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Comments:

The activities that will result from opening the Tongass National Forest are unsustainable and will leave unrecoverable destruction behind. The economic gains are short term, while the economic damage to the area will be forever, as will the biological and ecosystem damage. I know this as a retired biology teacher and ecologist. The Tongass is part of our legacy and the heritage we leave for generations to come. Please, please do not rescind the Roadless Rule in whole or in part. Do not open the Tongass National Forest to logging or, potentially, mining.

President Trump's efforts to create an Alaska-specific 'Roadless' Rule, which aims to allow for roads, often built at the taxpayers' expense and which support industrial-scale old-growth logging, would be a huge step backwards for the Tongass National Forest, where the billion-dollar industries of fisheries and tourism rely on an intact temperate rainforest, and the long transition from unsustainable clear-cut logging practices of the past is nearly complete.

The Tongass Forest is unique. It is the largest temperate rainforest in the world, and it sequesters more carbon than any other forest on Earth, an amazing statistic in our ever-warming world.

As Whit Fosburgh, president and CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership has said: 'We need a lasting solution for Alaska roadless areas that would conserve valuable fish and wildlife habitat and provide certainty for local communities that depend on the balanced use of these public resources, yet because of direct intervention from the White House, we are facing conservation setbacks within the Tongass that will affect more than half of the forest.'

He continued, 'Roadless areas within the Tongass National Forest, which have long been managed under the direction of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, provide vital habitat for salmon and Sitka blacktail deer. They also provide outstanding opportunities for hunting and fishing that support a strong tourism economy and are important for subsistence.'

'In January 2018, the state of Alaska petitioned the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow for the development of a state-specific roadless rule. Many hunting and fishing groups and businesses demonstrated a willingness to collaborate and support such a rule if a durable, good-faith compromise could be reached. One such solution was within the range of proposed options recommended by the Citizens Advisory Committee chartered by Governor Walker and is the path supported by a strong majority of Alaskans.'

'Yet the possibility of a broadly supported, long-term solution that is good for Alaska was all but eliminated this past summer when the White House intervened after an off-the-record meeting with Governor Dunleavy, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Forest Service were directed to propose the most extreme option.'

'If implemented, today's proposal would lead only to more conflict over the future of these lands, harming local communities and everyone's interests over the long haul. We encourage the administration to right this ship,

and we ask for leadership from the Alaska congressional delegation to shape a long-lasting outcome for the Tongass that brings people together.'

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