

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-9900

February 5, 2004

Dear Mr. President:

It was with tremendous dismay that we learned of your decision on December 23, 2003, to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the protection of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. It appears as if the entire process regarding the exemption of the Tongass has been one in which public sentiment has been ignored.

The Roadless Rule, which prohibits commercial logging and road building in pristine forest areas nationwide, is the most popular conservation policy in history. It is our understanding that the Forest Service has received 2.5 million public comments on the Rule, with the vast majority in support of strong protections for our forests.

More recently, over the summer, your Administration sought comment specifically on the proposal to exempt the Tongass and Chugach forests. Nearly a quarter of a million public comments were delivered to the Forest Service, 99 percent of which supported maintaining protections of the Tongass. Additionally, a growing diversity of voices — including large corporations, more than 450 gun clubs nationwide, the Garden Clubs of America, and the Forest Roads Working Group — have entered the debate in favor of protections. While the Forest Service may have complied with the letter of the law by seeking public input, they have willfully ignored the spirit of the law by turning a deaf ear to citizens' and interested constituencies' concerns.

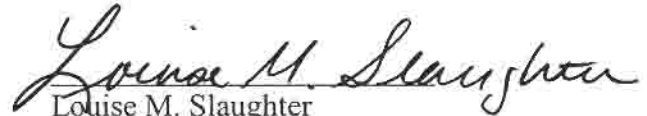
We are also concerned about the way in which the impacts of this exemption have been portrayed. While the Forest Service claims that "only" 300,000 acres of our nation's largest Forest will be impacted by the roads and timber sales the exemption will allow, the fact is that an industrial-scale footprint of clearcuts and road-building across 2.6 million acres of watersheds across the rainforest will scar the once pristine forest. Two-thirds of the Tongass is rock, ice, muskeg, and scrub forest. Only four percent of the forest ever contained the biggest most productive old growth standards—the ecological heart of the forest that lines river valley bottom and follows the coastline.

The Tongass National Forest is the largest intact temperate rainforest remaining in the world and home to an amazing array of species. By opening up unspoiled lands to destructive road building practices and clear cutting projects, we fear that the American people are in jeopardy of losing this incredible forest

This exemption flies in the face of public opinion, and threatens one of our nation's most pristine wilderness areas. We urge you to reverse this regulation and maintain the Roadless Rule's protection for the Tongass National Forest. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress


Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress

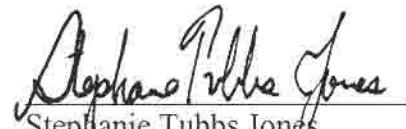

Dale Kildee
Member of Congress


Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress


John Olver
Member of Congress


Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

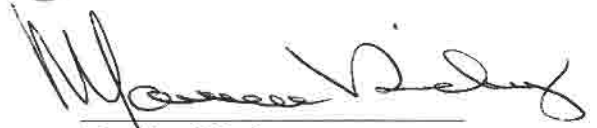

Joe Hoeffel
Member of Congress


Stephanie Tubbs Jones
Member of Congress


Jose Serrano
Member of Congress


Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Jim Langevin
Member of Congress



Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress


Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress


Ed Case
Member of Congress


Michael Michaud
Member of Congress


Rush Holt
Member of Congress



Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

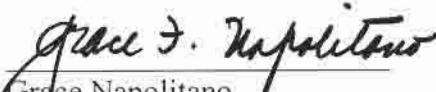

Mike Honda
Member of Congress



Jay Inslee
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Martin Frost
Member of Congress


