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Comments: To whom it may concern:

The Trump administration's proposal to remove roadless rule protections and allow destructive roadbuilding throughout Alaska's Tongass National Forest is bad for our environment, bad for taxpayers, and bad for future generations of Americans who deserve to visit and appreciate this beautiful, pristine place. It is opposed by a majority of Americans and Alaskans, including fisherman, sportsman, local businesses, and tribal nations who have sacred ties to the land, and why the administration should not move forward with this plan.

Spanning 500 miles along Southeast Alaska's panhandle, the Tongass is defined by thousands of islands, massive old-growth trees-some more than 1,000 years old-and, importantly, 32 federally-recognized Alaska Native Communities who have lived off these lands since time immemorial. The Tongass is also critically important to our fight against climate change, sequestering hundreds of millions of tons of carbon from our atmosphere.

For nearly two decades, millions of acres of the Tongass have been protected by an effective conservation safeguard known as the Roadless rule. Finalized in 2001, the Roadless rule protects some of the last truly wild places in our National Forest System from environmentally damaging roadbuilding and commercial logging. The application of the Roadless rule is particularly important to Alaska where decades of federally subsidized clear-cut logging have harmed air, water, and wildlife habitat.

At An oversight hearing of the Natural Resources Committee held with experts and the Forest Service last month, it became clear that only one special interest group will benefit from an Alaska Roadless Rule exemption: the timber industry. Removing roadless protections from the Tongass National Forest would open broad swaths of pristine, old-grown rainforest and ancient, irreplaceable trees to clear-cut logging and roadbuilding. Experts testified that expensive roadbuilding in this harsh terrain will be subsidized to the tune of millions of dollars by American taxpayers.

This administration's attempt to use taxpayer dollars to artificially prop up logging and roadbuilding efforts throughout the Tongass would not only harm our environment but undermine flourishing commercial fishing, recreation and tourism industries - which together make up 26 percent of regional Southeast Alaskan employment - that depend on the preservation of the forest.

KEEP THE TONGASS ROADLESS!

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