

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/14/2019 9:00:00 AM

First name: Andrew

Last name: Cliburn

Organization: Vermont Law School

Title:

Comments: Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write to urge you to select Option 1--the no action alternative--with respect to the Proposed Alaska Roadless Rule. As this Administration itself has pointed out in its Fourth National Climate Assessment released late last year, we live in perilous times. The global mean surface temperature is 1.1 C higher than the preindustrial era, principally attributable to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, as the International Panel of Climate Change reported last year, not only must we reduce such emissions by nearly half in the next decade, we must take CO2 out of the atmosphere to return to what science considers safe levels for human and nonhuman life to continue.

Therefore, promulgating a rule change allowing logging in old-growth forests is precisely the opposite of what a responsible Administrator should be doing. As I am sure you know, forests like the Tongass are an extraordinary carbon sink. Indeed, the Tongass is one of the premier carbon sinks in the world. The best estimates are that the Tongass sequesters about 650 million tons of CO2. That is roughly half of the United States' total emissions in any given year. Removing these particular trees in a temperate rain forest is not like logging in other forest systems.

Though I have little doubt that you and Chief Christensen will carry forward with the rule, I would like you to know that these are the moments and the decisions that define us as humans. Good humans make sure that there is enough to go around for everyone. That means that there is an atmosphere worth living in for our children and our grandchildren. You probably do not think that this rule will change a thing with respect to future generations, but as stewards of our country's public forests--and in many ways, our future--you might just want to do something on the side of life, and of decency in this perilous moment.

The proposed rule is one among many such policy decisions you have made, and perhaps will make. But I ask you and the Chief to think of this, for it will surely happen to you: one day a young person--perhaps your grandchild or great-grandchild--will come up your driveway and she will ask you the question of when you knew that our way of living was destroying the atmosphere. You will answer her that you knew before now, and that anyone who wanted to know, could have known. And then she will ask you what you did after knowing the truth. And you will have to say to her that you allowed Alaska an exemption to the Roadless Rule in order to cut down trees in the largest carbon sink in our country knowing that your actions would make the problem measurably worse.

[Position]

[Position]