

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

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I support 'No Action' alternative: Conserve the Roadless Rule in Alaska

Dear Comment Period Alaska Roadless Rule,

The Tongass produces more salmon than all other National Forests, combined. Roadless areas and places like the Tongass 77 contain highly-productive fish habitat that is critical to local fishing and tourism industries, which combine to contribute more than \$2 billion in economic activity and roughly 26% of jobs in the region, annually. The Tongass National Forest already has more than 5,000 miles of permanent logging roads transecting its landscape to access timber. American taxpayers have spent more than \$600 million building logging roads on the Tongass over the past 20 years. According to the Taxpayers for Common Sense, USFS could end up losing more than \$180 million in the Tongass over the next four years. Congressional sources pin the Tongass road maintenance backlog at roughly \$68 million. The Forest Service estimates it has a backlog of more than \$100 million in watershed restoration needs. The Forest Service has surveyed 3,687 places where roads cross fish streams on the Tongass (culverts and bridges) and found 33% of them fail to meet standards to allow fish migration. That means there are more than 1,200 places on the Tongass where roads don't allow fish to migrate past at all life stages! We applaud the Forest Service's on-going efforts to fix these problems, but we never should have gotten here in the first place and we question the logic behind adding to the problem.

Given the above, there is no need to make more roads to access old growth trees. If we are going to be leaders or even cooperators in fighting climate change, we need to demonstrate it to other countries and ourselves by preserving the limited old growth forests that remain in the US. Once those trees have fallen, all we will have are pictures of them, items made from them by China, and regrets. Increased roads and logging in this area would be poor stewardship of our resources. Let's not be poor stewards. Instead, let's focus on the greater long-term economic value of these forests as natural areas for tourism, salmonid production, carbon sequestration, etc.

The Roadless Rule has been instrumental in conserving the Chugach and Tongass National Forest and in supporting their associated fish and wildlife-based industries for almost 20 years. Please uphold the Rule's protections for important fish and wildlife areas, including the Tongass 77, by selecting the 'no action' alternative. Roadless areas are an important source of food, jobs, and income through commercial, subsistence, and recreational fishing. Salmon are part of Alaska's culture and we must protect them and their spawning streams. Please do not roll back roadless area protections for habitat that our irreplaceable fish and wildlife populations need to survive.

Sincerely,

Troy Zorn

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