David Price
Member of Congress


Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress


Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress


Rahm Emanuel
Member of Congress

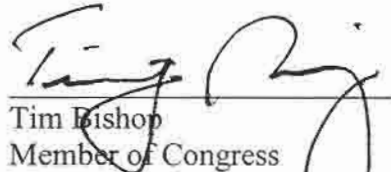

Ed Towns
Member of Congress



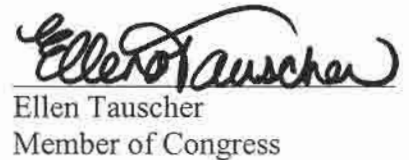
Lane Evans
Member of Congress



Bobby Rush
Member of Congress



Tim Bishop
Member of Congress



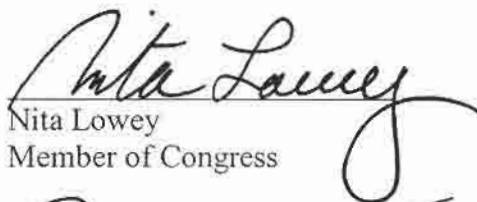
Ellen Tauscher
Member of Congress



Jim McGovern
Member of Congress




Gary Ackerman
Member of Congress



Nita Lowey
Member of Congress



Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



Jerry Costello
Member of Congress



Bobby Etheridge
Member of Congress




Jim Moran
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



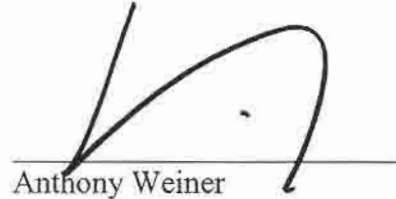
Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



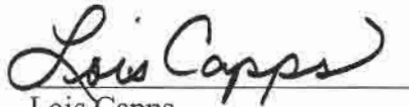
Peter Deutsch
Member of Congress



Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress



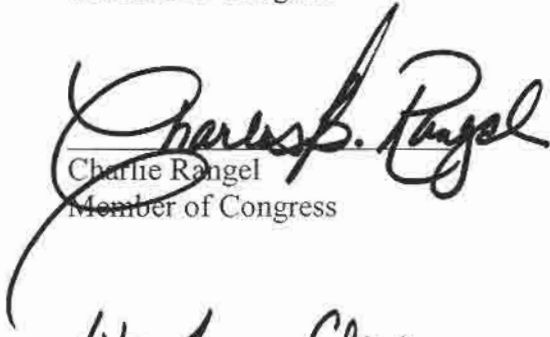
Anthony Weiner
Member of Congress



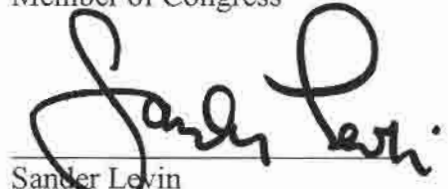
Lois Capps
Member of Congress



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



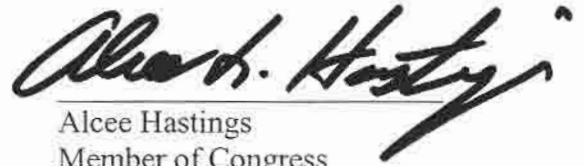
Charlie Rangel
Member of Congress



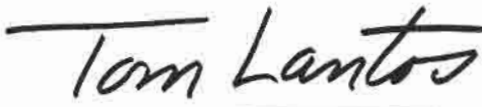
Sander Levin
Member of Congress



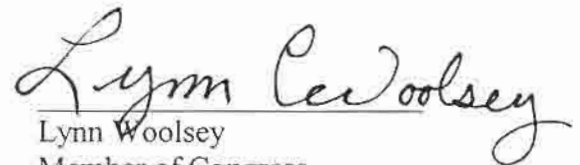
Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



Alcee Hastings
Member of Congress



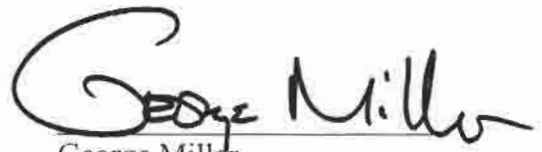
Tom Lantos
Member of Congress



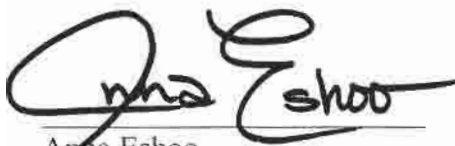
Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress



