



June 6, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
 Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
 1400 Independence Ave., SW
 Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As outfitters, guides, gear manufacturers, retailers, and outdoor professionals whose livelihoods depend on world-class fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreation in Alaska, we urge you to reinstate protections for the more than 9 million acres of roadless areas in Southeast Alaska’s Tongass National Forest, and to make good on your promise to transition away from unsustainable logging of undeveloped late successional forests toward management focused on recreation, visitor services, watershed health, and young-growth forest products. The Tongass Exemption fails to meet the current and future needs of Southeast Alaskans, the region’s many visitors, and the hundreds of businesses like ours that provide more than a quarter of all jobs in the region.

The Tongass is world-renowned for its abundant salmon and steelhead, plentiful wildlife, and outstanding scenic beauty. It is among the world's richest wild salmon-producing regions, contributing approximately 50 million fish annually to Alaska's multi-billion-dollar commercial salmon industry. More than 5,000 salmon streams attract more than 100,000 recreational anglers annually to pursue all five species of Pacific salmon, steelhead, coastal cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden. World-class guided trophy hunts and the opportunity for nonresidents to buy multiple deer tags over the counter make the Tongass a premier hunting destination. Iconic scenes of bears fishing for salmon and stopovers for some of the world's largest bird migrations attract visitors from around the world to places like Pack Creek and the Yakutat Tern Festival. From the Situk River in the north to Prince of Wales Island in the south, the Tongass provides hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists some of the best and most diverse outdoor opportunities available in North America.

Recognizing many of these values, your 2013 memorandum affirmed the USDA's 2010 commitment to rapidly transition away from unsustainable and costly old-growth logging over a 10- to 15-year period. As a result of your leadership and after multiple years of collaboration and hard compromise, a solution was reached to: (1) protect the most important and sensitive areas on the Tongass, including roadless areas, the Tongass 77, and TNC/Audubon conservation areas; (2) phase out large-scale old-growth logging; and (3) encourage investment in young-growth management. We stood by the Forest Service and supported the compromise then, and ask you to make good on your promise now.

The Tongass truly is a sportsmen's paradise—not just for Alaskans, but for all Americans. Pristine backcountry lands in the Tongass National Forest supply the clean water and quality spawning habitats that support the region's robust fisheries, contain much of the region's productive wildlife habitat for big game species, provide important subsistence and cultural resources, and are globally significant for carbon storage. Our livelihoods depend on those habitats and the hunting and fishing opportunities they provide. As business owners, we are seeking durable conservation solutions and sustainable forest management practices in the Tongass that promote community resilience across Southeast Alaska.

We urge you to recognize the immense importance of the Tongass' fish, wildlife, and backcountry roadless areas, and help reestablish the public's trust in the Forest Service, by reinstating roadless area protections and making good on the promise to transition the Tongass to management that is more ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable.

Sincerely,

Alaska Fly Fishing Goods
Brad Elfers, Owner
Juneau, AK

Alaska Fly Out Travel
Cory Luoma, Owner
Columbia Falls, MT

Alaska Kenai Fishing For Fun
Brad Kirr, Owner
Soldotna, AK

American Fly Fishing Trade Association
Jim Bartschi, Chair of Board of Directors
Bozeman, MT

Argali
Brad Brooks, CEO
Boise, ID

Baranof Wilderness Lodge
Mike and Sally Trotter, Owners
Sitka, AK

Cascadia Guide, Inc
Eric Neufeld, Co-Owner
Spokane, WA

Chrome Chasers
Rick Matney, Owner
Wrangell, AK

Cooper Landing Fishing Guide
David Lisi, Owner
Cooper Landing, AK

Dryft Fishing
Nick Satushek, President
Bellingham, WA

FarBank Enterprises
Tag Kleiner, VP of Marketing
Bainbridge Island, WA

Fishpond
Ben Kurtz, President
Denver, CO

Fly Water Travel
Ken Morrish, Director of Travel Sales
Ashland, OR

Gastineau Guiding
Sierra Gadaire, Operations Manager
Juneau, AK

Allen Fly Fishing
A.J. Gottschalk, Vice President
Southlake, TX

Aquaz Fishing
Brandon Hwang, President
South Korea

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
John Gale, Conservation Director
Boulder, CO

Bear Creek Outfitters
Arne Johnson, Owner
Juneau, AK

Chota Outdoor Gear
Mark Brown, General Manager
Knoxville, TN

Coastal Alaska Adventures
Keegan McCarthy, Owner
Douglas, AK

Custom Alaska Cruises
Keegan McCarthy, Owner
Douglas, AK

Expedition Broker
Greg Schlacter, Owner
Haines, AK

First Lite
Ford Van Fossan, Conservation Manager
Ketchum, ID

Fly Fishers International
Dave Peterson, Conservation Committee Chair
Livingston, MT

Frontiers International Travel
Mike Fitzgerald, President
Wexford, PA

Glacier Guides, Inc.
Alisha "Mutts" and Zach Decker, Owners
Glacier Bay, AK

Harper Studios
Earl Harper, Owner
Seattle, WA

Lakeview Outfitters
TJ Dawson and Phil Hilbruner, Owners
Cooper Landing, AK

Maven Outdoor Equipment Company
Brendon Weaver, Co-Owner
Lander, WY

Mossy's Fly Shop
Mike Brown, Owner
Anchorage, AK

Nautilus Reeks
Kristen Mustad, Owner
Sunderland, VT

Raging River Sales
Eric Neufeld, Owner
North Bend, WA

Redington
Tag Kleiner, VP of Marketing
Bainbridge Island, WA

Rio Products
Tag Kleiner, VP of Marketing
Idaho Falls, ID

Sawyer Paddles and Oars
Derek Young, Northern US Territory
Gold Hill, OR

Scott Fly Rod Company
Jim Bartschi, President
Montrose, CO

Shell Art Studio
Shelly Marshal, Owner
Juneau, AK

Sitka Conservation Society
Andrew Thoms, Executive Director
Sitka, AK

Hatch Magazine
Chad Shmukler, Editor
Philadelphia, PA

Loon Outdoors
Hogan Brown, Director of Marketing
Boise, ID

MeatEater Inc.
Steven Rinella
Bozeman, MT

Mystery Ranch Backpacks
Ryan Holm, Director of Marketing
Bozeman, MT

Pybus Point Lodge
Scott Jorgenson, Owner
Pybus Bay, AK

Rajeff Sports / ECHO Flyfishing
Evan Burck, Marketing
Vancouver, WA

Reds Fly Shop
Joe Rotter, Partner
Ellensburg, WA

Sage Fly Fishing
Tag Kleiner, VP of Marketing
Bainbridge Island, WA

Scientific Anglers
Brad Befus, President
Midland, MI

Seek Outside
Kevin and Angie Timm, Owners
Grand Junction, CO

Simms Fishing Products
K.C. Walsh, Executive Chairman
Bozeman, MT

Sitka Fish Outfitters
Jamie Steinson, Owner
Sitka, AK

Sitka Gear
Thaddeus Kaczmarek, Consumer Experience
Bozeman, MT

The Boat Company
Hunter McIntosh, President and CEO
Poulsbo, WA

The Fly Fishing Show
Ben Furimsky, President and CEO
Somerset, PA

The Fly Shop
Pat Pendergast, Director of International Travel
Redding, CA

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Joel Webster, VP for Western Conservation
Missoula, MT

The Venturing Angler
Tim Harden, Manager
Miami, FL

Trout Unlimited
Austin Williams, Alaska Legal and Policy Director
Anchorage, AK

Uncruise Adventures
Dan Blanchard, Owner and CEO
Juneau, AK

Temple Fork Outfitters
Nick Conklin, Fly Fishing Product Manager
Dallas, TX

The Drake Magazine
Tom Bie, Owner
Denver, CO

The FlyFish Journal
Jeff Galbraith, Publisher
Bellingham, WA

The Orvis Company
Dave Perkins, Vice Chairman
Sunderland, VT

Treasure Hunter Lodge
Kurt Whitehead and Trina Nation, Owners
Klawock, AK

Umpqua Feather Merchants
Russell Miller, Director of Marketing
Louisville, CO

Votex Optics
Mark Boardman, Director of Marketing
Barneveld, WI

Yellow Dog Flyfishing Adventures
Jim Klug, Director of Operations
Bozeman, MT