

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Re: FR Doc No: 2014-12061- Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) that evaluates an amendment to the 2008 Tongass National Forest Plan

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We, the 62 undersigned organizations and businesses, are writing to express our support for a land management plan for the Tongass National Forest that ends large-scale old-growth logging and shifts management focus on the Tongass towards sustainable, job-creating industries like fishing, tourism and recreation.

The Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska is one of the last remaining intact temperate coastal rainforests in the world – and it belongs to all Americans. More than one million visitors come to the Tongass annually and millions more in Alaska and across the country benefit from the salmon hatched in its bountiful streams and rivers. Even those who will never visit its emerald shores can appreciate the Tongass for its spectacular beauty and incredible ecological significance. The massive old growth trees of the Tongass are a critically important global carbon storehouse. We have a responsibility to safeguard it for all Americans.

We applaud your 2010 announcement of a “Transition Plan” to move the Tongass away from the old-growth logging of the past and focus instead on sustainable industries. However, recent actions of the U.S. Forest Service do not support such a commitment. In fact, instead of facilitating a transition away from timber, scheduled timber sales are set to dramatically increase old-growth logging in the Tongass. The Forest Service already has more than 97 million board feet of timber under contract, and is trying to push forward the massive Big Thorne sale as well. At 120 million board feet of old-growth, Big Thorne would be the largest sale in the Tongass in two decades – a throwback to the days when two large taxpayer-funded pulp mills devoured massive swaths of timber. It should not be happening today.

Such outdated old-growth logging practices create devastating habitat destruction within the forest. Just one of several scheduled sales, Big Thorne alone would directly affect approximately 6,000 acres of old-growth forest on north-central Prince of Wales Island, an area which is vital to the fate of Sitka black-tail deer and Alexander Archipelago wolf populations and other wildlife. If the Forest Service’s management practices continue as they have, the negative impacts on the wolf could lead to the first ever listing of old-growth dependent wildlife on the Tongass under the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, this habitat loss will have negative impacts on hunting and fishing by Alaska Natives and other subsistence users in the region.

Today, Southeast Alaskans rely on the healthy watersheds that support sustainable jobs and strong fish populations. The Tongass is a world class tourist destination and fishery, billion dollar industries that provide more than 17,000 jobs in the region. Nevertheless, the Forest Service continues to subsidize roughly 100 logging jobs to the tune of more than \$20 million annually– and potentially substantially more. Meanwhile the guides and outfitters whose jobs are key to the economic vitality of the region struggle just to get the permits they need from an underfunded and understaffed permit office. If the Forest Service truly wants to help provide economic opportunity to southeast Alaska communities, it should reallocate its priorities and resources to support fishing, recreation and other businesses that are compatible with the region’s world-class natural values.

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of people represented by the organizations and businesses below, we urge you to quickly finish the Tongass’ transition out of large-scale old-growth logging. By investing in fishing and

visitor services, and other non-logging sectors, the Department of Agriculture will secure a sustainable economy for southeast Alaska. As stewards of our nation's public land, we have an obligation to protect this national treasure, the last great temperate rainforest in the United States.

Sincerely,

Adventure Smith Explorations
Todd Smith
President
Tahoe City, CA

Alaska Coalition
Liz VanDenzen
Director
Santa Fe, NM

Alaska Wilderness League
Cindy Shogan
Executive Director
Washington, DC

American Canoe Association
Greg Rolf
Stewardship Coordinator
Fredericksburg, VA

Arctic Treks
Carol Kaasza and Jim Campbell
Co-Owners
Fairbanks, AK

Audubon Minnesota
Matthew Anderson
Executive Director
St Paul, MN

Audubon Society of Corvallis
Jim Fairchild
President
Corvallis, OR

Audubon Society of Omaha
Laurine Blankenau
President
Omaha, NE

Audubon Society of the District of Columbia
Tom Miskovsky
President
Washington, DC

Bismarck-Mandan Unitarian Universalist Church,
Social Action Committee
Carol Jean Larsen
Member, Social Action Committee
Bismarck, ND

Black Hills Audubon Society
Sam Merrill
Conservation Committee Chair
Olympia, WA

Californias for Western Wilderness
Michael J. Painter
Coordinator
San Francisco, CA

