

July 8, 2019

James E. Hubbard, Undersecretary
Natural Resource and Environment
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Jefferson Drive SW
Washington DC 20024

RE: Request for Sixty-day Extension for USDA Forest Service Alaska Roadless Rule Draft Environmental Impact Study public comment period

Dear Undersecretary Hubbard:

I am writing to request a sixty-day extension to the public comment period for the USDA Forest Service (USFS) Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) for the Alaska Roadless Rule.

Our mission at The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Today, we operate in all 50 U.S. states and contribute to conservation outcomes in 72 countries around the world. Environmental laws adopted over the last five decades in the United States have dramatically improved the quality of the nation's air and water, reduced the public's exposure to harmful chemicals, given the public a greater voice in government decisions, and conserved our fish, wildlife, and other natural resources. Generations of Americans have benefitted from this legacy of leadership in environmental protection.

Because of its broad application to federal actions, strong commitment to public engagement, and pathways for scientific input to inform and improve our decision making, the Roadless Rule is an important environmental law in the United States. An Alaska Roadless Rule will have large-scale impacts on management of the Tongass National Forest, the nation's largest national forest, and a forest where The Nature Conservancy actively partners with the USDA Forest Service on forest management. The Federal Register will initiate a sixty-day comment period for the general public. Given the importance and complexities of this proposed rule, The Nature Conservancy is requesting an extension of the public comment period.

An extension of the comment period is necessary to provide enough time to provide detailed analysis and responses to the rule and to ensure that the general public and communities of Southeast Alaska have a sufficient opportunity to be made aware of this process and provide input. Accordingly, we respectfully request no less than a sixty-day extension of the comment period from the originally proposed end date for the USFS Alaska Roadless Rule DEIS.

Sincerely,



Christine Woll
Southeast Alaska Program Director

Cc:
John Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Mary Neumayr, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality
Vicki Christiansen, Chief, USDA Forest Service