pollution than the world's entire transportation network, which is why countries, including the U.S., must commit to reducing emissions and protecting forest carbon sinks, like the Tongass National Forest.

During the original rulemaking process, more than 1.5 million Americans voiced support for the Roadless Rule, which followed decades of clear-cutting that had a destructive and lasting impact on the Tongass. The rule continues to receive overwhelming support, with a 2019 poll finding three-fourths of the general public in support of the Roadless Rule.

If Alaska is exempt from the Roadless Rule, it will open up the forest to further industrial scale logging. Deforestation of the Tongass will threaten the health of Alaskan salmon by polluting rivers and streams, harm cultural and sacred sites of great importance to Indigenous communities, jeopardize local economies based on tourism and fisheries, and continue to cost taxpayers money. New budget data revealed that the US Forest Service could end up losing more than \$180 million in the Tongass over the next four years.

Additionally, many Indigenous communities have stated they are not interested in exempting the Tongass from the Roadless Rule. In October, The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, which represents 57 tribal governments, passed a resolution in support of the Roadless Rule in Alaska. If the Tongass is made exempt from the Roadless Rule, it will not only destroy the forest and our global climate but the exemption will actively contribute to the ongoing genocide of Indigenous Peoples whose identities, cultures, and livelihoods are integral to the forest.

I urge you and the Forest Service to protect over 9 million acres of forest, defend our global climate, and stand with Indigenous and local communities by keeping the National Roadless rule intact and selecting the no-action alternative for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Alaska Roadless Rule, Alternative 1.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ferguson

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