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U.S. Forest Service moving forward with process to remove Alaska national forests from roadless rule

Washington – Today, [the U.S. Forest Service placed a notice in the federal register](#) announcing it is initiating an environmental impact statement (EIS) and public rulemaking process to develop an Alaska state-specific roadless rule. This rule would identify portions of Alaska national forests to remove from 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule protections, which protects more than 58 million acres of roadless national forests and is the result of one of the most extensive public processes in U.S. history – more than 1.6 million people submitted comments on the rule, 95% of which supported protections.

Undoing roadless protections in Alaska’s national forests simply makes no sense. Timber sales in Southeast Alaska are not economically viable without large public subsidies, and further depleting Tongass old-growth threatens billion-dollar, sustainable industries like tourism and fishing that provide thousands of jobs and continue to grow.

Statement by Andy Moderow, Alaska Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“The Walker administration is stuck in the past as it pushes to remove the Tongass from roadless protections. Are we really willing to risk a sustainable future for Southeast Alaska so that the heavily subsidized old-growth timber industry can export more raw timber and local jobs overseas?”

Tongass old-growth provides the foundation for strong fisheries, tourism, recreation, the Alaskan way of life. The roadless rule protects old-growth while providing for community access, hydropower projects, utility connectors and other economic development projects when they serve a legitimate public interest. Initiating this process in the name of ‘meaningfully addressing local economic and development concerns’ is just pretext for continuing to prop up an old-growth timber industry that can’t survive on its own. If we’re willing to think long term, keeping the roadless rule in place will continue to help strengthen Southeast Alaska’s economy while maintaining the health of our forests and the communities and wildlife that depend on them.”

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