

Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250  
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[Tom.Vilsack@osec.usda.gov](mailto:Tom.Vilsack@osec.usda.gov)

August 8, 2022

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

The undersigned representing 32 communities in Southeast Alaska along with the timber, mining, and renewable energy organizations and related businesses throughout the region and the State write to express their strong support for the points made in Senator Lisa Murkowski's attached letter to you of August 4, 2022, and Alaska Commissioner of Natural Resources Corri Feige's attached letter to you of May 25, 2022.

We specifically endorse Senator Murkowski' point that

Alaskans, and all Americans, deserve to understand the full range of consequences that the reimposition of the Roadless Rule on the Tongass will have. As part of that analysis, it is critical that USDA provide an accurate, modern account of the vast mineral resources within the Tongass, as well as the current value of those resources, so that we can understand what a loss of access, or substantially higher development costs, will truly mean. We need to understand how the Roadless Rule's restrictions will impact mineral availability and affordability, the ability to transition to electric vehicles and other technologies, and our national security.

and the State's recommendation that the USDA

fund completion of a comprehensive study of mineral resources for the entire Tongass as part of the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy; effectively updating Coldwell (1990) and Brew et al. (1991). Both studies, while containing important information, could be significantly improved upon with the new technology, imagery, and data gathering available today – and with a better understanding of the demand for and value of critical minerals in the fast-evolving modern technology and manufacturing industries.

Making minerals more difficult and expensive to access on the Tongass would conflict with the President's March 31, 2022, directive to the Department of Defense

to use the Defense Production Act of 1950 to fund feasibility studies for domestic production of critical minerals to combat climate change and for other purposes. Therefore, the proposed comprehensive study of Tongass mineral resources should be undertaken and completed so the Biden Administration and the public will know what minerals in what quantities will be impacted or foregone before USDA reimposes the 2001 Roadless Rule on the Tongass National Forest, which it has announced it will do in November 2022.

Finally, because of the adverse impacts of the 2001 Roadless Rule on the timber, mineral, and hydropower resources of the Tongass we continue to believe that it is in the national interest to continue to exempt the Tongass from the Roadless Rule.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kati Capozzi, President & CEO  
President/General Mgr.  
Alaska Chamber

Alec Mesdag,  
Alaska Electric Light & Power  
Company

Tessa Axelson, Executive Director  
Alaska Forest Association

Deantha Skibinski,  
Executive Director  
Alaska Miners Association

Jason Custer, Vice President,  
Alaska Power & Telephone Company

Don Habeger, Executive  
Director First Things First  
Alaska Foundation

Craig Dahl, Executive Director  
Greater Juneau Chamber of  
Commerce

Michelle O'Brien, Executive  
Director, Greater Ketchikan of  
Chamber of Commerce

Trey Acteson, Chief Executive  
Officer  
Southeast Alaska Power Agency

Robert Venables,  
Executive Director  
Southeast Conference

Leila Kimbrell, Executive Director  
Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc.

Randy Johnson, President  
Tyler Rental

Karen Matthias, Executive Director  
Council of Alaska Producers

Rebecca Logan, Executive  
Director, Alaska Alliance

The **Alaska Alliance** is a 43-year-old trade association with a mission to promote the responsible development of Alaska's oil, gas, and mineral resources. It represents 500 Alaskan businesses who employ 35,000 people in the state of Alaska.

The **Alaska Chamber** represents 100,000 Alaskan employees and businesses large and small. The mission of the Alaska Chamber is to promote a positive business environment and grow and foster a healthy and diverse economy in Alaska. The Chamber stands behind strong, pro-business public policy and advocates for the issues that impact Alaska businesses. A healthy business climate benefits everyone who lives and works in Alaska.

The **Alaska Electric Light & Power Company** provides retail electric service for approximately 17,000 customers, including the Greens Creek Mine, in the City and Borough of Juneau. The oldest regulated electric utility in Alaska, AEL&P began more than a century of service in 1893 with a simple water wheel.

The **Alaska Forest Association (AFA)** is a forest trade association representing an array of members with an interest in the forest products industry in Alaska. AFA members include, but are not limited to, timber operators, contractors, equipment suppliers, fuel distributors, tribal organizations, forest product vendors, sawmills, other affiliated industry associations and private citizens. AFA's activities are directly related to the viability of the forest products industry in Alaska. AFA is committed to advancing the restoration, promotion and maintenance of a healthy, viable forest products industry, contributing to economic and ecological health in Alaska's forests and communities.

