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Roadless Rule Comments by David Beebe

The Roadless Rule is an essential conservation component of what little remains of the internationally significant coastal temperate rainforests of the world -- a significant portion of which, is owned by all Americans and found in Southeast Alaska.

The agency which manages this "crown jewel of the national forest system" is not only in a full blown state of corporate capture but Region 10 exemplifies just how openly corrupted such a state of capture can be. This was revealed two years ago by the Washington Office Activity Review team investigating the histories of two large timber sales. The Tonka Timber Sale of the Petersburg District and the Big Thorne Timber Sale Project of the Thorne Bay Ranger District. Each were found to be coincidentally failing to properly administrate these sales with the resulting losses of nearly 4million dollars in revenues to the communities and our region.

The USFS remains silent on these matters which serves to confirm our worst fears of demonstrable agency corruption and ongoing coverup. Until an independent forensic audit takes place and the line officer and staff perpetrators held accountable, we can only assume the worst. Until this matter is addressed, this agency has no legitimacy to actually function in the best interests of the public.

Large portions of Southeast (including entire islands) have been permanently impaired in the wake of a half century of agency enabled conversion to even aged tree plantations. Thousands of miles of logging roads and over a million acres of the highest biological value old growth in Southeast demonstrate what "intensively managed," means. These colonial tree plantations are for the purposes of raw log export -- primarily, to China.

That several thousands of miles of logging roads already exist in the region is testament to the establishment of the Rule. The agency has admitted a long-recognized accounting backlog of over a billion dollars of deferred maintenance on the existing federal logging road system of Region 10. These disregarded responsibilities to maintain the existing log road system constitute a breach of the public trust and stem from a captured agency with a long-documented track record of systemic and systematic maladministration in failing to comply with several environmental and administrative laws.

Given the USFS continues to disregard its responsibilities to maintain the existing road systems, elimination of the Rule guarantees an even greater scale of disregard and degradation. The consequent damage to anadromous stream systems and entire watersheds is as follows: documented "red pipes"(failed culverts) precluding anadromous and non commercial fish species passage; allowing large scale siltation of countless miles of salmon spawning habitat wreaking perpetual ecological havoc on countless watersheds. This occurs at a time in which wild salmon populations such as king and pink salmon are absent or obviously struggling to maintain current populations.

The Roadless Rule has a distinguished history of enjoying a profound level of public support on international, national, state, regional, and local levels. USFS informational meetings were recently conducted in Southeast discussing elimination of the Roadless Rule. News accounts covering these meetings revealed almost unanimous support for maintaining the Roadless Rule by residents of the communities which will bear the greatest impacts should the Rule be eliminated.

The Roadless Rule has a profound level of historical scientific support and validation of its crucial importance from hundreds of scientists -- all urging maintaining the Rule as it exists in Southeast Alaska and across the entire national forest system of the United States.

The scientific concerns for maintaining the Rule cite a full spectrum plethora of the intrinsic values of these old growth forest remnants in Southeast which function as providers of essential, and irreplaceable ecosystem services. These functions utterly pale in comparison to the temporary, one time, commodity values obtained in the international marketplace.

That the Rule is under attack is a direct result of the present state of the full spectrum corporate capture of America. This is enabled by the corporatization of Native Tribal and Regional entities and imposed by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act; the well-documented corporate capture of the for profit and nonprofit national news media; the corporate capture of the national electoral process; and finally, the corporate capture of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of the United States Forest Service are driving the elimination of the Roadless Rule.

Keep the Roadless Rule on the Tongass. Suspend all agency actions until it can be demonstrated sufficient oversight and accountability have been fully restored.

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