

PROTECTING THE TONGASS - AMERICA'S RAINFOREST

Passed: 243-288

SUMMARY:

The House passed an amendment to protect the Tongass National Forest by blocking multi-million-dollar tax subsidies for expensive and destructive road building in this forest which consists of 17 million acres of prime fish and wildlife habitat. *(June 20, 2019, Roll Call No.382)*

BACKGROUND:

Known as "America's Rainforest," the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska is home to a stunning array of plant life and wildlife. The majestic 17 million acres of the Tongass, is North America's largest intact old-growth forest and a haven for black and brown bears, wolves, martens, northern goshawks, moose and five species of Pacific salmon. Unfortunately, decades of clearcutting by industrial timber operations have decimated large swaths of this one-of-a-kind habitat. And for decades, the Tongass National Forest timber industry has quietly benefited from hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies, much of it covering costs associated with building logging roads that serve no other public benefit.

Not only does the U.S. Forest Service have more road miles than the US highway system and far more miles than it can afford to maintain already but these roads in remote forests like the Tongass fragment important habitat, promote destructive logging activity and contribute to erosion and flooding.

Rep. Blumenauer (D-Ore) and Rep. Gallego (D-Ariz) offered an amendment to the FY20 Interior and Environment Division of the Appropriations minibus (H.R. 3055) to stop this multi-million dollar road subsidy to the timber industry in Alaska and, in the process, stop damaging an international treasure that attracts tourists from around the world and provides important habitat to incredible wildlife.

OUTCOME:

On June 20, 2019, the House passed the Blumenauer amendment, 243-188. "Yes" was the pro-conservation vote. Unfortunately, the amendment was not included in the final Interior appropriations bill signed into law in December 2019 by President Trump.