

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 24, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Ms. Vicki Christiansen  
Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue and Chief Christiansen:

National forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service support some of the most important Pacific salmon habitats in the world. The Tongass National Forest alone provides habitat for 25 percent of the salmon caught off the entire west coast.<sup>1</sup> Pacific salmon originating from the Tongass National Forest support robust recreational and commercial fishing industries in Southeast Alaska and are essential for subsistence fishing by indigenous and non-indigenous communities throughout the region.

We are deeply concerned that the proposed Alaska Roadless Rule will have significant consequences on the economic, cultural, and subsistence needs of residents in Southeast Alaska. Over 100 fishermen and fisherwomen across the region wrote in opposition to removing Roadless Rule protections.<sup>2</sup> The resulting industrial-scale logging will have wide-spread negative impacts on their livelihood given the importance of healthy, connected habitat for salmon productivity.<sup>3</sup>

To better understand what the U.S. Forest Service is doing to sustain and bolster salmon productivity in the Tongass National Forest, please answer the following questions as soon as possible, but no later than November 8, 2019:

- What is the economic value of commercial, recreational, and subsistence Pacific salmon fisheries derived from the Tongass National Forest?
- How many watersheds have been restored to full salmon productivity in the Tongass National Forest? How many watersheds are still in need of restoration to support full

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd554592.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd554592.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Letter from salmon fishermen and fisherwomen of Southeast Alaska to Secretary Perdue, USDA and Chief Christiansen, U.S. Forest Service (August 21, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nepa/roadless/2001RoadlessRuleFR.pdf>

salmon productivity? What proportion of those watersheds are in need of restoration because of damages from past logging activities?

- How has the U.S. Forest Service used the watershed condition framework in Region 10 to identify and rank priority watersheds in need of restoration?
- What actions are the U.S. Forest Service currently taking to restore watersheds in need of restoration?
- What are the estimated staff, contracting, and budget needs that would be required to reach full salmon productivity in all of the priority watersheds within the next five or ten years? Does the U.S. Forest Service have a comprehensive plan to maximize salmon productivity in priority watersheds?
- What is the U.S. Forest Service currently doing, or planning to do, to address spawning habitat sensitivity and impacts from climate change? What are the estimated staff, budget, and research needs to better understand spawning habitat sensitivity and impacts from climate change?
- How many watersheds will likely be impacted by the Roadless Rule exemption in the Tongass National Forest? Will any of the priority watersheds be impacted?

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources



Jared Huffman  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife