



**Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida
Indian Tribes of Alaska**

907.586.1432 • 800.344.1432

PO Box 25500 • Juneau, Alaska

99802 www.tlingitandHaida.gov

June 30, 2025

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Secretary Brooke L. Rollins
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

U.S. Forest Service
Chief Tom Schultz
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Opposition to the Rescission of the Roadless Rule – Tongass National Forest

Dear Secretary Rollins and Chief Schultz:

On behalf of the Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, a sovereign tribal government representing over 38,000 tribal citizens, we write to express our unequivocal opposition to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's decision on June 23, 2025, to rescind the Roadless Rule protections for the Tongass National Forest.

This decision was made without tribal consultation and therefore violates the federal government's legally mandated trust responsibility to tribal nations. As such, we do not recognize the legitimacy of this action until meaningful, government-to-government consultation has occurred. This unilateral rescission disregards the inherent sovereignty of tribes, undermines the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Southeast Alaska, threatens the health of the land that our communities have stewarded for millennia, and disregards the foundational government-to-government relationship that should guide all federal actions involving tribal homelands.

The Roadless Rule has long served as a critical safeguard for the ecological integrity of the Tongass, which remains one of the world's last great temperate rainforests. For the Tlingit and Haida peoples, the Tongass is not simply a forest—it is our ancestral homeland, our source of identity, culture, and sustenance. Our communities rely on intact ecosystems for traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering practices that are vital to our lifeways and are protected under ANILCA Title VIII.

We recognize that Southeast Alaska communities need a viable level of industries and resource development to support sustainable local economies. However, that development must be planned and managed with us—not over us. Decisions about our homelands must be shaped through tribal leadership and lived experience, not imposed from afar without our involvement. When development is done right—with tribal governments at the table—it can strengthen, not sacrifice, our land, culture, and shared future.

Removing these protections opens the door to regressive logging projects and industrial development that fail to center tribal priorities or advance sustainable, locally driven economies. Road construction will irreversibly damage watersheds, cultural forests, salmon habitat, sacred sites, and subsistence practices. These actions run counter to the best available science and ignore the clear and consistent opposition expressed by tribal governments, local communities, and the broader public throughout the consultation and public comment processes.

We formally request immediate consultation with the USDA and U.S. Forest Service and call for suspension of the rescission until such consultation has occurred. Any federal action affecting the Tongass must proceed only through a mutually respectful, government-to-government process that upholds the sovereignty of Tlingit & Haida and the other 19 federally recognized tribes in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard J. Peterson", is written over a horizontal line.

Richard J. Peterson,
President