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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **STATEMENT**

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**Statement by Laurie Cooper, Rainforest Program Director for Alaska Wilderness League, on the legal challenge of the exemption of the Tongass from the 2001 Roadless Rule**

“Celebrated and recognized for its world class salmon streams, cathedral stands of old-growth trees, vibrant native traditions, and unique coastal communities the Tongass National Forest has also been characterized for decades by conflict and controversy over its natural resources. It is time to craft a different story for America’s rainforest, one in which sparring over the fate of this one-of-a-kind resource does not have to be a central theme.”

“Today, great strides are being made to transition away from the stark battle lines drawn between conservation and development interests. A new spirit of cooperation and collaboration is emerging that has the potential to benefit forest-dependent communities and the rainforest ecosystem. Yet progress is hindered by the fact that a significant amount of the rainforest’s most valuable fish and wildlife habitat remains open to clearcut logging. Until that changes conflict will only be prolonged as evidenced by the recent court challenge to the exemption of the Tongass National Forest from administrative protections offered by the 2001 Roadless Rule.”

“Enacting additional congressional protections for the Alaskan rainforest is a central component to resolving the long and contentious debate on the future of our country’s largest national forest. We are strongly supportive and actively involved in advancing a collaborative, locally-supported Tongass solution that provides durable protections for valuable wildlife and fish habitat, respects the traditions and culture of Alaska natives, and fulfills the needs of forest-dependent communities.”

“The long-term health the coastal rainforest, the vitality and productivity of fish and wildlife habitat, and the vibrancy of Southeast Alaska communities is too important to leave open to conflict and controversy.”



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