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Juneau, Alaska/Áak'w K'wáan Territory

Media Contacts: See below

U.S. Forest Service restores critical protections to Tongass National Forest
The National Roadless Rule was rolled back for America's last great rainforest by the Trump administration, threatening millions of acres of undeveloped national forest lands

JUNEAU (Áak'w K'wáan Territory) — In a win for Southeast Alaska communities, wildlife, and the climate, the U.S. Forest Service reinstated Roadless Rule protections across the Tongass rainforest in Southeast Alaska. Tribal leaders, recreational small-business owners, commercial fishing operators, and conservationists cheered the agency's restoration of this critical safeguard. The move restores federal protection — from industrial logging and damaging road-building — to just over 9 million undeveloped acres in America's largest national forest.

The 17 million-acre Tongass National Forest, situated in the southeast corner of Alaska, is a temperate rainforest that draws visitors from around the globe and provides habitat for an abundance of wildlife including grizzly bears, bald eagles, and wolves. It is the ancestral homeland of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. The Tongass also serves as the country's largest forest carbon sink, making its protection critical for U.S. efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and to set a global example.

The following statements were issued in response to today's news.

President Joel Jackson, Organized Village of Kake:

"The Tongass Roadless Rule is important to everyone. The old-growth timber is a carbon sink, one of the best in the world. It's important to OUR WAY OF LIFE — the streams, salmon, deer, and all the forest animals and plants."

Naawéiyaa Tagaban, Environmental Justice Strategy Lead, Native Movement:

"The restoration of National Roadless Rule protections for the Tongass National Forest is a great first step in honoring the voices of the many Tribal Governments and Tribal Citizens who spoke out in favor of Roadless Rule protections for the Tongass. We are grateful to the Biden administration for taking this first step toward long-term protections for the Tongass. We hope that going forward true long-term protections will be established that do not rely on a rule which can be changed at the whim of a presidential administration. The administration must look to Tribal Sovereignty and Indigenous stewardship as the true long-term solution for protections in the Tongass. Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people have lived in and managed the Tongass national forest for generations, true protections will look like the restoration of lands into Indigenous ownership."

Wanda Culp, Tongass Coordinator, Women's Earth and Climate Action Network:

"The Tongass Forest is homeland to countless indigenous family species, intertwined as strong and delicate as a spider's circular web. The Tongass National Forest in Alaska is a national treasure, stored wealth, as is each of America's Public Forests. They should always be handled as the treasures they are — cherished and saved to enable our future generations to breathe fresh air. To BREATHE FREELY!"

