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Comments:

This comment is in regard to the potential removal of the 'Roadless Rule' pertaining to the Tongass National Forest; in order to make way for logging. The Tongass Forest is made up of 9.2 millions acres. Trees are fundamental in oxygen production, oxygen that almost every living thing on earth requires to remain alive. One tree alone annually produces 260 pounds of oxygen, which is enough to supply a family of four. There is on average around 300 trees within an acre, resulting in 78,000 pounds of oxygen per year. This value is enough to sustain 1,200 people. With the Tongass containing 9.2 million acres - this would mean that going through with the proposed logging operations could endanger the production of 7,973,333 pounds of pure oxygen; affecting 122,667 people every year. Trees not only provide oxygen, they are homes. 8 of every 10 species found on land reside in forests. There are 1,000 vertebrate species that inhabit Alaska; meaning that removing protective rulings against roads and logging could negatively affect 800 of those species. The 'Roadless Rule' protections in place not only secure the Tongass National forest, but a total of 58 million acres of forest in a total of 39 different states. Logging is a large factor in deforestation. Based on the actions of the presidential administration in regards to conservation thus far; there is a high likelihood that forest management will be very poorly executed. Furthermore, along with the danger of deforestation due to logging; roads pose their own risks. In addition to causing fragmentation to a habitat - constructing roads alter the habitat. When a road is placed through a forest, it results in an edge habitat along the roads. Altering the habitat can impact animals even when direct mortality (such as being struck by machinery or logging vehicles) is not the result. Roads change the natural behaviors of animals, and can facilitate the spread of invasive organisms. Truck emissions are a obvious factor when weighing out pros and cons of logging operations, yet hazardous waste and materials must also be taken into account. Logging machinery and vehicles contain mechanical fluids, fuel, and oil. When these vehicles are damaged or become trapped in the mud - these hazardous fluids can leak into the surrounding environment. Bulldozers, graders, and dump trucks will also need to be brought in to move around dirt and flatten surfaces just for the construction of the roads themselves. Tribal governments also oppose the removal of 'Roadless Rules', and these governments are trusting us with the well-being of their native land. Local officials argue that introducing logging to the forest will end the 'stifling' of the local economy, yet they fail to acknowledge that the word 'stifling' will be more-so appropriate as a description of our living conditions as we continue to make choices that contribute to climate change and the warming of the earth. The hits taken to wildlife and tourism due to the roads and logging will negatively affect the local economy. Jobs provided by the logging operation will do little to counteract this. In conclusion, even when lands have been logged and then turned into pasture or areas of agriculture; the initial rise in prosperity is still short lived. In the years that followed deforestation; development levels declined until communities were no better off then they were before they made the decision that destroyed their forest. These are the reasons why I believe the decision to remove the 'Roadless Rule' to any extent is unduly detrimental.

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