



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

**MAY 22 2019**

Mr. Ben Bulis  
President and CEO  
American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
321 East Main Street, Suite 300  
Bozeman, Montana 59715

Dear Mr. Bulis:

Thank you for your letter of March 28, 2019, to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen and me, sharing your comments regarding development of a state-specific roadless rule for Alaska. I apologize for the delayed response.

In response to a petition from the State of Alaska, I instructed the Forest Service to initiate a public rulemaking process to address Roadless area management concerns on the Tongass National Forest.

The Forest Service seeks to actively engage communities, Tribes, and the public throughout the process of developing a state-specific Alaska Roadless Rule. In the fall of 2018, the Forest Service hosted 17 community meetings across Alaska and in Washington, D.C., to provide information, answer questions, and listen to communities about the rulemaking process. The Forest Service is developing a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) using public input received during these meetings. I expect the draft EIS to be released in summer of 2019, which will open a public comment period. The Forest Service will then host another round of public meetings to provide information about the draft EIS and answer questions. I encourage you to submit additional comments during the comment period and participate in these public meetings. In addition, Forest Service leaders in the Alaska region are always willing to meet with you and all citizens to hear your input.

I am committed to meeting economic, social, and natural resource needs for Alaskans and all Americans. The Forest Service values its collaboration with the State of Alaska, local communities, and other partners as we strive for shared stewardship of our public lands. The proposed Alaska Roadless Rule is an important part of achieving our shared goal.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the Tongass National Forest. I appreciate your participation in this process. Please share this response with the other members listed in your letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sonny Perdue".

Sonny Perdue  
Secretary



March 28, 2019

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

Ms. Vicki Christiansen  
 Chief, U.S. Forest Service  
 1400 Independence Ave., SW  
 Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue and Chief Christiansen:

As gear manufacturers, service providers, and communications professionals whose livelihoods depend on world-class hunting and fishing in Alaska, we are writing in regards to the management of 9.5 million acres of undeveloped public lands in the Tongass National Forest of Southeast Alaska. We understand that the US Forest Service is now reconsidering the future management of these lands under a state-focused Alaska Roadless Rule, and we encourage you to choose a balanced approach that would offset any new development in these areas with increased conservation measures for the highest-value public lands.

The Tongass National Forest is known nationwide for providing big game hunters with some of the finest and most readily available opportunities to pursue Sitka black-tailed deer and black bear, with quality hunting for mountain goat, moose, and Roosevelt elk offered as well. It is one of the only hunting destinations where nonresidents still can buy multiple deer tags over-the-counter and hunt without a guide. The Tongass is also among the world's largest wild salmon-producing regions, each year contributing nearly 50 million fish 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. From the Situk River in the north

to Prince of Wales Island in the south, the Tongass provides guided and unguided anglers some of the best and most diverse sportfishing opportunities available in North America.

This region is truly a sportsmen's paradise—not just for Alaskans, but for all Americans. And yet that could change if the Alaska Roadless Rule were to significantly alter the management of these lands. Pristine backcountry lands in the Tongass National Forest contain much of the region's productive wildlife habitat for big game species and supply the clean water and quality spawning habitats that support the region's robust fisheries. For these reasons they have been safeguarded for nearly two-decades under the 2001 roadless rule.

We cannot afford to lose those habitats and the hunting and fishing opportunities they provide, and we urge that you recognize their value in the development of a balanced Alaskan Roadless Rule.

Sincerely,

American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
Ben Bulis, President and CEO  
Bozeman, MT

C. F. Burkheimer Fly Rod Company  
Carl "Kerry" Burkheimer, Owner  
Washougal, WA

Chota Outdoor Gear  
Mark Brown, General Manager  
Knoxville, TN

Drake Magazine  
Tom Bie, Editor  
Denver, CO

Dryft Fishing  
Nick Satushek, President  
Bellingham, WA

First Lite  
Ford Van Fossan, Conservation and Content Manager  
Ketchum, ID

Fishpond  
Johnny Le Coq, CEO  
Denver, CO

Fly Water Travel  
Tag Kleiner, VP of Marketing  
Bainbridge Island, WA

The Flyfish Journal  
Jeff Galbraith, Publisher  
Bellingham, WA

Hatch Magazine  
Chad Shmukler, Editor  
Philadelphia, PA

Hatch Outdoors Inc  
Andrew Dickinson, General Manager  
Vista, CA

Loon Outdoors  
Brett Zundel, Owner / Director of Sales  
Boise, ID

MeatEater Inc.  
Steven Rinella  
Bozeman, MT

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

Nautilus Reels  
Kristen Mustad, Owner  
Miami, FL

Olympic Peninsula Skagit Tactics (OPST)  
Ben Paull, General Manager  
Tukwila, WA

The Orvis Company  
Dave Perkins, Vice Chairman  
Sunderland, VT

Redington  
Tag Kleiner, VP of Marketing  
Bainbridge Island, WA

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

Scott Fly Rod Company  
Jim Bartschi, President  
Montrose, CO

SpeyCo Fly Reels  
Tim Pantzlaff, Owner  
Green Bay, WI

Umpqua Feather Merchants  
Jeff Fryhover, President / CEO  
Louisville, CO

Rajeff Sports / ECHO Flyfishing  
James Lemon, Marketing  
Vancouver, WA

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

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

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

Thomas and Thomas  
Joe Goodspeed, Designer  
Greenfield, MA

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