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July xx, xxxx

Dear Member of Congress:

We are writing on behalf of our millions of members and supporters to voice our strong support for the Roadless Area Conservation Act, which was recently introduced by Representatives Ruben Gallego and Diana DeGette and Senator Maria Cantwell. This legislation would codify the U.S. Forest Service's Roadless Rule, which since 2001 has played a critical role in protecting 58.8 million acres of National Forest land in 39 states from logging and road building.

Roadless Areas provide invaluable ecological, recreational, and climate benefits. They offer habitat for thousands of wildlife species, provide opportunities for recreational activities such as camping, hiking, and fishing, supply clean drinking water to millions of Americans, and save taxpayers millions of dollars by limiting expensive roadbuilding on our cherished public lands. Our National Forests also serve as essential tools in the fight against climate change, acting as carbon sinks that store and sequester significant amounts of carbon emissions.

Despite the many benefits of maintaining intact roadless areas on public lands, and the overwhelming public support for protection of these areas, the Roadless Rule is under attack on multiple fronts. The Forest Service is working on a rule that could exempt more than 9 million acres of roadless public lands in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska from roadless protections, putting these important lands at risk of logging and road construction. Additionally, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue is considering whether to create similar exemptions in Utah that would threaten another 4 million acres of roadless national forest. Given these proposals, passing legislation to codify the federal Roadless Rule is more urgent than ever.

The Roadless Area Conservation Act would also save millions of taxpayer dollars by continuing to limit expensive roadbuilding, and allowing the Forest Service to instead focus on maintaining its existing 371,000 miles of network roads, at a time at a time when the agency is experiencing a 3.2 billion dollar maintenance backlog. In 2015 an analysis found that timber sales in the Tongass incurred losses of over \$20 million a year while Forest Service expenditures continuously outpaced revenue from timber sales. The American taxpayer has subsidized these

losses. More than 240 million people are living within 100 miles of a national forest or national grasslands, and roadless areas contribute billions to the U.S. Outdoor recreation economy. For example, in 2017, the outdoor recreation economy generated \$887 billion in consumer spending and 7.6 million direct jobs nationally with \$59.2 billion in local and state tax revenue. Lastly, the roadless rule is working exceptionally well at protecting national forest land from road building and commercial logging while providing flexibility for numerous other activities. For instance, the Forest Service has reviewed and approved, typically within two months, dozens of projects within Alaska's roadless areas, including 29 mining projects, 9 hydroelectric or intertie projects, a geothermal lease, and even an aerial tram.

The Roadless Area Conservation Act would make the Roadless Rule the law of the land, thereby preserving the clean water, recreation, wildlife, and cultural values of National Forests nationwide. We strongly support this legislation, and encourage you to help defend our National Forests by becoming a cosponsor. To join us in ending these attacks on our wildest national forests, please contact Mariel Jorgensen in Rep. Gallego's (D-AZ) office Mariel.jorgensen@mail.house.gov and in the Senate Amit Ronen in Senator Cantwell's (D-WA) Office Amit.Ronen@cantwell.senate.gov.