Central Sierra Audubon Society
Tom Parrington
President
Sonora, CA

Climate Crisis Coalition of the Twin Cities
Christine Frank
Coordinator
Minneapolis, MN

Colorado Mountain Club
Heather MacSllarrow
Conservation Director
Golden, CO

Conservation Northwest
Dave Wertz
Science and Conservation Director
Bellingham, WA

Delaware Nature Societ
Brenna Gogin
Environmental Advocate
Hokessin, DE

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
Andrew Mason
Co-President
Oneonta, NY

Design Chocolate
Robin Swennes
Owner
Kennebunk, ME

Environment America
Anna Aurilio
Legislative Director
Washington, DC

Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center
Natalynne DeLapp
Executive Director
Arcata, CA

Flemish Centre for Indigenous Peoples
Martina Roels
Belgium

Foothills Audubon Club
Ronald Harden
Legislative Chair
Berthoud, CO

Four harbors Audubon Society
Susan Krause
President
St. James, NY

Green Alliance
Sarah Brown
Director
Portsmouth, NH

Howling For Wolves
Maureen Hackett
Founder and President
Hopkins, MN

Iowa Audubon
Douglas Harr
President
Ogden, IA

Klamath Forest Alliance
Kimberly Baker
Executive Director
Orleans, CA

Lehigh Valley Audubon Society
Jon Levin
Treasurer
Emmaus, PA

Magic
Robin Bayer
President
Palo Alto, CA

Mankato Area Environmentalists
Leigh Pomeroy
President
Mankato, MN

Michigan Audubon
Jonathan E. Lutz
Executive Director
Lansing, MI

Minnehaha Chapter, Izaak Walton League of
America
John Rust
President
Minneapolis, MN

Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America
Barry Drazkowski
President
St Paul, MN

Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
Matthew Schaut
President
Bloomington, MN

National Garden Clubs, Inc.
Marion Hilliard
Deep South Legislative Chairman
Orange Park, FL

Natural Resources Council of Maine
Lisa Pohlmann
Executive Director
Augusta, ME

Nature Abounds
Melinda Hughes-Wert
President
DuBois, PA

North Cascades Audubon Society
Pam Borso
President
Bellingham, WA

PA Council of Churches
Rev. Sandy Strauss
Director of Public Advocacy
Harrisburg, PA

Palos Verdes/South bay Audubon Society
David Quadhamer
President
Palos Verdes, CA

Perpetual Motion NW
David Egan
President
Fall City, WA

Pilchuck Audubon Society
Kathleen Snyder
President
Snohomish, WA

Prescott Audubon Society
Suzette Russi
Conservation Chair
Prescott, AZ

Rainier Audubon Society
Dan Streiffert
Chair
Auburn, WA

River Bluff Audubon Society
Dan Reed
President
Jefferson City, MO

River Runners of Wilderness
Jo JOhnson
Co-Director
Flagstaff, AZ

Round Ideas Insitute
David Torney
President
Jemez Springs, NM

San Diego Audubon Society
Ed Henry
President
San Diego, CA

San Juan Citizen Alliance
Jimbo Buickerood
Public Lands Director
Durango, CO

The Clinch Coaliton
Diedre Donahue
Director
Wise, VA

The Conservation Alliance
John Sterling
Executive Director
Bend, OR

The Wildlife Center
Katherine Eagleson
Executive Director
Espanola, NM

Tribal Environmental Policy Center
Bob Gruenig

Corrales, NM

Umpqua Watersheds
Joseph Quinn
Conservation Chair
Roseburg, OR

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
Cynthia Ellis
President
Red House, WV

Wisconsin Audubon Council
Karen Etter Hale
Community Relations and Issues Coordinator
Madison, WI

Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society
Diane Lembck
President
Franklin, WI

Women Observing Wildlife-MN

Catherine Zimmer

Executive Director

St Paul, MN

Words to Go

Harriet Rhodes

Owner

Greenwich, CT

Yonder Star Christmas Shop

Brett Snyder

Owner

Arendtsville, PA

Zumbro Valley Audubon

Joel Dunnette

President

Rochester, MN