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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Maintain protections for Alaska Roadless Rule

Dear Secretary Secretary Perdue,

As a child I devoured tales of the wild, untouched freedom of Alaska. Jack London's "Call of the Wild" and "White Fang" transported me to lands bathed in snow and rich with adventure. Since then it had been a dream of mine to visit the place I'd read so much about, America's Last Frontier. It seemed like a distant dream (it's an expensive thing, flying across the country!), but in 2016, with the help of a college friend, I was able to do just that.

She was from Juneau and was happy to host me if I could make the trip. It took years of saving at my minimum wage job while in college, but I did it. I still remember my tiny plane dipping below the clouds and catching my first glimpse of the little town tucked in the bosom of the mountains. Memories From those chapter books welled up inside of me as I thought "I finally made it!"

Walking around, surrounded by cloud-kissing mountains still dotted with snow even in the middle of June, with Bald Eagles sitting on telephone lines like pigeons do in the lower 48, it felt surreal. It felt like I was walking through a painting. And it only got better. I could go on for hours about my trip, and how much I long to return, but I like to think you already know.

I cannot imagine another person not able to live the wonder and amazement of Alaska like I did. It is with love and the utmost respect for the place of my fondest memories that I come to you concerned about the USDA Forest Service's plan to take away Roadless Rule protections from the Tongass National Forest. I really can't understand why they would consider this, and I'll tell you why:

The Tongass National Forest is the largest national forest in the US. It's also the largest intact temperate rainforest on the planet, and is home to Sitka blacktail deer, brown bears, wolves, mountain goats, and all five species of wild Alaska salmon. It's not only a beautiful preservation of nature, it's also a breadwinner for the state as it attracts both outdoorsmen and tourists alike.

As for timber, let's face it: it's been going downhill for a while. Pulp mills started closing in the 1990s, almost 30 years ago, and now less than 1% of regional employment is in timber. In spite of that, American taxpayers have lost, on average, \$30 million each year in federal subsidies to Tongass timber over the past two decades. That's \$600 million since 1999. Anyone can see that's a bad investment.

Similarly, tourism and commercial fishing, Southeast Alaska's first and second-largest employers representing a quarter of the regions employment, both rely on Tongass National Forest in order to survive; however neither need any money from the government like timber does. Both of them rely on an intact, unroaded, wild Tongass National Forest. In fact, the multi-use areas that would be targeted for clearcut logging under the stripping of Roadless protections are the very same areas to which cruise ships are directed for an immersive experience in the Tongass. Why would you purposefully choose to gut these two prolific industries like that?

It doesn't make sense for the USDA Forest Service to subsidize the destruction of one of America's last great wild places, and therefore damage the healthy, sustainable economies of the region. More than 1.5 million

visitors plan to visit the Tongass National Forest on cruise ships alone in 2020, and they are not coming to see clearcuts.

Please continue protecting Tongass National Forest. Select Alternative 1: No Action for USFS Docket ID: FS-2019-0023 Alaska Roadless Rule #54511 to preserve the Tongass National Forest's wild character so that all may enjoy for generations to come, and to sustain Southeast Alaska's economy.

Sincerely,

Ms Rachael Rockefeller

Mineral, VA 23117-9665

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