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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please maintain protections for the Tongass and Chugach National Forests

Dear Secretary Sonny Perdue,

Changing the Roadless Rule for Alaska could irreversibly threaten national forest lands across the state and set precedent for the rest of the countries pristine National Forest. Like the 182,000 acres of roadless area in my home state of West Virginia.

This petition threatens a variety of valuable assets to our nation from ancient forests including thousand-year-old Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and western red cedar to endemic species including brown bear, wolf, eagles, black-tailed deer, and world-class salmon habitat that support commercial and recreational fisheries. Once our roadless areas are gone, they're gone forever.

The Tongass National Forest contains nearly 10 million acres of Intact Forest Landscape (IFL)--the unbroken natural landscape of a forest ecosystem and its habitat. That amount is equivalent to more than half of the IFL in the lower 48 states and represents nearly 40 percent of the Intact Forest Landscape managed by the U.S. Forest Service that is left in this country, something that many other countries do not have and a reason the United States is respected and visited by conservationist and tourist around the world.

Furthermore, this area sustains a vital portion of our food source and a local economy, the Tongass produces on average 28% of Alaska's annual commercial salmon catch and 25% of the entire west coast annual harvest! The Forest Service estimates that the salmon industry generates \$986 million annually. Of which would be drastically negatively impacted by roads and logging in these ecosystems.

It is imperative that our official leadership vote to stop the rollback of the important 2001 National Roadless Rule in Alaska and protect our national forests. I urge you to please maintain protections for our national forests in Alaska and show that all our our national forests are valued.

Sincerely,

Rhea Mitchell

Fayetteville, WV 25840

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