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Comments: The Forest Service announced plans today for a massive timber sale that would destroy more than 5,100 acres of critical old-growth habitat in the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska.

Shame on the Forest Service for having the gall to continue to burden and overwhelm Southeast Alaskans with yet another needless and money-losing timber sale when we are in the midst of a pandemic and a controversial Alaska Roadless Rulemaking process. As Alaskans await Secretary Perdue's decision on the Roadless Rule, they will yet again have to advocate for the protection of critical old-growth habitat in their backyards. We don't know how many times we need to say it: Timber only contributes 1% to Southeast Alaska's economy, while the fishing and tourism industries contribute 26%. Stop making Southeast Alaskans' lives more difficult by threatening our true economic drivers.

The U.S. Forest Service's draft environmental impact statement for the South Revilla timber sale proposes chain-sawing 5,115 acres of old-growth forest near Ketchikan. It also would allow bulldozing or rebuilding more than 80 miles of damaging logging roads, costing taxpayers \$11 million.

This assault on America's largest rainforest will destroy important habitat for salmon, bears and wolves, and worsen the climate crisis. Clearcutting the Tongass and wiping out enormous carbon stores is like cutting off part of the planet's oxygen supply. It's mind-boggling that the Trump administration wants to decimate this spectacular old-growth forest and erase one of the solutions to averting catastrophic climate change.

This project and the proposed elimination of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule on the Tongass are part of the Trump administration's relentless efforts to clearcut large swaths of remaining old-growth across the national forest, consistent with its policy of increasing logging nationwide.

As forests across the Americas burn, the last thing we need to do is destroy old-growth forests in the Tongass Rainforest, one of the United States' best defenses against furthering the climate crisis. Existing within the territories of the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples, the Tongass is a vital ecosystem necessary to the traditional life-ways of local Indigenous communities. Destroying critical old growth in the Tongass not only devastates wildlife habitat and harms the climate but disregards the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and further perpetuates modern genocidal policies. We must stand together for our forests, communities and the climate.

The roughly 17 million-acre Tongass is the largest national forest in the United States. Since time immemorial it has been the traditional homelands of the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples. Alaska Natives rely on the area

for culture, traditional hunting, fishing and livelihoods. People from around the world visit the Tongass for world-class recreation, sport and commercial fishing.

It was just over two months ago that a federal judge threw out the largest logging project we've seen in decades because the Forest Service failed to provide communities with basic information like where it intended to log. Nevertheless, the agency is back again with twin proposals for timber sales targeting irreplaceable old-growth trees in the same cherished national forest. Urgent action is needed to address the climate crisis, and that includes efforts to preserve the magnificent trees that absorb carbon. Unfortunately, these destructive logging plans will only make the problem worse.

The Tongass is the largest intact temperate rainforest left on Earth and provides vital habitat for eagles, bears, wolves, salmon and countless other species. It is a globally recognized carbon sink and helps to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change, storing approximately 8% of the total carbon stored in all national forests.

Alaska Rainforest Defenders asked, plain and simple in their September 2018 scoping comments on the South Revilla project, that the Forest Service drop the timber part of the project. As with their recently successful lawsuit against the timber component of the POWLLA project, environmentalists have no complaints over the non-timber components of this project. In the DEIS, all of the alternatives for the project are estimated to have a timber sale value appraised at a loss to taxpayers, which means that legally a timber sale could not be offered. Continuing to a final EIS would be gambling with millions of dollars of Forest Service planning effort at taxpayer expense.

Logging the Tongass has been tremendously costly for taxpayers. A new report estimates that timber sales from the forest have cost taxpayers

\$1.7 billion over four decades.

Despite a commitment to move away from unsustainable old-growth timber sales, the U.S. Forest Service continues to offer these sales in the

Tongass National Forest. More clearcutting will damage the real drivers of southeast Alaska's economy: fish, wildlife and tourism. Defenders won't stand by and watch as the administration despoils irreplaceable wildlife habitat and threatens sustainable jobs and livelihoods in southeast Alaska.