



December 16, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Ms. Vicki Christiansen
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue and Ms. Christiansen,

We are outfitters and guides, tour operators, gear manufacturers and retailers, sportsmen organizations, and conservation groups that value and depend on the Tongass National Forest. We employ hundreds of southeast Alaskans, have tens-of-thousands of Alaskan supporters, and cater to customers that travel to the Tongass for its world-class fish and wildlife, recreation values, subsistence resources, and for the economic opportunities roadless areas provide. The proposed Alaska Roadless Rule and decisions about how to manage the Tongass have a direct and profound impact on us, our customers, and our members.

The proposed Alaska Roadless Rule, which would fully exempt the Tongass, is a huge leap backward and risks undoing much of the progress gained through hard compromise and collaboration in recent years. It turns its back to the region's economic strengths, fishing, tourism and outdoor recreation, which now account for 26% of regional employment and \$2 billion to the local economy, and short changes the values that make the Tongass so unique and valuable to local residents and visitors alike. Exempting the Tongass from the Roadless Rule unnecessarily courts conflict and empowers the most extreme voices while obstructing more productive and mutually beneficial pathways to the future. The Forest Service should abandon its proposed exemption and, instead, maintain protections for roadless areas within the Tongass.

Many of us work directly with the Forest Service, either through special use permits to operate on the Tongass, as project partners, or as visitors, hunters, anglers, and subsistence users. Our ability to fulfill our missions and meet the needs of our customers, and the Forest Service's ability to meet the needs of the public, are directly tied to one another. Either we succeed as stewards of our public lands together with the Forest Service, or we standby as turmoil over management decisions grows and forest values are degraded.

Many of the undersigned parties have long supported efforts by the Forest Service to transition the Tongass from unsustainable old-growth logging to management focused on fish and wildlife, tourism and recreation, and a sustainable young-growth forest products industry. We cheered the original transition announcement in 2010, worked tirelessly in support of the 2016 amendment to the Tongass Land Management Plan, and have supported its implementation since. Although compromise can be difficult, the need to move beyond the persistent conflict that has clouded the Tongass for decades is paramount.

Roadless areas on the Tongass are some of the best and most valuable lands on the forest. Many of the most important salmon streams are in roadless areas. Increasingly scarce winter deer range and prime bear habitat is often found in low elevation roadless areas. Roadless areas offer the right combination of beautiful scenery, wild landscapes, fish and wildlife, and access that our growing tourism and recreation industry demands. The Roadless Rule's protections for these unique values give our businesses and organizations a level of certainty upon which we base our business investments and hiring decisions.

The Tongass is a paradise—not just for Alaskans, but for all Americans. Roadless areas in the Tongass contain much of the region's most productive wildlife habitat, quality salmon habitat and clean water, and recreation opportunity. Any durable and long-lasting solution to the persistent land-management challenges on the Tongass must be based on collaboration and care for the important fish, wildlife, recreation, subsistence and scenic values that make the Tongass unique among our public lands. The proposed Alaska Roadless Rule fails on this measure. We encourage the Forest Service to listen to the overwhelming weight of public comment, the needs of businesses and organizations like ours, and to not exempt the Tongass from the Roadless Rule.

Sincerely,

Above and Beyond Alaska
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Juneau, AK

Hatch Outdoors Inc
Andrew Dickinson, General Manager
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Alaska Charter Service
Travis Peterson, Owner
Sitka, AK

Alaska Fly Fishing Goods
Brad Elfers, Owner
Juneau, AK

Alaska Fly Out Travel
Cory Luoma, Owner
Columbia Falls, MT

Alaska Kenai Fishing For Fun
Brad Kirr, Owner & Guide
Soldotna, AK

Allen Fly Fishing
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American Fly Fishing Trade Association
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Brett Fitzgerald, CEO
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August Island Pictures
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Bear Creek Outfitters
Arne Johnson, Owner
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Cascadia Guide, Inc
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Lakeview Outfitters
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Mossy's Fly Shop
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Pioneer Studios
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Pybus Point Lodge
Scott Jorgenson, Owner
Pybus Bay, AK

Quality Deer Management Association
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Chrome Chasers
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Wrangell, AK

Chugach Backcountry Fishing
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Coastal Alaska Adventures
Keegan McCarthy, Owner
Douglas, AK

Coastal Alaska Safaris
Chad Poppe, Owner
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Chota Outdoor Gear
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Expedition Broker
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Raging River Sales
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Rajeff Sports / ECHO Flyfishing
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Red’s Fly Shop
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The Flyfish Journal
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The Fly Fishing Show
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Fly Water Travel
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Frontiers International Travel
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Sitka Fish Outfitters
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Harper Studios
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