

STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE

2001

Source

SCS CSHJR 6(RES) am S

Legislative
Resolve No.

4



Relating to opposition to the inclusion of national forests in Alaska within former President Clinton's Roadless Area Conservation rule and supporting the overturning of this inclusion by litigation, by congressional action, or by action of President Bush.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS the forest products industry has been and continues to be an important economic sector in Alaska that contributes significant employment income to the economy of the state, and, through purchases of timber from National Forest System lands, contributes significant revenue to local communities through the revenue sharing provisions of federal law; and

WHEREAS the Roadless Area Conservation rule is contrary to the land management planning process for individual forests established by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 and its implementing regulations; and

WHEREAS application of the Roadless Area Conservation rule to the Tongass and Chugach National Forests designates significant additional acreage as administrative, de facto wilderness areas within Alaska; and

WHEREAS application of the Roadless Area Conservation rule in Alaska is contrary to sec. 708(b)(4), Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which specifically prohibits another roadless area review and evaluation (RARE) on national forest lands in Alaska for the purpose of setting aside commercial forest land as wilderness; and

WHEREAS application of the Roadless Area Conservation rule in Alaska is contrary to sec. 1326(a) of ANILCA, which prohibits the withdrawal of more than 5,000 acres, in the aggregate, of public lands within Alaska without the consent of the Congress; and

WHEREAS application of the Roadless Area Conservation rule in Alaska is contrary to sec. 1326(b) of ANILCA, which expressly prohibits studies of public lands for the purpose of considering the establishment of new conservation system units, recreation areas, national conservation areas, or for related or similar purposes; and

WHEREAS the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990 and other Congressional and administrative actions have withdrawn more than 97 percent of the Tongass National Forest from availability for timber harvest and other resource development opportunities; and

WHEREAS the 1997 and 1999 revisions of the Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) further reduced the available commercial forest lands in the Tongass to 576,000 acres out of nearly 6,000,000 suitable acres across the forest; and

WHEREAS the available commercial forest lands remaining after the 1999 TLMP amendments are insufficient to satisfy the raw material needs of Southeast Alaska's forest products manufacturing industry, given the plan's maximum annual economic offering level of 153,000,000 board feet; and

WHEREAS, by applying the roadless policy to the Tongass, the federal government has further reduced the available commercial forest lands in the Tongass to less than half the currently available acreage and will further reduce the maximum annual offering level to less than 50,000,000 board feet; and

WHEREAS application of the Roadless Area Conservation rule to the Tongass, together with Under Secretary Lyons' 1999 unilateral TLMP amendment, nullifies the results of the United States Forest Service's 1986-1997 planning process in the Tongass, which cost the taxpayers more than \$13,000,000; and

WHEREAS application of the Roadless Area Conservation rule to the Tongass, together with Under Secretary Lyons' 1999 unilateral TLMP amendment, will further

destabilize the already unstable timber-based economy of Southeast Alaska by forcing the closure of most of the remaining forest products manufacturing facilities, resulting in loss of employment and associated negative socioeconomic impacts within timber-dependent communities and the Southeast Alaska region; and

WHEREAS the Chugach National Forest has spent three years and over four million dollars conducting a revision to its land management plan and is within a few months of issuing the Final Environmental Impact Statement for that plan; and

WHEREAS a wide range of interests from the Alaska public has been involved in the Chugach land management planning process, working to develop a range of plan alternatives that respond to the public's interests, needs, and concerns, and the Roadless Area Conservation rule will render that involvement and expense pointless and undermine public confidence in the planning process; and

WHEREAS the public, through the Chugach Land Management Plan revision scoping process, has expressed deep concern that the approximately 130,000 acres of the Chugach National Forest suffering from spruce bark beetle damage must be managed for the restoration of a green, healthy forest, and the Roadless Area Conservation rule prevents access required by land managers to accomplish that restoration work; and

WHEREAS application of the Roadless Area Conservation rule will render it virtually impossible for inholders and adjacent landowners, particularly families and small business owners, to obtain the access to their property that was promised them in ANILCA; and

WHEREAS the Alaska State Legislature expresses its appreciation of the recent temporary delay for 60 days of the Roadless Area Conservation rule;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature strongly opposes the Roadless Area Conservation rule, and particularly opposes the inclusion of the Tongass and Chugach National Forests in the Roadless Area Conservation rule; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature fully supports Governor Knowles' decision to litigate against the application of the Roadless Area Conservation rule to National Forest System lands in Alaska; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges members of the Alaska delegation in Congress to use all available means to set aside the Roadless Area

Conservation rule through Congressional action; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges President George W. Bush to overturn the classification and inclusion of the national forests located inside Alaska's boundaries.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United States; the Honorable Ann Veneman, United States Secretary of Agriculture; Mike Dombeck, Chief of the United States Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.