



## Taxpayers Paying to Clearcut America's Rainforest

### The Tongass National Forest

Americans can take great pride in our largest national forest – the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. The Tongass is America's Rainforest. It was established by Teddy Roosevelt in 1907 and is the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world. Its giant Sitka Spruce and other old growth trees, which had already been growing for hundreds of years before Columbus came to America, are home to wolves, bears, salmon and Bald Eagles that have disappeared from many other parts of the country. The Tongass stretches over 17 million acres from Ketchikan to Yakutat in southeast Alaska, making it the size of West Virginia. This remote rainforest of ancient trees covers an island landscape marked by narrow inlets and glacier-carved fiords. America's Rainforest is an incomparable wonder of nature owned and valued by all Americans.



The Tongass National Forest is many things to many different people. Local businesses rely on the beauty of the Tongass to attract millions of visitors and their tourist dollars each year. Scientists rely on the Tongass to get a glimpse of an ecosystem which has remained virtually unchanged since before Columbus landed in America. Native people and other residents rely on the Tongass to provide food and spiritual meaning. Fishermen, recreational and commercial, rely on the fresh water streams of the Tongass to provide ample spawning grounds for all five species of Pacific salmon. Future generations of Americans are relying on us to preserve and keep this ancient rainforest intact.

### A Shameful Legacy

Despite the majesty of the Tongass, the U.S. Forest Service is allowing the logging industry to chop away at America's pride. For over 50 years, private logging companies have had access to the biggest and best trees in our country's largest public forest and have left leaving Americans to foot the bill. Since when did it become the responsibility of America's tax-payers to subsidize the clearcutting of America's Rainforest? If there is one thing that the Forest Service has proven with its fiscal irresponsibility, it's that money does not grow on trees.

#### FAST FACTS

- ▶ Since 1982, American taxpayers have spent \$1 billion subsidizing the timber industry's clearcutting of America's Rainforest in Alaska.
- ▶ Over the past twenty-five years, U.S. taxpayers have lost an average of \$40 million each year building roads and clearcutting the Tongass National Forest.
- ▶ The Forest Services proposed logging plan includes projects which will continue to cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars each year.
- ▶ According to Forest Service records, fewer than 200 jobs are attributable directly to the Tongass National Forest's logging program. Consequently, the taxpayer subsidy per Tongass timber job is over \$200,000. By comparison, the commercial fishing fleet in southeast Alaska employs nearly 4,000 people and an estimated 5,900 people work in the tourism industry.

## The Real Costs

The U.S. Forest Service offers to sell trees for far less than they are worth. These bargain basement prices for our old growth trees are a travesty.

Additionally, American taxpayers are paying the bill to prepare the bargain-basement timber sales, and build and maintain the logging roads in the Tongass National Forest. Already, over 5,000 miles of roads crisscross the Tongass and the Forest Service has plans to build over 1,000 additional miles of roads. America's cities sit in gridlock while the Forest Service spends millions of tax dollars building roads into the rainforest so the timber industry can cut down century old trees.



These clear cuts and timber roads don't just damage the rainforest; they damage hunting, fishing, recreation, and tourism industries that are the foundation of Southeast Alaska's economy.



## A Big Responsibility

It is simply irresponsible for the federal government to spend tens of millions of our tax dollars subsidizing the timber industry in Alaska and, in the process, damage an international treasure that attracts visitors from around the world.

If Congress is serious about cutting government waste, the annual subsidy to prop up the timber industry and clearcut the rainforest in Alaska is a good place to start. We have a responsibility to leave our economy, our government, and our environment in better shape than we inherited it. The disregard for the waste of taxpayer dollars and the health of the Tongass National Forest must stop.

Led by Representatives Robert Andrews (D-NJ) and Steve Chabot (R-OH), the U.S. House of Representatives has twice voted overwhelmingly in favor of ending taxpayer subsidies for logging roads in the Tongass National Forest. The amendment is making a difference on the ground in southeast Alaska. Since first passing the House, the road budget for the Tongass has steadily declined. But there is still work to be done – the Forest Service's most recent 5-year logging schedule will cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars annually to build roads and clearcut America's Rainforest.

Members of Congress should continue to support ending wasteful subsidies in the Tongass National Forest.

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