

**Statement  
of Becky Knight  
Before Petersburg Borough Assembly  
Nov. 18, 2019**

Good evening. My name is Becky Knight and I speak for myself. I ask that you affirm Resolution #2019-14 in support of keeping the 2001 Roadless Rule intact. A “no” vote on the resolution would disregard science, existing law, and public sentiment—including the futures of our young people and children who are literally at the dawn of their lives. All this, for the singular purpose of heavily subsidized<sup>1</sup> road construction to access the last bastions of high volume old growth timber which will be largely exported in the round and at great profit to a few people.

The Roadless Rule has been working just fine since it was enacted in 2001. While there have been a few red herrings floated around in order to undermine the Rule, they simply do not hold up to scrutiny. The first is that the proposed exemption is “about more than just access to timber” and that the Rule is “too restrictive” on the mining, energy, and community infrastructure sectors. This is patently false. First, “As of January 2018, 57 projects within roadless areas in Alaska have been submitted for review and **all** have been approved, most within a month of submission.”<sup>2</sup> Second, if this false pretense were true, then Alaska’s other national forest, the Chugach, which has no timber would have been included the proposed exemption.

In rambling statements before a Nov.13 Congressional subcommittee hearing,<sup>3</sup> Rep. Don Young alleged that the Rule has been “disastrous for Alaskans and Southeast.” Again, if this were true then why has public sentiment throughout Alaska and the region, (as high as 100% in some communities), been overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the rule intact? SE Alaskans have moved on since the pulp mill days, while our delegation remains stuck in the past.

Rep. Young also claimed that the Blue Lake dam expansion in Sitka was held up for ten years because of the Roadless Rule and that “you couldn’t cut a tree... couldn’t build a road.” *Mr Young is misinformed.* The Roadless Rule was NOT a hangup for the project. In fact, the Blue Lake road has been preexisting

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<sup>1</sup> See Prepared Testimony of Autumn Hanna, Vice President, Taxpayers for Common Sense Legislative Hearing: National Parks, Forests and Public Lands and Subcommittee United States House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee. November 13, 2019 <https://naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Hanna,%20Autumn%20-%20Written%20Testimony.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Forest Service, *Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Inventoried Roadless Areas* (Jan. 2018); U.S. Forest Service, *Question 8* (June 2018). [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd595403.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd595403.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See *Opening Statement of Rep. Don Young*. US Congress Natural Resources Committee. Subcommittee Hearing: NPFPL Oversight Hearing – November 13, 2019. <https://naturalresources.house.gov/hearings/npfpl-oversight-hearing-november-13-2019>

since the dam was first built in the late 1950s. The only delays in the project were the City's decision making process and securing the funding. As for the timber at the far end of the lake, it was not removed and instead, left flooded, simply because it was impractical to get to it due to steep slopes on both sides of the lake and not enough volume to make it worthwhile.

Another ruse perpetuated by industry supporters is that there is a shortage of access to firewood. Really? With the thousands of miles of road on the Tongass, the plentiful abandoned timber volume in local logging areas can supply decades of firewood, free-for-the taking, for local residents.

But enough on the spin perpetuated by timber industry at-any-cost backers.

A few facts are in order:

Approximately one third of all locations where logging roads intersect streams on the Tongass fail to meet applicable standards for salmon migration.<sup>4</sup> That computes to approximately 1,000 culverts that block salmon migration, and are in need of repair.

Federal regulations [NFMA] wisely required that wildlife populations be "well distributed." It is the forest fragmentation and cumulative loss of intact forest habitat that have hugely impacted these populations. With that mandate in mind, the framers of the Tongass Wildlife Conservation Strategy emphasized that the strategy alone, was insufficient to maintain viable, well-distributed populations of wildlife and would need a reasonable matrix in between [the small, medium, and large Habitat Conservation Areas, or "HCA's" for short]. Roadless areas provide much of that matrix. Let me remind you that "viable" wildlife populations are not the same as "hunnable" wildlife populations. This is especially important for deer, whether you refer to hunting as personal use or subsistence.

Finally, the past six decades of Tongass industrial logging and its resultant high-grading has eliminated the rarest and most productive stands of contiguous large-tree old-growth by 66 percent.<sup>5</sup> These stands are the most

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<sup>4</sup> Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership. <https://seakfhp.org/2017/09/06/the-tongass-top-5/>

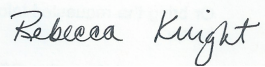
<sup>5</sup> Albert, D. M., and J. W. Schoen, *Use of Historic Logging Patterns to Identify Disproportionately Logged Ecosystems within Temperate Rainforests of Southeastern Alaska*, 27 *Conservation Biology* at 779-780 (2013); <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23866037> Albert, D. M., and J. W. Schoen, *A conservation assessment for the coastal forests and mountains ecoregion of southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest In A Conservation Assessment and Resource Synthesis for the Coastal Forests & Mountains Ecoregion in Southeastern Alaska and the Tongass National Forest*. <https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/alaska/seak/era/cfm/Pages/CA-AKCFM.aspx>.

valuable for fish and wildlife and historically covered less than five percent of the Tongass.

Some of the highest concentrations of old growth logging can be found on Prince of Wales Island and has resulted in a loss of 94 percent of the contiguous large-tree old-growth stands there since 1954.<sup>6</sup>

The overall result is that logging and road construction have left a mess on the Tongass, where some 65 salmon streams are in need of major restoration, and are estimated at a taxpayer funded cost of more than \$100 million.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the road maintenance backlog on national forests in Alaska amounts to \$68 million.<sup>8</sup> Shouldn't our collective focus be on fixing the mess we have made before we move on to trash our remaining pristine areas?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Knight". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Rebecca Knight

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> USDA, *Investment Strategy in Support of Rural Communities in Southeast Alaska 2011-2013*, R10-MB-734 at 11 (Nov. 2011). [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5339075.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5339075.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See *Testimony of Mike Dombeck*. US Congress Natural Resources Committee. Subcommittee Hearing: NPFPL Oversight Hearing – November 13, 2019. <https://naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Furnish,%20James%20-%20Testimony.pdf>.