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OKANOGAN

HIGHLANDS











**GREENWAY** 





October 26, 2020

Sonny Perdue Secretary of Agriculture U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Ave., S.W. Washington, DC 20250

Vicki Christiansen Chief of Forest Service U.S. Forest Service 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250

Re: Proposed Exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule

Dear Secretary Perdue and Chief Christiansen:

The undersigned 72 conservation, recreation and wildlife organizations, local business leaders, and elected officials from Washington State, are writing to express our disappointment with the U.S. Forest Service's proposed Alaska Roadless Rule and associated Final Environmental Impact Statement. The proposed management plan would open vast tracts of America's remaining ancient forest to logging and road building.

The Tongass is the world's largest remaining intact coastal temperate rainforest and stores more climate-disrupting pollution in its old growth forests and rich soils than any other national forest in the United States – earning its name, "America's Climate Forest." As much as 12% of the nation's stored carbon in National Forests is stored within the Tongass National Forest. Logging and roadbuilding release the stored carbon into the atmosphere at a time when we need to be cutting our emissions drastically to prevent full blown climate chaos.

Roadless area protections sustain southeast Alaska's ancient forests including thousand-year old Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and western red cedar. Tribal communities currently rely on the Tongass for traditional uses that date back thousands of years and support communities' essential food security. The Tongass is also home to endemic species including brown bears, wolves, eagles, black-tailed deer, and world-class salmon habitat that support commercial and recreational fisheries. It is also home to incredible outdoor recreation opportunities like mountaineering and sea kayaking.

The Tongass National Forest is federal land owned by all Americans and its management matters beyond just Alaska. Here in Washington State, more than most areas, we have a direct connection to Southeast Alaska in many ways. The Tongass National Forest is approximately 500 miles from the northern border of Washington State, the same distance as Boise, ID. Washington is the closest state to Alaska and shares close business, economic and cultural connections. Seattle is the home port for numerous cruise ships heading north through the Alaska Panhandle to Glacier Bay National Park, immediately adjacent to threatened forest roadless areas.

We share a rich cultural connection to salmon inspired by our local Tribes and natural history similar to our northern Alaska neighbors. The Tongass National Forest produces on average 28% of Alaska's annual commercial salmon catch, and 25% of the entire west coast annual harvest. A significant number of commercial fishing permits held in Southeast and offshore waters in Alaska have their home port in Washington State in places like Seattle's Fisherman's Terminal or Westport on the Olympic coast.

In an August 2019, letter to your office, Southeast Alaska fishermen and fisherwomen urged the Forest Service to select an alternative that broadly protects fish habitat, continues the phase-out of industrial scale old growth clear-cutting, and prioritizes the restoration of degraded watersheds and streams.

Recently, nine tribal governments filed an APA petition to commence a rulemaking process, in collaboration with the Tribes of Southeast Alaska, to create a Traditional Homelands Conservation Rule that protects the traditional and customary uses and areas of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples in the Tongass National Forest.

Instead, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service are proposing a complete lifting of the roadless rule that would result in renewed large-scale logging and adverse impacts to Indigenous peoples as well as negative impacts to the tourism and seafood industries of Southeast Alaska.

Please stop the rollback of the important 2001 National Roadless Rule in Alaska and protect the Tongass National Forest!

Sincerely,

**Christine Rolfes** 

Senator

Washington State Senate (DIst 23)

Jamie Pedersen

Senator

Washington State Senate (DIst 43)

Senator Liz Lovelett

Senator

Washington State Senate (DIst 40)

Alex Ramel

Representative

Washington State Senate (DIst 40)

Satpal S Sidhu County Executive Whatcom County

Todd Donovan Council member Whatcom County Claudia Balducci Councilmember King County Council

Jeanne Kohl-Welles Councilmember King County Council

Vanessa Kritzer Councilmember Redmond City Council

Tom Uniack
Executive Director
Washington Wild

**Betsy Robblee** 

Conservation & Advocacy Director

The Mountaineers

Levi Wyatt

Corporate Social Responsibility Coordinator

Yakima Chief Hops

Peter Bahls
Executive Director

Northwest Watershed Institute

Sarah Shaffer Executive Director

Wenatchee Outdoors (Wenatchee)

Judy Hallisey President

Kittitas Audubon Society

**Rob Smith** 

Northwest Regional Director

**National Parks Conservation Association** 

Donna Osseward

President

Olympic Parks Associates

Marlies Wierenga

Pacific Northwest Conservation Director

WildEarth Guardians

Annalise Wille Co-founder

Women for Wild Lands

Greg Friedrichs
Co-owner & Operator
F/V Arminta (Bellingham)

Norm Johnson

Mayor

Town of Index

**Daniel Hammill** 

Councilmember (Ward 3)
Bellingham City Council

Susan Jane M. Brown

**Staff Attorney** 

Western Environmental Law Center

Raymond Kwan & Barry Chan

Owners

Lucky Envelope Brewing

Nina Bell, J.D. Executive Director

Northwest Environmental Advocates

Joe Sambataro

National Access Director & Northwest Regional Director

Access Fund

Jack Guinn Owner

Hellbent Brewing Company

Pamela Brulotte

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Icicle Brewing Company (Leavenworth)

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Inland Northwest Wildlife Council

Mike Petersen Executive Director The Lands Council

Lindsay Frickle Executive Director Issaquah Alps Trails Club

Janet Strong President

Grays Harbor Audubon Society

Sam Israel

Public Lands Coordinator Methow Valley Citizens Council

Paul Fish President

Mountain Gear, Inc (Spokane)

**Amy Grondin** 

Co-owner & Operator

Duna Fisheries, LLC (Port Townsend)

Stephen Feldman Board Member

Rainier Audubon Society

Mark Sherwood Executive Director Native Fish Society

Megan Birzell

Washington State Director The Wilderness Society

Mike Runion President

7 Seas Brewing (Tacoma)

Inessa Pearce President SVENA

Ann Darlington President BOD

Friends of Heybrook Ridge

Molly Whitney Executive Director

Cascade Forest Conservancy

Art Wolfe

**Conservation Photographer** 

Art Wolfe, Inc.

**Dave Werntz** 

Science and Conservation Director

**Conservation Northwest** 

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Lance Reif Owner

Wildwater River Guides (Leavenworth)

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North Cascades Conservation Council

John McGlenn President

Washington Wildlife Federation

James Moschella

Policy and Planning Manager Washington Trails Association

Allen Gibbs
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Pilchuck Audubon Society

Lara Zahaba

Co-Owner | Marketing & Communications

**Stoup Brewing** 

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Timothy Coleman Executive Director

**Kettle Range Conservation Group** 

Zac Olson Manager

Dru Bru (Snoqualmie Pass)

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**Owners** 

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Beaux Bowman Co-Owner

Black Raven Brewing Company

Lee First Waterkeeper

Twin Harbors Waterkeeper

Mike Clancy

Conservation Chairman

Washington State Council Fly Fishers International

Andree Hurley Executive Director Washington Water Trails

Jack Lamb CEO // Owner

Aslan Brewing Co. (Bellingham)

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North Central Washington Audubon

Mark Boyar President

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Sarah Kliegman co-Executive Director Okanogan Highlands Alliance

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Timothy Manns Conservation Chair Skagit Audubon Society

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Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

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Owner

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