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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To those responsible for managing our public lands on the Tongass National Forest:

I have been fortunate enough to visit the Tongass National Forest, spending a week in and around Haines and on a 10-day rafting trip on the Tatshenshini-Alsek Rivers. I have first-hand experience visiting roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest and know that they possess unparalleled opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation. The long-term ecological, recreational, and economic values maintained by leaving roadless areas on the Tongass un-roaded vastly outweigh the short-term economic returns for a few individuals derived by exploiting these areas.

Like most Americans, I strongly support protecting roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest. These unroaded areas are most valuable in their current unaltered condition. I am adamantly opposed to opening these roadless areas to benefit the few who will profit by their destruction.

The Tongass National Forest contains nearly 40 percent of intact forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Maintaining these forests is crucial, as they hold 8 percent of all carbon stored in forests managed by the Forest Service. These landscapes are unfragmented areas large enough to maintain biological diversity and support healthy habitats for wildlife, including all five of North America's Pacific salmon species. Lifting the Roadless Area Conservation Rule on the Tongass National Forest is unfathomable as it would open up 9.5 million acres of untrammeled land for exploitation and endanger one-quarter of the West Coast's wild salmon.

The American people lose by lifting the Roadless Area Rule on the Tongass National Forest. Over the past two decades, the Forest Service timber sales program on the Tongass National Forest has been a financial failure, costing taxpayers nearly \$600 million. Future logging on the Tongass will undoubtedly continue to cost American taxpayers money.

Why would anyone suggest lifting the Roadless Area Rule on the Tongass National Forest except the few individuals who would benefit from liquidating these irreplaceable forests? Why would the Forest Service, who is entrusted to responsibly manage our public lands and forests, open up the area to benefit timber extraction, which accounts for just 1 percent of southeast Alaska's jobs, compared with 8 percent for seafood processing and 17 percent for tourism?

I urge those responsible for the management of our public lands on the Tongass National Forest to select the No-Action Alternative for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Alaska Roadless Rule, Alternative #1.

Please do not exempt the Tongass from the Roadless Rule, or make any changes to how the Rule is applied in Alaska.

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