

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 9, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave
Washington, D.C., 20250

The Honorable Tom Schultz
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins and Chief Schultz,

We write with concern that, in affording just 21 days for public comment, the U.S. Forest Service is not providing an adequate opportunity for meaningful public participation on its Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (NOI) for the proposed repeal of the Roadless Rule. We respectfully request that you extend the comment period by at least thirty days. We also encourage you to conduct more robust stakeholder engagement, including by holding public hearings in all states with Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and consulting proactively with Tribal governments.

The Roadless Rule is a landmark public-lands rule that has ensured the responsible management of nearly 60 million acres of National Forest System land and the irreplaceable resources they provide since its inception. Its repeal represents a major shift in the longstanding management of lands in virtually all federal forests across the country – forests that our constituents care deeply about. This includes protections of over half of the 17 million-acre mature and old-growth Tongass National Forest in Alaska – America’s largest forest and last remaining temperate rainforest – which offers critical opportunities for Tribal subsistence, tourism, outdoor recreation, and carbon sequestration. Twenty-one days is simply not enough to provide the opportunity for meaningful participation that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires.

This is an issue with broad public interest from conservationists, recreationists, Tribal communities, and more. When the Roadless Rule was first adopted, more than 1.6 million comments were submitted in favor of the rule. Everyday Americans have a real stake in this issue, and twenty-one days is simply not enough time for individuals to take time out of their busy lives to research, prepare, and submit meaningful comments on such a complex and significant issue. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) held more than 400 public meetings across the country during the 2001 Roadless Rule rulemaking process and has a responsibility to similarly ensure adequate opportunity for the public to weigh in on the proposed repeal.

Additionally, it is the responsibility of the U.S. Government to hold robust and meaningful Tribal consultation with any impacted Tribal governments. Considering the breadth of the Roadless Rule’s purview, numerous Tribes will be impacted, and to our knowledge there has been virtually no Tribal consultation on this significant and sudden policy shift. This is contrary to the Forest Service’s protocol, which requires a minimum tribal consultation period of 120 days for national-level decisions.

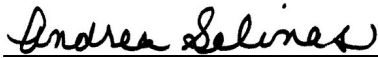
Participation by Tribes, local governments and by the public, “in cooperation” with the federal government, is central to the democratic process, and execution of the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”)¹. As the U.S. Supreme Court has explained, NEPA guarantees that “relevant information will be made available to the

¹ 42 U.S.C. 4331(a).

larger audience that may also play a role in both the decision-making process and the implementation of that decision.”² Allowing the public to participate early on addresses NEPA’s “manifest concern with preventing uninformed action,” because it is through the “broad dissemination of information” that “the public” can “react to the effects of a proposed action at a meaningful time.”³

Considering the complex nature of this proposal and the widespread local and national interests likely to be affected, we strongly urge you to provide a minimum of 45 days for the public to comment and participate in public hearings, and 120 days for Tribal consultation.

Sincerely,



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



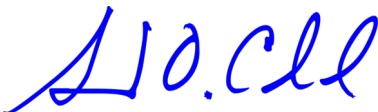
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Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Alex Padilla
United States Senator

² *Robertson v. Methow Valley Citizens Council*, 490 U.S. 332, 349 (1989).

³ *Marsh v. Or. Nat. Res. Council*, 490 U.S. 360, 371 (1989).



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



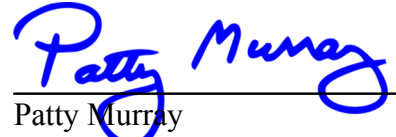
Rashida Tlaib
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Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



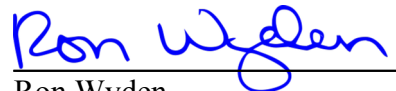
Jim Tokuda
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Patty Murray
United States Senator



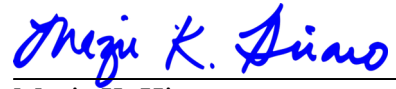
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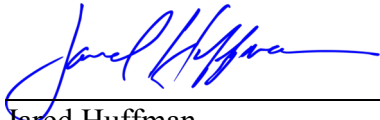
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United States Senator



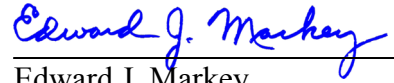
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Tina Smith
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Jared Huffman
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United States Senator



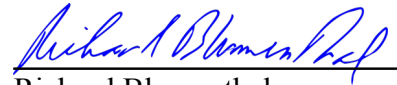
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Mark R. Warner
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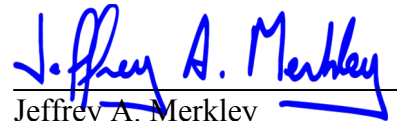
Steve Cohen
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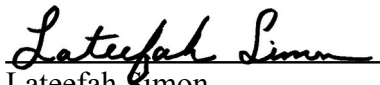
Adam B. Schiff
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Sara Jacobs
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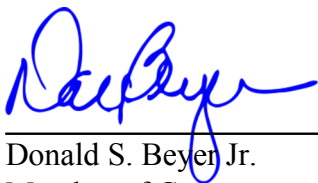
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



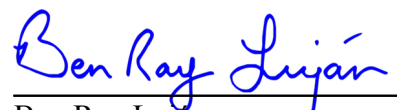
Lateefah Simon
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Peter Welch
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Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



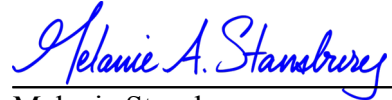
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Cory A. Booker
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Marilyn Strickland
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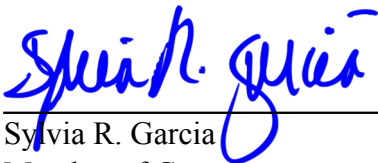
Melanie Stansbury
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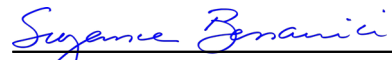
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Rick Larsen
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Sylvia R. Garcia
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Maxine Waters
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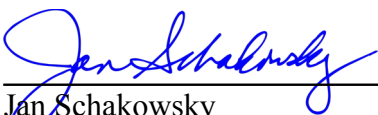
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



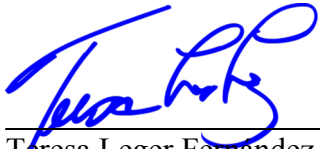
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



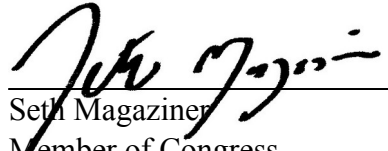
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



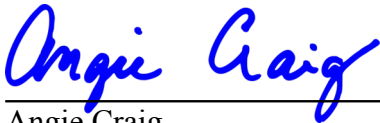
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



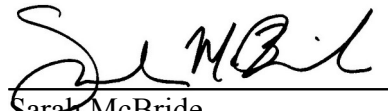
Teresa Leger Fernandez
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Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on
Agriculture



Sarah McBride
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