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
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<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<td>Earl Harper, Owner</td>
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<td>TJ Dawson and Phil Hilbruner, Owners</td>
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<td>Brendon Weaver, Co-Owner</td>
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<td>Derek Young, Northern US Territory</td>
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<td>Jim Bartschi, President</td>
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<td>Andrew Thoms, Executive Director</td>
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<td>Chad Shmukler, Editor</td>
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<td>Hogan Brown, Director of Marketing</td>
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<td>Steven Rinella</td>
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<td>Ryan Holm, Director of Marketing</td>
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<td>Evan Burck, Marketing</td>
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<td>Kevin and Angie Timm, Owners</td>
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<td>K.C. Walsh, Executive Chairman</td>
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<td>Sitka Fish Outfitters</td>
<td>Jamie Steinson, Owner</td>
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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