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U.S. Forest Service Alaska Roadless Rule Committee:

As with the other few "untouched" places remaining on this planet, this space is valuable for so many reasons, both tangible and not. Most people like to argue the tangibles because that's what we can measure. So I'll bring up the millions of tons of wild caught salmon that Americans and the world have grown to love (who doesn't love sushi or a perfectly grilled salmon fillet?). These fish need protected spawning grounds. Other forms of wildlife can follow the same argument. The argument of a carbon sink is legitimate, but pre-supposes you believe in a scientific near-certainty, climate change. But if you don't believe in it, just as those who didn't believe the sun was the center of the solar system, that's fine. This roadless wilderness has value in the imagination of man. We need places to exist that are still wild. We need places that you can't drive to and take a selfie or thirst trap for Instagram. We need places that can still be explored by individuals. We need places to go get away from all the rest of humanity to regain a perspective that has been lost on so many. The same perspective gained by an unbelievably dark night with clear skies where the solar system and depths of the universe can be seen with the naked eye. These places provide such things.

These places also have inherent value of scarcity. There are few places like this remaining in the world - the value of each truly wild place increases as the previous one is developed and often destroyed.

I get the economics of logging, mining, etc. Raw materials are needed to keep the engine of America and the world running. But we have plenty. If the price of lumber becomes ever so slightly higher because this vast forest is protected from logging, is that really that bad? Maybe we should be more resourceful by using less and making more out of what we already have. Myopic economic policy (ie.re-election) often drives these moves. Which side of history do we want to be on?

Just my two cents as a 34 yo guy from the Appalachian mountains who has seen and appreciated a great deal of the natural beauty of the United States and hopes to see much much more.

The Roadless Rule has been instrumental in conserving the Tongass National Forest and in supporting its 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. 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,

Eric Sollenberger

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