ALASKA CHAMBER

September 19, 2025

Brad Kinder
Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
201 14th Street SW
Mailstop 1108
Washington, DC 20250-1124

Re: Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation; National Forest System Lands (90 Fed. Reg. 42179, August 29, 2025); FS-2025-0001

Dear Director Kinder:

The Alaska Chamber writes to support the August 29, 2025, proposal from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) to rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This long-overdue step is critical to restoring responsible access to resources, enhancing energy security, and ensuring economic and social opportunity for the people of Southeast Alaska.

The Alaska Chamber is Alaska's most diverse statewide business advocacy organization. Our mission is to promote a healthy business environment in Alaska. The Chamber has more than 700 members and represents businesses of all sizes and industries from across the state, directly representing 58,000 Alaskan workers and $4.6 billion in wages.

Congress recognized Alaska's uniqueness when it passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and the Tongass Timber Reform Act, setting aside more than 6.6 million acres for conservation. The remaining lands were to support local economies and subsistence activities. The 2001 Rule violated this balance by locking up an additional 9.3 million acres, exceeding the legal limits imposed by ANILCA's "no-more" clause. The proposed rescission corrects this federal overreach and reinstates deference to local land management planning, as originally intended under the National Forest Management Act.

Beyond the illegal federal overreach of the Roadless Rule, the rule has long imposed a one-size-fits-all regulatory framework that is fundamentally incompatible with Alaska's unique geography, community structure, and economic needs. Rescinding the rule will restore necessary flexibility, honor state-specific land management processes, and allow local decisionmakers to responsibly manage National Forest System lands in a way that balances conservation with economic and community development.

Roads are lifelines. They support energy distribution, mineral exploration, aquaculture, transportation, and forest health efforts. Without road access, maintaining power lines, transporting resources, or even responding to wildfires becomes disproportionately expensive and burdensome. While the majority of the Lower 48 benefits from a vast network of roads that were built well in advance of the 2001 Roadless Rule, this ill-conceived policy cut Alaskans off at its knees from the lifesaving access roads provide.

More than 40% of all inventoried roadless areas nationwide now face high or very-high wildfire hazard potential, and recent years have shown increased wildfire and insect activity. The Roadless Rule's

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restriction on roadbuilding and active management in these areas significantly inhibits fuel reduction efforts and threatens nearby communities. Rescission would give forest managers the tools to manage these risks and protect both ecosystems and human lives.

The proposed rescission directly fulfills Executive Order 14153, *Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential*, as well as EOs 14192, 14225, and 14154, which prioritize responsible domestic production of energy, minerals, and timber. These directives underscore the urgent need to reduce regulatory burdens that inhibit access to America's natural resources, particularly those on public lands in Alaska.

We urge the Department to move swiftly and decisively to finalize the rescission. Doing so will restore access, improve forest health, support national and economic security, and finally provide regulatory equity to the people of Alaska.

Thank you for considering the Alaska Chamber's comments on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Kati Capozzi

Kati Capozzi
President and CEO