



RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

December 19, 2025

Submitted electronically via: [Hali Gruber@murkowski.senate.gov](mailto:Hali_Gruber@murkowski.senate.gov), [Joe Byrnes@sullivan.senate.gov](mailto:Joe_Byrnes@sullivan.senate.gov), Joshua.Walton@mail.house.gov

Honorable Senator Lisa Murkowski
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Dan Sullivan
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Congressman Nick Begich
153 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515



Re: Exempting the Tongass from the 2001 Roadless Rule

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Begich:

The Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc. (RDC) writes to express strong support for a lasting legislative solution to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Rule. Thank you for the great work you've done so far in removing restrictive federal actions that have stymied Alaska's economy and job growth. Due to your efforts using the Congressional Review Act (CRA) in tandem with the directives laid out in the Executive Order (EO) "Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential", you have created a path forward for opening lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), opening mining in the Ambler and Central Yukon Mining Districts, rescinding Public Land Order 5150, and building the King Cove to Cold Bay Road, among others. We hope to see similar progress made with the Roadless Rule.

RDC is a statewide, non-profit trade association founded in 1975. Our membership is comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's fishing, tourism, forestry, mining, and oil and gas industries and includes Alaska Native corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC's purpose is to encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through the responsible development of our natural resources.

The President's Alaska EO seeks to rescind the Roadless Rule which has been a barrier to access to the Tongass as a mining district. The Tongass is a major Volcanic Mass Sulfide (VMS) area with proven deposits of critical and rare earth minerals that are vitally important to national security.



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The United States Geologic Survey (USGS) and the Forest Service have estimated that there are billions of dollars of discovered and billions of dollars of undiscovered minerals in the Tongass. The hundreds of gold and non-gold legacy mines scattered throughout the Tongass and the three currently operating mines on the Tongass support the USGS's optimism for mineral potential.

There is water access to the archipelago of islands that make up the Tongass. Mining explorers need the certainty of road access to move drills and heavy equipment across the beach into the interior of those islands to access the mineral deposits. Legislation to make that happen would provide the certainty that investors need to fund access to critical and rare earth minerals that are vitally important to national security.

For additional context, the nationwide Roadless Rule rulemaking, which includes the Tongass, is scheduled to be completed in the Fall of 2026. The litigation and appeals that will follow completion of the rulemaking could last well beyond the Trump Administration and be rescinded again. The Roadless Rule has been imposed and rescinded six times over the last 25 years, which has understandably created investor uncertainty.

Importantly, the Roadless Rule remains in effect on the Tongass today due to a stay of the State's litigation against the Biden Administration's 2023 reimposition while the Trump Administration's 2025 nationwide rulemaking goes forward. We thus have the odd situation in which the Trump Department of Justice (DOJ) is defending the 2023 reimposition of the Roadless Rule that it had rescinded in Trump's first term.

Please find attached Governor Dunleavy's letter to President Trump on October 27, 2025, requesting that he seek a legislative exemption to the Roadless Rule. In addition to a legislative solution, we would also ask that you send an inquiry to the DOJ as to why the current administration is defending the Biden Administration's error in reimposing the Roadless Rule and stipulate judgment in favor of the State, RDC, and the other Plaintiffs. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Connor Hajdukovich
Interim Executive Director
Resource Development Council for Alaska
Celebrating 50 Years of Responsible Resource Development in Alaska



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Governor Mike Dunleavy STATE OF ALASKA

October 27, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you again for your January 20, 2025, Executive Order “Unleashing Alaska’s Extraordinary Resource Potential.” Among the many other welcome policies included in that EO is your directive to remove the Tongass National Forest from the Clinton Administration’s 2001 Roadless Rule. Alaska understands that the Tongass does not stand alone and appreciates the Administration’s August 29, 2025, proposed rulemaking to remove the Roadless Rule from all the national forests except for Colorado and Idaho.

Your efforts with regard to the Roadless Rule are important because the Tongass is the focal point of environmental groups efforts to stop responsible use of America’s largest National Forest and many public lands across the United States. Unfortunately, while this Roadless Rule was revoked in your first Administration, it was re-instated by Biden on January 25, 2023. In order to ensure that this harmful Rule goes away permanently, Alaska asks that your Administration seek separate legislation to keep the Tongass open to roadbuilding and development by statute.

The Roadless Rule remains in effect on the Tongass today due to a stay of the State’s litigation against Biden’s 2023 reimposition while your Administration’s 2025 nationwide rulemaking goes forward. The nationwide rulemaking is scheduled to be completed in the Fall of 2026. We are concerned that the litigation and appeals that will follow completion of the rulemaking could last beyond your Administration and be rescinded again.

The Tongass is a rich rainforest with a vast timber resource. It is also one of the richest Volcanogenic Massive Sulfide (VMS) belts in North America, containing proven deposits of copper, zinc, silver, gold, cobalt, barite, and rare earth minerals (at Bokan Mountain). USGS studies and historical mining records show hundreds of past-producing mines from the early 1900s through 1943. Southeast Alaska’s geological system is vastly underexplored, due in large part to the lack of assured road access and site management assurance caused by the application

The Honorable Donald J. Trump

October 27, 2025

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of the 2001 Roadless Rule to the Tongass. The United States Geologic Survey (USGS) has estimated that there are billions of dollars of discovered and billions of dollars of undiscovered minerals on the Tongass.

We have water access to the archipelago of islands that make up the Tongass. We just need the certainty of road access to move drills and heavy equipment across the beach into the interior of those islands to access the mineral deposits. Legislation to make that happen would provide the certainty that investors need to fund the access to critical and rare earth minerals so important to national security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Dunleavy", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Mike Dunleavy
Governor

Enclosure

The following is an example of statutory language that would permanently exempt the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule:

“Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the final rule and record of decision entitled “Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation; National Forest System Lands in Alaska,” 88 Fed. Reg. 5252 (January 27, 2023) is hereby rescinded, the final rule entitled “Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation; National Forest System Lands in Alaska,” 85 Fed. Reg. 68688 (October 29, 2020) is hereby enacted into law. The 2001 Roadless Rule shall not apply to the Tongass National Forest except by Act of Congress. The Secretary and Secretary of the Interior shall not manage or continue to manage, close, limit, or restrict access to, or resource development on National Forest lands in Alaska beyond those closures, limitations, and access restrictions to, and resource development of, multiple uses that were in effect on the day after passage of the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990.”