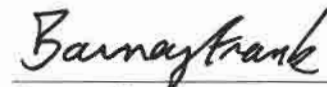
Nancy Pelosi
Member of Congress



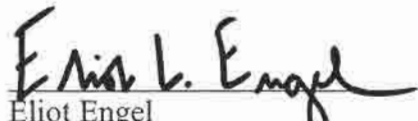
George Miller
Member of Congress

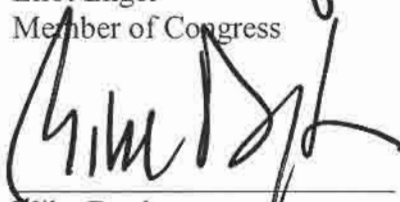


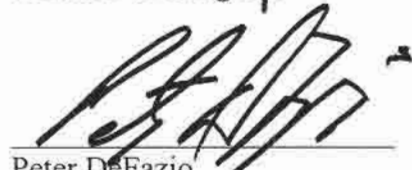
Anna Eshoo
Member of Congress



Barney Frank
Member of Congress



Eliot Engel
Member of Congress



Mike Doyle
Member of Congress


Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress


Ed Markey
Member of Congress


Michael McNulty
Member of Congress

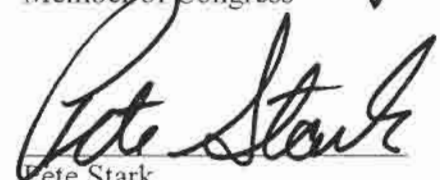

Howard Berman
Member of Congress


Jane Harman
Member of Congress


Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

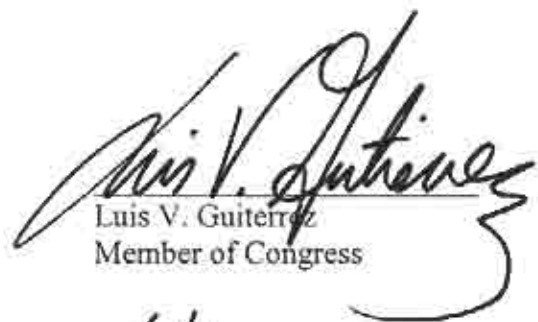

Bob Filner
Member of Congress


Frank Pallone
Member of Congress


Pete Stark
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Luis V. Guterrez
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Hilda L. Solis
Member of Congress



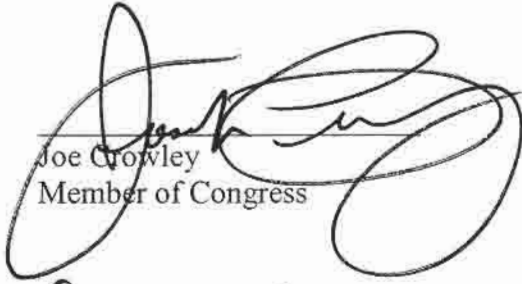
Robert J. Matsui
Member of Congress



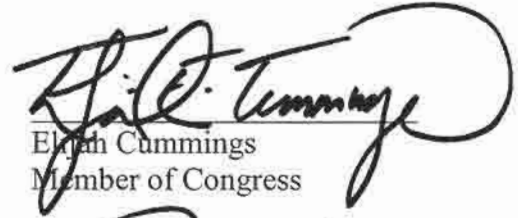
Bill Delahunt
Member of Congress



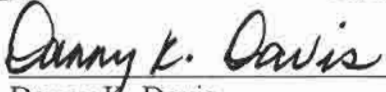
Tom Allen
Member of Congress



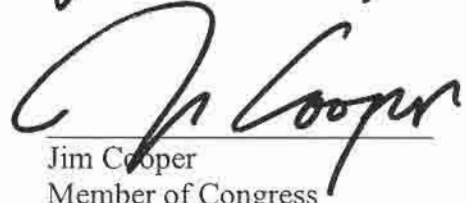
Joe Crowley
Member of Congress



Elijah Cummings
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Jim Cooper
Member of Congress