



September 30, 2026

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, docket number FS-2025-0001

Dear Director Kinder:

The Alaska Chamber writes to support the August 20, 2026, 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 opportunities 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. Alaska Chamber membership has supported the overturn of the Roadless Rule for more than 15 years.

For more than two decades, the Roadless Rule has imposed a one-size-fits-all national framework on millions of acres of National Forest System lands despite significant differences in geography, infrastructure, community needs, economic conditions, and resource management priorities. Nowhere are those differences more pronounced than in Alaska.

Congress recognized Alaska's unique circumstances through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and subsequent legislation, establishing extensive conservation protections while preserving opportunities for responsible multiple-use management. Yet the Roadless Rule placed additional restrictions on approximately 9.3 million acres of the Tongass, limiting the flexibility available to local land managers and Southeast Alaska communities.

The Chamber supports USDA's proposal to return greater decision-making authority to local Forest Service officials who understand the ecological, economic, and social conditions of the forests and communities they serve. Local land management planning provides a more appropriate framework for balancing conservation, recreation, timber, watersheds, wildlife, infrastructure, resource development, and other multiple uses than a blanket national prohibition.

For Alaska, access is essential. Roads and infrastructure support energy distribution, transportation, mineral exploration, forest management, recreation, tourism, emergency response, and other economic activity. In Southeast Alaska, where communities are geographically isolated and transportation and



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energy costs are already high, unnecessary restrictions on access can make infrastructure development and economic opportunity significantly more difficult and expensive.

Rescinding the Roadless Rule does *not* authorize unrestricted development of inventoried roadless areas. Existing land management plans will continue to govern these lands, and future proposals for road construction, timber harvest, or other ground-disturbing activities will remain subject to site-specific environmental review, NEPA, and other applicable federal laws.

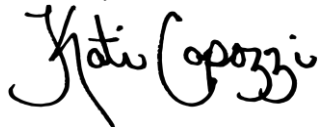
That distinction is important, because rescission does not predetermine where development should occur; it restores the ability to consider proposed uses on their individual merits. Alaska can protect fish habitat, clean water, wildlife, recreation opportunities, and the extraordinary natural character of the Tongass while also providing reasonable access for communities and responsible economic activity.

The Tongass is both an extraordinary national forest and home to Southeast Alaska communities that need reliable infrastructure, affordable energy, access to resources, and opportunities to build sustainable private-sector economies. These priorities can and should coexist.

The Alaska Chamber therefore strongly supports rescission of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, including its application to the Tongass National Forest, and urges USDA to finalize the proposed rule without delay. Rescission 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kati Capozzi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kati" and last name "Capozzi" clearly distinguishable.

Kati Capozzi
President and CEO