



# THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

[www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org)

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# Statement

**The Wilderness Society's President, William H. Meadows, today issued the following statement in response to the Forest Service's release of its final management plan for the Tongass National Forest:**

Proper management of America's largest national forest demands an appropriate balance of multiple uses and values to ensure healthy forest ecosystems that support natural resources and sustainable local economies. The Wilderness Society is disappointed that the Tongass Land Management plan once again focuses so heavily on timber extraction at the expense of the forest's pristine wilderness character.

Timber is just one of many resources found in the Tongass, and demand for this resource has been steadily declining. Today, the activities that are driving Southeast Alaska's economy depend on protecting the forest's scenic views, watersheds, fisheries, and roadless areas. Indeed, commercial fishing, recreation, and tourism in the Tongass are the growth sectors of the economy and these, together with other non-commodity values, represent a much larger contribution to the region's economy. As open space, wildlife, and roadless areas become even scarcer throughout the world, these qualities of the Tongass will only become more valuable.

Contrary to the public interest and the realities of the local economy, this plan puts millions of pristine roadless acres of the Tongass National Forest at risk from energy development, mining, logging, and roadbuilding. The 2001 Roadless Rule has played a key role in protecting wildlife habitat, preserving clean drinking water, offering recreational opportunities for people, and providing a defense against global warming. Despite growing evidence that open space and wild places are good for business and local economies, not to mention important for human health and development and response to climate change, the Tongass Land Management Plan continues to push for industry access to ecologically and culturally important places, including irreplaceable roadless areas.

The Wilderness Society believes that the Forest Service should manage the Tongass in a manner that reflects its true worth, and better balances the multiple uses and values of the forest. Instead of focusing so heavily on timber, we believe the agency should invest in stewardship activities that more accurately reflect market conditions, and that better benefit current and future generations. Some examples include: restoring high value watersheds previously impacted by logging, and permanently protecting ecologically and socially valuable areas of the forest. Especially as global climate change threatens to alter natural systems, it is critical that we protect what few healthy ecosystems remain.

The Wilderness Society is a nonprofit organization founded in 1935 and dedicated to the protection of America's wilderness and wildlife. The organization is part of the Tongass Futures Roundtable and has been working with this group, including the Forest Service, to find management solutions for the Tongass National Forest that make better economic sense, support local cultural interests, and continue to provide for diverse, vibrant communities, and healthy ecosystems. The land management plan released today does little to resolve these issues.

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