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Comments: What's not to like about our National Forests? They are a treasure, with countless riches we can enjoy and preserve. The jewel in the crown of the National Forest system is the 17 million acre Tongass National Forest, with 9.2 million roadless acres, America's largest national forest, and more importantly one of the largest intact temperate rainforests in the world.

The Roadless Area Conservation Policy, established in January 2001 by President Clinton, ended logging, road-building, and hydrocarbon/mineral leasing in 58 million acres of the wildest remaining undeveloped national forest land. The State of Alaska now seeks total exemption from this act, ostensibly to support the logging industry. But there is no logic to support this.

Decades ago the Tongass supported thousands of logging related jobs. But as of 2019 the Tongass supports fewer than 100 timber jobs, which account for less than one percent of regional employment. Today it is tourism and commercial salmon fishing that drive the economy, representing 26% of jobs in the region. The Forest Service reports in 2017 that the Tongass received 2.9 million visitors, generated \$382 million, and supported 3,937 tourism and salmon fishing jobs. But salmon populations have been struggling. Additional roads and mining would only degrade their habitat, as these industries increase erosion, sediment build-up, and warming in streams. The roadless areas of the Tongass provide pristine cold water habitat for these threatened fish, which in turn supports a \$382 million industry. Exemption from the roadless requirement would thus hurt Alaska's economy, not help it.

This is not empty hyperbole or false news. As noted by Dale Bosworth, chief of the 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 therefore urgently request that the Governor's request be denied and that the Roadless Rule remain in effect in the Tongass National Forest. I support Alternative #1, that no action be taken, keeping the hard-fought protections for roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest.

Thank you.

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