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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comments to oppose modification to the Roadless Rule

Dear U.S. Forest Service,

I am writing to you today with regard to the Roadless Rule's relation to Tongass National Forest, and why the protections it affords the environment cannot afford to be reduced.

The Roadless Rule helps protect old-growth forests like Tongass by limiting the acceleration of erosion, pollution, and other phenomena that weaken the stability of the natural environment. Preserving the innate strength of these forests is of vital importance, not only to a forest's immediate surrounding area, but to the global climate as a whole. Intact, these ancient forests are strongholds of climate resilience, and the Tongass is one of world's largest old-growth forests. Allowing roadbuilding and clearcutting to take place in Tongass National Forest would directly contribute to accelerating the effects of climate change, and permanently deprive the planet of one of its strongest weapons to combat those effects.

Additionally, Tongass National Forest is a habitat for birds like the Prince of Wales Spruce Grouse and Northern Goshawk, as well as for mammals like wolves and deer. These animals, through their natural behaviors, regulate their ecosystem in an inimitable and effortless way. Potentially opening these roadless areas to more logging and road construction will splinter the forest and eliminate more of the mature trees that these animals rely on.

Yet, all of the action alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement allow more roadbuilding and logging across the Tongass National Forest. Logging roads and timber operations cost tens of millions of taxpayer dollars every year, with zero return on investment. Meanwhile, these destructive activities degrade the naturally sustainable wealth of salmon, wildlife watching, and tourism opportunities.

The advantages and short-term gains of opening more acres to the timber industry are vastly outweighed by the long-term advantages of bolstering protections to the old-growth forests and wild areas on the Tongass. I urge you to select the "No Action" Alternative (Alternative 1) and allow the Roadless Rule to remain intact on the Tongass National Forest.

Sincerely,

Richard O'Leary

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