The **Alaska Miners Association (AMA)** is a non-profit professional membership organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry throughout Alaska. The AMA has a diverse membership composed of more than 1,800 individual and corporate members that come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, Haines and Nome. Alaska's miners are individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, major mining companies, Alaska Native Corporations, and the contracting sector that supports Alaska's mining industry. AMA members explore for and produce gold, silver, platinum, molybdenum, lead, zinc, copper, coal, limestone, sand and gravel, crushed stone, armor rock, and other materials.

The **Alaska Power & Telephone Company** is

**First Things First Alaska Foundation** is dedicated to preserving the economic viability and future of Alaska through education. There is a clear need to educate the public on the benefits of responsible economic development and natural resource management.

The **Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce** is a member organization representing just under 400 businesses in Juneau. As is typical to all chambers, our overriding mission is to promote and protect the economic environment in which our business members operate; in fact every business in our market benefits from our efforts – members or not. We must be diligent to monitor, local, state and federal issues that directly or indirectly improve or impair the business climate. Our membership represents virtually every type of business organization that operates in this market, from the smallest retailer to two world-class silver and gold mines, the cruise ship industry, fish processors and a variety of marine related businesses. Long missing from our membership is anyone involved directly in timber, but we clearly need to ensure that the existing and under-exploration mines in this region have guaranteed access to mineral deposits, and the utilization of existing road systems needs to be preserved. We do not pretend to be experts in all aspects of this issue, but we believe that the economic health and longevity of this region would be strengthened if the Tongass were to be removed from the roadless rules, and managed as originally envisioned. We believe that tourism, fishing, mining, and a renewed timber industry can coexist to the benefit of all in the region.

The **Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce** is a diverse community-based organization comprised of over 250 members, including private sector businesses, non-profit organizations, and local governments. Our member-businesses include some of the largest employers in Southeast Alaska, as well as the State of Alaska, which provide family-wage jobs to thousands of Alaskans. The Ketchikan Chamber brings businesses, investors, and customers together to work toward the common goal of encouraging a sustainable economy which can preserve the socioeconomic well-being of our community, and the families who call it home.

The **Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc.** is an Alaskan business association comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's oil and gas, mining, forest products, tourism and fisheries industries. RDC's membership includes Alaska Native Corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC's purpose is to encourage a strong, diversified private

sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through the responsible development of our natural resources.

The **Southeast Alaska Power Agency** is a Joint Action Agency of the State of Alaska, formed as a public corporation existing under Alaska Statutes §§42.45.300-.320. SEAPA owns two hydroelectric projects in Southeast Alaska (Swan Lake and the Tye Lake Hydroelectric Facilities) and associated transmission facilities that provide economical, renewable, non-carbon-based electric power to SEAPA's three member public utilities located in Wrangell, Petersburg, and Ketchikan. SEAPA has a vital interest in the management of the Tongass because application of the Roadless Rule to the Tongass adversely affects its ability to generate affordable renewable electric power in rural Southeast Alaska as an alternative to diesel and other fossil fuels. With rare exceptions, communities in Southeast Alaska are not connected by road or to the North American electrical grid and rely on either renewable hydroelectric power or non-renewable and polluting diesel generation for their electricity needs.

**Southeast Conference** is comprised of more than 200 members who are concerned about the future of Southeast Alaska and who share a collective desire to build and support strong economies and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska. Its history dates back to 1958 when an association of communities joined to advocate for the establishment of the Alaska Marine Highway System. Over the ensuing decades, the Southeast Conference's mission and membership broadened to the point that it now works to advance the collective interests of the people, communities, Native organizations and businesses throughout Southeast Alaska. Among other roles, the Southeast Conference is the state-designated Alaska Regional Development Organization and the federally-designated Economic Development District for southeast Alaska. Among its members are communities located in and around the Tongass National Forest, Alaska chambers of commerce, Native organizations, nonprofit and community organizations, independent power authorities, public utilities, and private individuals and companies, including companies having ties to regionally important industries like the Southeast Alaska tourism, fisheries, mariculture, timber, hydroelectric, mining and transportation industries.

**Tyler Rental Inc.** is a full line rental equipment company serving the Construction, Forestry, Maritime and Mining industries from six locations in Alaska and Washington State. Tyler Rental has provided a broad range of specialized rental equipment for contractors and do-it-yourselfers since 1989. In 2018, Tyler employed over 100 employees with total assets in excess of \$90 million.

cc: U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski  
U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan  
Congressman Don Young's Office  
Governor Michael J. Dunleavy