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Title:

Comments: I am against logging and development of the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska. Because it is the largest temperate rainforest in the world and the largest national forest in the US; At almost 17 million acres, it's a wonderland for hunting and fishing that should be preserved for the sake of the planet and for future generations to enjoy and experience in its unadulterated condition. In this country, mountain goats roam the alpine, Sitka blacktail deer slink through the old growth forests, moose and ducks are scattered throughout coastal marshes, and brown and black bears are everywhere. The fishing is even more robust. The Tongass rivers and creeks support more salmon than all other national forests combined, and the fishing and tourism account for more than 25 percent of local jobs in the region. The Tongass produces 28 percent of Alaska's commercial salmon catch and Tongass salmon fishing generates \$1 billion annually, according to Trout Unlimited.

It's an old-growth cathedral of evergreen rainforest. Spruce, cedar, and hemlock thrive in steep terrain that's often many miles from any established road.

And it's important to note that old-growth logging isn't the booming industry that it used to be in Southeast. In fact, reigniting the old-growth logging here would likely require some serious federal subsidies. The Forest Service lost about \$600 million through its management of the Tongass National Forest, according to a new report from the Taxpayers for Common Sense. The nonpartisan group calculated the Forest Service's losses through road-building and timber sales and found that the average net loss was about \$30 million annually over the past 20 years.

Building new logging roads through vast wilderness is expensive. What's more, Tongass timber is a mix of high-value sawtimber and low-quality trees. In other words, for loggers to get to the good stuff, they've got to churn through a ton of low-value timber. And according to one 2013 study, about 66 percent of the large-tree old-growth forest on the Tongass has already been logged.

The whole ecology of the Tongass relies on two key factors: giant coniferous trees and clean, cold water. The massive trees force the creeks and rivers to meander, which creates ideal spawning habitat for salmon (the place is nicknamed the Salmon Forest). Those salmon die after they spawn, and those rotting fish carcasses put tons of nutrients back into the forest. Black and brown bears gorge on the salmon, but so do eagles, ravens, wolves, and even ducks (local waterfowlers don't like shooting mallards during the later stages of the salmon runs here because they taste fishy after gobbling salmon eggs and carcasses). Blacktail deer need those old-growth forests for wintering habitat. And locals rely on all these critters for subsistence hunting and fishing, as well as the dollars they bring in from traveling outdoors people.

When you compare that existing, thriving economy to the potential new one from a resurgence in old-growth logging, the smart bet is on conserving this habitat for hunting, fishing, and tourism.

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