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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Conservationists Oppose Threats to America’s Rainforest and Local Jobs”

WASHINGTON – Today, fourteen conservation groups sent a letter to Representative Doc Hastings to express their strong opposition to H.R. 1408, legislation that would transfer public lands from the Tongass National Forest to the Sealaska Corporation.

Statement by Cindy Shogan, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“This bill will have far-reaching impacts on the national interest lands of the Tongass National Forest and upon the local economy of southeast Alaska. What’s more, it would have significant ramifications for the new path forward for the economic opportunities that the U.S. Forest Service is driving in the region, such as second-growth timber, management, restoration-based jobs, salmon, and other investments such as recreation and tourism.

Any legislation for the Tongass National Forest should include protections for vital watersheds, salmon fisheries, wildlife habitat and subsistence harvest, and for lands and waters that the small business people such as recreational guides depend upon to support their families. If the Sealaska bill passes, southeast Alaskan’s livelihoods, wildlife habitat and watersheds, would be under threat and substantially impacted by the intensive logging practices that the Sealaska Corporation has engaged in historically.

At 17 million acres, the Tongass is America’s largest national forest. With over 5,500 salmon-streams and rivers, it is truly a ‘salmon forest’ and an intact ecosystem. It is a land of huge bears grown fat on salmon, eagles soaring the endless skies, and 500-year-old trees standing silent sentry over a rich and verdant world. We can make decisions about America’s rainforest that we can be proud of — balanced decisions which allow us to continue to experience and use the rainforest and its resources, without losing them.”

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