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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am an ardent supporter of our National Forests(NFs). I spend time every day walking and hiking in the forest. Forests can renew our souls as well as renew the Earth. They are our nation's treasure and hold countless riches which we can use and preserve. The 17 million acre Tongass National Forest, about 9.2 million acres in roadless rule area, is America's largest national forest and more importantly it is one of the largest intact temperate rainforests in the world.

The Roadless Area Conservation Policy was established in January 2001 by President Clinton, ending logging, road building; and coal gas, oil, and other mineral leasing in 58 million acres of the wildest remaining undeveloped national forest land. The State of Alaska and the Tongass was exempted on December 30, 2003 because the Bush administration never formalized the rule and then changed the language which allowed Governors an opportunity to seek management requirements for National Forest System inventoried roads within their states. While this change has been argued by environmental organizations, I will again ask why? In establishing the Rule the government Forest Service received an overwhelming response from the public to make this happen and then in two years the government backed down and allowed States to take charge. We were never asked again until now to comment on such a monumental change in the Rule.

Now, we are being asked by the U.S. Forest Service, and I am thankful, to add our voices anew for saving the forests that we have left in the world. Gov. Mike Dunleavy has requested a total exemption from the Roadless Rule for the Tongass. This, to me, is destroying our national wealth and further adding to the destruction of carbon sequestering forests, species decline, health of our air and water around the globe. If Alaska is allowed to build roads in the Tongass it will destroy habit, old growth trees and undermine this pristine area of the Earth as well as setting a precedent for other states to follow; thus the Rule is no longer ! No State has ever asked for a total exemption or been given one before.

As of 2019 the Tongass supports fewer than 100 timber jobs, which account for less than 1 percent of regional employment. Tourism and commercial salmon fishing have become the economic driving factors in Alaska representing 26% of jobs in the region. The FS reports in 2017 that the Tongas received 2.9 million visitors and generated \$382 million and supported 3,937 jobs. The salmon populations have been struggling and roadless areas of the Tongass provide pristine cold water habitat for these threatened fish. Logging and mining degrade streams, rivers and water quality and thus adding to the stress on our salmon populations.

Quoting Dale Bosworth who was chief U.S. Forest Service.under President George W Bush.

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/dec/9the-cents-and-sense-of-maintaining-the-roadless-pr/>.

"Now, timber harvesting on national forests is absolutely a viable and important multiple use. It provides jobs and wood products while reducing the fire hazard and improving forest health. But due to expensive road building and transportation costs, lack of sawmill capacity and low timber values, the Tongass has the least economically-

efficient timber sale program in the National Forest System. A recent report from Taxpayers for Common Sense found that timber sales in the Tongass have actually cost the American taxpayers roughly \$600 million since 1999, or \$30 million per year on average in 2018 dollars. It is difficult to justify opening up roadless areas in the Tongass for timber sales, which are heavily subsidized by American taxpayers, while simultaneously jeopardizing the industries that are adding to the regional tax base.

I am requesting that the Governor's request be denied and that the Roadless Rule remain in effect in the Tongass National Forest. I support Alternative #1, no action to be taken, and retain the hard-fought protections for roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest.

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