



Audubon Armchair Activist

Audubon's Letter of the Month Club

August 2003

NATIONAL FORESTS IN JEOPARDY!

The Bush Administration seeks to remove critical protections for two national rainforests - and the public has only until August 14th to say no!

Tell the Bush Administration you oppose their plans to exempt the Tongass and Chugach National Forests in Alaska from the Roadless Rule! Click the TAKE ACTION NOW key to send your message to the U.S. Forest Service today!

On July 15, the Bush Administration, through the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), released its proposed changes to the Roadless Rule - changes that could very well spell disaster for two of America's last remaining rainforests! The proposed change: remove roadless area protections in America's two biggest National Forests — Tongass and Chugach National Forests, both located in Alaska. Fortunately, USFS cannot implement the change without allowing the general public an opportunity to weigh-in on the proposed change, which they accomplish through a public comment period. And the public comment period on these changes closes on August 14th!

Three years ago, Audubon and our partners in the conservation community coordinated the submission of over one million comments to the U.S. Forest Service in support of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule—the overwhelmingly popular, publicly mandated policy that protects 58.5 million acres of America's pristine, roadless forests, while continuing to allow public access and opportunities for recreational activities including birdwatching, fishing, hiking, hunting and camping. It also protects critical habitat for birds, fish and wildlife, including threatened or endangered species, and provide clean drinking water for 60 million Americans.

Nine million of those 58.5 acres lay in the Tongass National Forest, with another 5 million in the Chugach. But since the Rule's implementation in 2001, it's been under attack. And despite a recent court ruling, the challenges don't end. And this one is perhaps the toughest challenge yet, as the USFS has not only set two separate comment periods here - one for the Tongass, and another for the Chugach, but is only allowing the general public 30 days to respond!

There is no scientific basis to exclude the Tongass or Chugach national forests from the Forest Service's national roadless rule. It's simply a boon to the politically powerful special interests that look to open these protected areas for business! The Tongass is the largest forest in the U.S., and it includes the largest amount of old growth temperate rainforest on the planet. It provides habitat for the highest density Bald Eagle population in the world, and also supports healthy populations of all five species of anadromous salmon, black and grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines, deer, mountain goats, goshawks, marbled murrelets, and other forest birds. New logging and road building in the remaining roadless areas of the Tongass will jeopardize these bird and wildlife populations and irreversibly compromise the ecosystem integrity of America's largest national forest.

The Chugach is the second largest forest in the U.S. - and at 98% road-free, is one of the wildest forests in the nation. The Chugach still has healthy and productive populations of bear, moose, eagles, shorebirds, migratory waterfowl, whales, sea lions, seals, and sea otters. The Chugach National Forest includes the famous Copper River Delta, which is one of the most important shorebird staging areas in the entire Western Hemisphere!

If we hope to maintain healthy, diverse rainforest in Alaska we must design a comprehensive strategy for protecting the remaining stands of big trees in various regions across the rainforest. The Roadless Rule is a critical piece of any conservation strategy.

With the public comment period set to close on August 14th, National Audubon, our Audubon Alaska state office, and our partners in conservation are actively engaged in efforts to keep the Roadless Rule intact for the benefit of all our nation's forests. But we're going to need your help in order to succeed! Please take a moment to send your letter to the USFS in opposition to these exemptions immediately! And please encourage your family and friends to send a comment as well! The more comments the USFS receives in opposition to these exemptions, the better chance there is they will vote to keep the protections in place!

Remember to send your letter to both of the addresses listed below so your letter will apply/count for both the Tongass comment period and the Chugach comment period! Also, do not hesitate to visit our special website at www.audubon.org to utilize our free TAKE ACTION site to send your comments in via e-mail.

Armchair Activist
Audubon Public Policy Division
1150 Connecticut Ave, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
1-800-659-2622
audubonaction@audubon.org

sample letter:

Roadless Tongass National Forest
Content Analysis Team
U.S.D.A. Forest Service
P.O. Box 22810
Salt Lake City, Utah 84122
FAX: (801) 880-2808

Roadless ANPR - Chugach
USFS Content Analysis Team
P.O. Box 22777
Salt Lake City, UT 84122
FAX: 801-880-3311

August 1, 2003

Dear Chief Dale Bosworth:

I strongly support the Roadless Area Conservation Rule as it was issued in January 2001 and oppose the proposed exemptions of the Tongass and Chugach National Forests, our nation's two largest national forests, from the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

The Roadless Rule, a landmark conservation policy, has the overwhelming support of the American people. Safeguarding our wild forests from road building, commercial logging, mining and drilling benefits everyone including those who hunt, fish, hike, camp and recreate on these public lands. To exempt America's rainforest - one-quarter of our nation's roadless forests - from protection is unwarranted and unwanted.

Please accept this as my official comment opposing the proposed temporary exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule and the advance notice of proposed rulemaking to make permanent the Tongass exemption and extend it to the Chugach National Forest (36 CFR Parts 219 and 294).

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

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