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Comments:

As an American citizen who cherishes our nation's wild places, I strongly urge you not to pander to the timber industry by rejecting opening up the Tongass National Forest to destructive logging.

The 17 million acre Tongass National Forest is protected by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, to ensure damaging activities are kept out of this special place. However, certain misguided members of Congress are seeking to convince the USDA to strip vital Roadless Rule protections and mar the natural beauty of the irreplaceable Tongass by expanding roadless areas to make way for logging in Southeast Alaska.

I fiercely oppose any plans to roll back the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) in Alaska or elsewhere, especially efforts to decrease or remove protections from roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest, a unique wild place where one can find some of the last existing old-growth temperate rainforest in the world. Home to centuries-old trees and where rivers flow through thousands of islands. The value of the Tongass not only to the economic and ecological health of Southeast Alaska but for its essential role in providing fish and wildlife habitat and access to clean drinking water is inestimable.

The Roadless Rule is one of the wisest and most overwhelmingly supported land management policies the Federal Government has ever adopted, preserving some of America's best fish and wildlife habitat as well as saving countless millions of taxpayer dollars from subsidizing floundering timber sales and road construction.

The value of the Roadless Rule in preventing environmentally damaging and economically wasteful road-building and logging in the Tongass cannot be dismissed and allowing such destructive activities in this pristine place would threaten some of the last, best habitat for treasured species such as endangered salmon, grizzly bear and moose, not to mention logging costs vastly exceed timber revenues and require indefensible taxpayer subsidies.

Moreover, proposing to eliminate protections for Alaska's roadless areas by making an exception for the Tongass would also invite future attacks on roadless areas, rivers, fish and wildlife across the nation, threatening their ability to combat climate change, clean our air and contribute to the survival of myriad species.

The world's original forests are rapidly vanishing with mere fragments remaining. In fact, our own nation is fast losing its unique wild places to the greed of special interests and their land grab agendas and if this shameless trend continues we will have nothing to pass on to future generations. This sell-off of our public lands to the highest bidder **MUST STOP NOW!**

There is still time to protect and preserve the Tongass where vast tracts of primeval forests and all the original wildlife still exist. But time is running out and if we do not put an end to large-scale logging in our fast disappearing old-growth forests, this priceless legacy will be lost.

Therefore, I call on the Forest Service to put the public interest above timber industry profits by keeping the federal Roadless Rule intact and maintaining current protections for national forests in Alaska. To do otherwise would be a step away from sustainable development and would run counter to the interests of Alaskans and taxpayers.

Thank you for your serious consideration of my comments on this most urgent issue that affects ALL Americans.