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Conservation groups strongly opposed to forest provisions in wildfire legislation

WASHINGTON, DC – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to take up a discussion draft of the “Wildfire Budgeting, Response and Forest Management Act of 2016” on Thursday, June 23, 2016 at 10 a.m. Included in the proposal is a provision that would delay the ongoing amendment process for the Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) that started in 2013.

Statement by Kristen Miller, Conservation Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“The Tongass language in this bill would severely impact the U.S. Forest Service’s ability to provide management for all the values of the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska. Instead of moving forest management toward supporting a more economically and environmentally sustainable future, this legislation would keep the Tongass’ economy anchored in the unsustainable logging practices of the past.

Southeast Alaska’s economy has already transitioned away from logging, and the Forest Service is taking proactive steps to support the transition to sustainable industries that will provide jobs for people in the decades to come. With more than 17,000 fishing, recreation, tourism and supporting jobs in the region that rely on an intact ecosystem, good forest management practices are key to safeguarding the economy for southeast Alaska.

At approximately 17 million acres, the Tongass is our nation's largest rainforest and encompasses some of the largest remaining tracts of coastal temperate rainforests left on earth. It provides valuable habitat for an array of species, including salmon, bears, wolves and some of the greatest breeding concentrations of bald eagles in the world. As an ancient, carbon-rich forest, the Tongass’ intact ecosystems help to moderate global climate change, providing important contributions to our country’s climate objectives.”

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