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First name: Gayle

Last name: Leberg

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Gayle Leberg and I live in Mill Creek, Washington.

My family first plied the waters of Alaska in 1898. I lived there in the 70s and 80s and deeply understand the vital role the Tongass Forest plays in maintaining the Alaskan ecology. It sustains the vital salmon population and cultural resources. Having lived in Washington state for 60 of my 70 years, I have witness the degradation of the Salish Sea. The salmon are barely surviving. Lack of knowledge contributed to this decline. Now we know and have no excuse. The Tongass must be preserved not only for the local ecology, but as one of the last temperate rainforests in the world that we need to protect the planet.

I am writing to express strong opposition to efforts to roll back the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) in Alaska or elsewhere. The Roadless Rule was implemented with unprecedented public support to protect some of our nations most pristine public lands, including large parts of the Tongass National Forest. You must choose the No Action alternative. Any other choice would ignore overwhelming public support and harm Alaskans, including Alaska Natives, and taxpayers across the nation.

In Southeast Alaska, tourism accounts for 28% of employment and generate an annual \$1 billion in economic benefit, making it far more of an economic driver than the timber industry, which is less than 1% of the regional economy.

Any choice but the No Action alternative would also put wildlife and critical habitat at risk, threaten access to clean water, and be a step in the wrong direction on climate change jeopardizing Alaskans at a time when the state already faces severe challenges related to rising temperatures. I urge you not to abandon the Roadless Rule in Alaska and instead to put the public interest above corporate profits by choosing to keep the rule in place unchanged.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Regards, Gayle Leberg

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