

Community Association of Elfin Cove
Resolution 19-01
A RESOLUTION BY THE COMMUNITY OF ELFIN COVE COMMENTING ON THE
PROPOSED ALASKA ROADLESS RULE

WHEREAS, the community of Elfin Cove is a unique community that prospers by and through the protection of its natural resources; and,

WHEREAS, the sustainability of the future of the Elfin Cove economy and the lifestyles of our citizens depend on nurturing and sustaining the natural resources supported by our forests, rivers, and ocean, both locally and regionally in Southeast Alaska; and,

WHEREAS, many Elfin Cove residents obtain their livelihoods from economic activities including tourism, sport fishing lodges, and commercial fishing, which are highly dependent on a pristine and productive natural setting; and,

WHEREAS, salmon populations are facing increased challenges from changing ocean conditions, climate change, ocean acidification, rising water temperatures in streams, and ocean warming events in the Pacific Ocean, and freshwater habitat development in the contiguous United States; and,

WHEREAS, Southeast Alaska is the most visited region in Alaska, with two thirds of all visitors to the State coming to this region and therefore acting as a significant contribution; and,

WHEREAS, the Roadless Rule was first adopted in 2001 to protect 58 million acres of our nation's most essential and intact roadless areas in the National Forest system; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska has been against the inclusion of the Tongass in the Roadless Rule since it was promulgated in 2001, despite support for the rule from a wide variety of constituents living in Southeast Alaska; and,

WHEREAS, during the scoping process for an Alaska Specific Roadless Rule in 2018, communities throughout Southeast Alaska spoke in support of the 2001 Roadless Rule, as well as the heavy majority of the official scoping comments received strongly supported maintaining the 2001 Roadless Rule on the Tongass; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska invested time, staff, and money to convene a stakeholder-led Citizen Advisory Committee in 2018 that provided recommendations and perspectives from different interest groups in Southeast Alaska on what a workable compromise for an Alaska Roadless Rule could look like; and,

WHEREAS, the pursuit of a full exemption from the 2001 Roadless Rule is highly divisive among local populations and stakeholders and increased conflict on the Tongass will tarnish the reputation of the region nationwide, with negative impacts for the tourism industry; and,

WHEREAS, roadless areas on the Tongass are essential to Southeast Alaska's way of life and represent some of the most spectacular and unique roadless areas anywhere in the National Forest System and support hunting, fishing, customary and traditional uses, unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities, and opportunities for businesses; and,

WHEREAS, the amount of carbon stored in the intact old growth forests and soils of the Tongass National Forest represent one of the highest carbon stores in the world, and the conservation of intact roadless areas and old growth forests on the Tongass are essential for maintaining local and national climate resilience and slowing down climate change throughout the world; and,

WHEREAS, the Tongass provides a wide range of ecosystem services beyond carbon sequestration to residents and visitors alike on a 24/7 basis naturally and at no cost to the taxpayer, and;

WHEREAS, increased logging of old growth forests in the existing roadless areas of the Tongass seriously impact the ability of the forest to provide these vital ecosystem services, such as clean water, clean air, stream temperature regulation, and healthy salmon and wildlife habitat; and,

WHEREAS, increased logging of old growth forests in existing roadless areas would incur a significant cost to taxpayers, as new reports estimate that the subsidization of industrial-scale logging on the Tongass has cost taxpayers over \$600 million over the past twenty years; and,

WHEREAS, according to the State of Alaska's own economic experts and commissioned reports, Tongass timber is uncompetitive due to fundamental, permanent changes that have occurred in global markets, high labor costs, distance from markets, and the availability of less-expensive substitutes; and,

WHEREAS, the sport fishing, commercial fishing, and visitor industries that provide the economic backbone of Southeast Alaska depend on pristine, scenic vistas and healthy, productive watersheds; and,

WHEREAS, opening up roadless areas for future development industrial-scale logging will actively work against the Tongass Transition and the 2016 Tongass Land Management Plan Amendment, which was created after years of collaborative work between a diverse group of stakeholders;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that given long-lasting, fiscally irresponsible, and environmentally damaging impacts of any reduction in current Roadless Rule protections on the Tongass, the community of Elfin Cove strongly supports lasting protection for all inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest as provided for in the 2001 Roadless Rule.

There should be no exemption from the Roadless Rule for Alaska and there should be no Alaska-specific roadless rule; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the economic livelihoods of Elfin Cove residents would be irreparably harmed by the effects of a full exemption from the Roadless Rule on the Tongass, which would lead to increased climate change, increased threats to fish habitat, and development occurring in pristine natural areas that showcase the tourism potential and natural beauty of the Tongass National Forest; and,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the community of Elfin Cove encourages the USFS to invest in programs, workforce development, and employment opportunities for Southeast Alaskan residents to restore the health and productivity of the Tongass National Forest's degraded watersheds and streams, as a means of supporting vital ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, small-scale timber production, fish and wildlife populations, natural vistas, visitor amenities, subsistence, hydrological resources, and more.

The Community of Elfin Cove submits the attached letter with expanded and specific comments for our local area.

Passed and Approved by the Community of Elfin Cove this 30th of October, 2019.

Wayne Stauffer (electronically signed)

Community of Elfin Cove, Chairman
