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First name: Paula

Last name: Loftis

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Roadless Rule - Protection of Alaska's National Forests

I reviewed the history of the Roadless Rule. Earthjustice is a wealth of information and I quote liberally from their literature.

The nearly 50 million acres of roadless areas in our National Forests are an American treasure. The forests protected by the 2001 Roadless Rule-adopted with overwhelming public support-provide vital habitat for thousands of wildlife species, safeguard drinking water supplies for millions of Americans, and ensure quality recreation cherished by all.

In November 2000, the Forest Service released a near-final plan. The agency proposed to immediately prohibit roadbuilding and commodity logging on 49 million acres of wild forests. In 2004, it would be expanded to include Alaska's Tongass National Forest, bringing the total acres protected to 58.5 million.

OCTOBER 1, 2012

The U.S. Supreme Court denies a request by the State of Wyoming to review the legality of the Roadless Rule.

Of the decision, attorney Kristen Boyles says: "With the Supreme Court's denial of Wyoming's petition for review, there should no longer be any question about the Roadless Rule's legality."

MARCH 25, 2013

The D.C. District Court ends a challenge by the state of Alaska against the Roadless Rule.

The case is the final litigation challenging the rule nationwide. The court holds that no further challenges are allowed, because the statute of limitations has run out.

JULY 29, 2015

The Ninth Circuit's 11-judge en banc panel rules that the exemption of the Tongass from the Roadless Rule was illegal.

MARCH 28, 2016

The U.S. Supreme Court declines to hear a last-ditch effort by the State of Alaska to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule.

The Ninth Circuit's ruling-and the decision by the Supreme Court not to review that ruling-reinforced the settled rule that federal agencies cannot arbitrarily change policies and ignore previous factual findings simply because a new president has taken office.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2017

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia throws out the state of Alaska's attack on protections for the nearly 50 million acres of wild "roadless" national forest lands nationwide from logging and logging roads.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia previously dismissed the case for exceeding the six-year statute of limitations. An appeals court overturned that ruling, saying the clock started ticking when a federal court reinstated the rule in 2006, not when the rule was first issued in 2001. Alaska filed its challenge in 2011, seeking to overturn the rule on multiple grounds. Today's lengthy and careful ruling finds that each of those claims lack merit.

Groups intervening in Alaska's case to defend the Roadless Rule included Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, Alaska Center for the Environment, The Boat Company, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, Defenders of Wildlife, Tongass Conservation Society, Center for Biological Diversity, and Greenpeace. The groups are represented by attorneys from Earthjustice and NRDC.

AUGUST 2, 2018

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announces that it intends to create an "Alaska state-specific" version of the Roadless Rule, undermining safeguards for the Tongass and the Chugach National Forests, prized expanses of glaciers, fjords and old-growth rainforest spanning more than 22 million acres in Alaska.

OCTOBER 15, 2019

The U.S. Forest Service announces plans to repeal Roadless Rule protections across more than 9 million acres of the Tongass National Forest, enabling logging interests to bulldoze roads and clear-cut trees in areas of the Tongass that have been off-limits for decades.

"The millions of ancient trees across this temperate rainforest serve as the greatest carbon sanctuary in the U.S. national forest system, helping us all as a counterweight against the climate crisis," said Earthjustice Managing Attorney Eric Jorgensen. "Earthjustice will oppose this attack on the safeguards wisely established by the Roadless Rule."

Public lands are taxpayer supported and it is a travesty to sell them off to special interest groups for profit. Once the roads are allowed then come the loggers removing old growth forests and mining absolutely destroying the ecosystem, then hunters killing the wildlife, violating the Endangered Species Act, and then the all-terrain vehicles terrorizing the wildlife and bringing noise into a place where only nature previously existed....and on and on it goes. Wilderness and forests should be left to be pristine wilderness and forests. We need it to be so.

In conclusion, an American proverb states "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children". It would serve the Forest Service and all Secretaries of Agriculture well if they remembered the proverb. My family, friends and I often visit Alaska and other wilderness and forest areas and also spend a great deal of money in these states. Alaska will shoot the golden goose with any loss of the forest.

I recall watching a video that included Senator Lisa Ann Murkowski and her colleagues exclaiming with awe and amazement to a bear cam catching salmon on waterfalls. The Congressional staff now wishes to violate and destroy the environment, salmon estuary, wildlife habitat and Alaskan Natives that include: Iñupiat, Yupik, Aleut, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, and a number of Northern Athabaskan cultures.

It is hypocritical to make a decision violating the basic premise that human s have a responsibility to be good stewards to this planet and all its inhabitants by any breach of the Roadless Rule. It must stay in place and intact. There needs to be an end to the court actions and a basic value and attitude of protecting public lands needs to be respected forever more.

Thank you for your time and attention to these concerns and plea.

Paula A. Loftis

41 Grand Oaks Way

Beaufort, SC 29907

(843) 525-1902

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