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Organization:
Title:
Comments: For your attention

The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250
David E. Schmid, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region
Attn: Alaska Roadless Rule
P.O. Box 21628
Juneau, Alaska, 99802
Dear Secretary Perdue, and Mr. Schmid:
I am writing to voice my opposition to any modification to the Roadless Rule in Alaska. The proposed changes would undermine safeguards, and facilitate increased old-growth logging in the Tongass and the Chugach National Forests. Logging prohibitions contained within the Roadless Rule are a key component of the long-awaited transition away from old-growth clearcutting on the Tongass. The Roadless Rule protects over 2.5 million acres of productive old-growth (which constitutes half of the old-growth forests remaining on the Tongass) and prevents the fragmentation of large unbroken landscape. Rolling back the Roadless Rule in Alaska would ignore overwhelming public support, put wildlife and critical habitat at risk, and threaten access to safe drinking water. The rule change would be a step away from sustainable development and would run counter to the interests of all Americans, as well as Alaskans, and is not in the best interest of taxpayers.
Scientists overwhelmingly agree that clear cutting of old growth trees for timber puts whole systems at risk and destroys wildlife habitats, yet the Forest Service's amendment to the Tongass plan allows clearcutting to continue for well over another ten years. This rule change will promote further, as well as rapid, destruction. Both the Tongass and the Chugach play a vital role in capturing excess carbon from the atmosphere and mitigating some of the impact of global warming, as well as providing ecosystems services that reach beyond Alaska. In Alaska, which experienced unprecedented heat waves this summer, the Tongass serves as a buffer against climate change. Much like the Amazon rainforest, the Tongass' stands of ancient trees are champions at absorbing greenhouse gas emissions, storing approximately 8 percent of the total carbon in all national forests of the lower 48 states.
The Tongass National Forest is home to more than 9 million acres of roadless area. The Roadless Rule protects ecosystems, which, in turn, helps make the Tongass the country's single most important national forest for carbon sequestration and climate change
mitigation.
Again, I strongly urge you against granting any exemptions or exceptions to the Roadless Rule in Alaska, as is offered in alternative 1, and advise the Forest Service to refrain from pursuing an Alaska version of the Roadless Rule. Rather, continue to uphold the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, maintaining protections against logging and roadbuilding in Tongass roadless areas.
The agency's mission is "Caring for the Land and Serving the People." The Forest Service should strive to protect the Tongass National Forest and ensure our public lands serve the people and wildlife of today and future generations.
Thank you for taking the time for my comment,
Caroline Sévilla