Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/17/2019 8:00:00 AM
First name: Jaime
Last name: Hamre
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Please maintain protections for the Tongass National Forest

Dear Secretary Sonny Perdue,

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) safeguards nearly 10 million acres of roadless forest lands in Alaska. These publicly owned and managed areas in our national forests have been protected to conserve watersheds, wildlife habitat and recreational values for the last twenty years. Now, because of the petition submitted by the state of Alaska, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is considering removing these protections.

Changing the Roadless Rule for Alaska could irreversibly threaten national forest lands across the state, from ancient forests including thousand-year-old Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and western red cedar. The Tongass is also home to endemic species including brown bears, wolves, eagles, black-tailed deer, and world-class salmon that support commercial and recreational fisheries. Once our roadless areas are gone, they're gone forever.

I urge you to please maintain protections for our national forests in Alaska.

The proposed action in U.S. Forest Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement of the Alaska roadless rule would open vast tracts of America's remaining ancient forest to logging and road building.

The Tongass National Forest contains nearly 10 million acres of Intact Forest Landscape (IFL) - the unbroken natural landscape of a forest ecosystem and its habitat. That amount is equivalent to more than half of the IFL in the lower 48 states and represents nearly 40 percent of the Intact Forest Landscape managed by the U.S. Forest Service that is left in this country.

The Tongass is the spawning ground for about 40 percent of the wild salmon on the West Coast. The Forest Service estimates that the salmon industry generates $986 million annually.

In an August 2019 letter to your office, Southeast Alaska fishermen and fisherwomen urged the Forest Service to select an alternative that broadly protects fish habitat, continues the phase-out of industrial-scale old-growth clear-cutting, and prioritizes the restoration of degraded watersheds and streams.

Instead, the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service have proposed to renew large-scale logging that would adversely impact the tourism and seafood industries of Southeast Alaska.

Please stop the rollback of the important 2001 National Roadless Rule in Alaska and protect the Tongass National Forest!

Sincerely,