

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/21/2019 8:00:00 AM

First name: Mark

Last name: Olinger

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Keep 'Roadless Rule' Protections for the Tongass National Forest

Dear U.S. Forest Service,

Recently the Forest Service issued a proposal to open more than 9 million pristine acres of Alaska's Tongass National Forest to clear-cut logging and bulldozing of roads. This would endanger one of the largest intact old-growth temperate rainforests left in North America.

I strongly oppose the Forest Service's plan to eliminate "Roadless Rule" protections for the Tongass National Forest and urge you to select the "no action" alternative instead. At almost 17 million acres, the Tongass is the largest U.S. national forest and one of the world's most important temperate rainforests. On the Tongass alone the rule protects 9.3 million acres of breathtaking, undeveloped forests.

As you know the Tongass is America's wildest remaining national forest, and it is home to a wide range of wildlife, including Alexander Archipelago wolves, grizzly bears and salmon. It also stores a vast amount of carbon, with its centuries-old trees serving as a carbon-reserve life raft in this time of climate change. Logging releases most of that carbon into the atmosphere.

Your proposal to open the door to clearcutting and bulldozing is irresponsible and fundamentally threatens these values. The Tongass belongs to all Americans and should not be sacrificed to the timber industry, which provides a small fraction of the jobs and income in Southeast Alaska compared to tourism and fishing. Jobs and income which rely on intact forests to thrive. It is even more important to save these last remaining roadless forests because your agency has fragmented and logged so much of our national forests, harming wildlife and waters along the way.

Further, I oppose your plan to allow the agency to open any of the 5.3 million acres of roadless areas on the Chugach National Forest to bulldozing and clearcutting for logging. A spectacular landscape of rugged mountains, snow-covered peaks, lakes, rivers and streams. This is simply a backdoor repeal of the 2001 Roadless Rule, which protects all roadless lands because of the critical role they play in protecting pure water, secure wildlife habitat and remote recreation.

For nearly two decades, the "Roadless Rule" has protected much of our country's last wild national forests from most logging and development.

Please think of future generations by selecting the "no action" alternative to maintain "Roadless Rule" protections for the Tongass and Chugach.

Sincerely,

Mark Olinger

Mount Vernon, TX 75457

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