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Comments: HC5434

U.S. Forest Service Alaska Roadless Rule Committee:

The "no action" alternative is the action that will protect fishing communities, clean water, and wildlife in the world's largest intact temperate rainforest and a national treasure. The Roadless Rule has conserved key areas of the Tongass from industrial old-growth logging and supported habitat for salmon, trout and steelhead, provided recreational access for anglers, and advanced southeast Alaska's \$2 billion fishing and tourism industries. The proposed repeal of the Roadless Rule on the Tongass is a direct result of political and special interest decision-making aimed at reviving an outdated clear-cut logging industry that threatens key fish and wildlife resources in southeast Alaska.

There are already more than 5,000 miles of permanent logging roads crisscrossing the Tongass that give timber harvesters access to a great deal of timber. Existing roads have created a massive backlog of needed maintenance that adds to the millions taxpayers spend each year subsidizing logging on the Tongass. Many logging roads also don't meet standards set to protect fish, and need updates. It does not make sense to ask taxpayers to fund new roads, especially in a place like the Tongass where new road building is very expensive. And it definitely does not make sense in places within the forest that have been identified as most important for fish and wildlife, like in the Tongass 77.

The Forest Service has surveyed 3,687 road crossing on fish streams and found that a third of them don't allow fish to pass at all their life stages! Roads also result in erosion which can smother eggs and juvenile fish. Moreover, adding roads in key areas on the Forest such as Tongass 77 or TNC/Audubon areas, which are proven to be most important for fish and wildlife, would be especially detrimental for the economy and future of the Forest.

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 more than 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,

Dan Roper

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