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The Tongass National Forest, is the largest intact temperate rainforest on the planet. While its value as a well of resources can be quantified and monetized, its value as an intact and unspoiled ecosystem cannot be calculated. It's priceless. But this ecosystem, already transforming due to climate change, is facing enormous challenges from a more serious threat - politics. President Trump, Senators Sullivan and Murkowski, Congress Young, and Governor Dunleavy have all publicly stated their dogged mission to pursue a determined and aggressive rollback of environmental protections in Alaska.

According to the Washington Post "President Trump has instructed Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to exempt Alaska's Tongass National Forest from logging restrictions, after privately discussing the matter with the state's governor aboard Air Force One."

In letter dated back to April 2015, Sunny Purdue, Secretary of Agriculture previously told Andrew Mack, then Commissioner of the Dept of Natural Resources in Alaska that: "We share your interest in exploring options to help create jobs and prosperity for rural communities in Southeast Alaska, and the forest-products sector has long been part of this economy. We want to ensure that we continue to contribute to the health of the rural economy in Alaska by investing in the sustainability, health, and productivity of our National Forest."

I would challenge that the forest products sector contributed little to the long term health of our rural economy and instead was a short lived boom that busted when costs become too high, markets collapsed, subsidies ended, and the timber industry failed to modernize and innovate.

The Forest Service reports that the Tongass produces 25% of the West Coast's commercial salmon catch. Fishing and tourism bring in more than \$2 billion to Alaska annually. Logging accounts for less than 1% of jobs in SE Alaska. Timber sales on the Tongass still lose money and are heavily subsidized by U.S. taxpayers. Much of the wood that is harvested on the Tongass is exported without any domestic processing other than cants.

Some say that the Roadless Rule keeps inhibits necessary infrastructure projects from occurring but my understanding that since the roadless rule was enacted, the Forest Service has approved all 58 project requests it has received for roads in Alaska's national forests.

I'd like to finish reading a quote from Mike Dombeck, former Chief of the Forest Service: "Nevertheless, Alaska's congressional delegation and its governor, pushed primarily by logging interests, want an exemption from the roadless rule. But decisions that affect our shared land shouldn't be made at the behest of special interests. They should be made by professional land managers and informed by science - not politics.

The roadless rule has served our national forests well. It affirms a basic truth. Most Americans value their public lands for the clean water, healthy habitat and recreational opportunities they provide. Over a century ago, President Theodore Roosevelt's secretary of Agriculture, James Wilson, wrote that national forests should be managed for "the greatest good for the greatest number for the long run." We urge the president and Secretary Perdue to follow this sage advice and do what is best for the long-term health of the land and future generations of Americans."

Published in the LA Times, Sept 2019

Mike Dombeck, chief of the U.S. Forest Service from 1997 to 2001. Chris Wood president and chief executive of Trout Unlimited.

In closing, I would echo: I urge you to leave the roadless rule intact and unchanged for the long term health of the Tongass and for future generations of Alaskans and every American.

Thank you,

Dan Sullivan

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