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For Immediate Release
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In Case You Missed It: Rep. Don Young's Amendment to Boost Alaska Forestry Passes House Floor



WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Western Caucus Member Don Young (**AK-At Large**) released the following statement after his Amendment #69 to H.R. 2 - which would exempt Alaska from the 2001 'Roadless Rule' and thereby boost forestry in several National Forest System units in which it has been artificially suppressed - passed the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 208-207:

Congressman Young stated, “I want to thank my colleagues on the Western Caucus for supporting my amendment to exempt national forests in Alaska from the Roadless rule. The Clinton-era Roadless Rule applies a one-sized-fits all approach to areas where those policies rarely work, especially the federally locked lands of Alaska. In my years living in and representing Alaska, I’ve watched tens of thousands of jobs in the logging and support industries dwindle down to a few hundred. The economy of Southeast Alaska is hurting, not because of the recession or a poor timber market; but because of radical and ill-advised environmentalism. This amendment ensures the U.S. Forest Service fulfils its multiple-use mandate, which includes providing timber sales in the Tongass and Chugach National Forests.”

Background:

On Friday, May 18, 2018, Congressman Don Young's Amendment #69 to H.R. 2 - colloquially known as the 'Farm Bill' - was agreed to by a vote of 208-207 on the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

If made law, the amendment would exempt National Forests in Alaska from the 'Roadless Rule' while leaving intact all relevant management authorities including the Tongass Forest Plan. The 2001 Roadless Rule set aside 9.5 million acres of the Tongass National Forest from road development, effectively prohibiting access to mature timber stands.

At 16.8 million acres, the Tongass National Forest is the largest in the nation. Coupled with the Chugach National Forest, Alaska contains over 12% of the total acreage in the national forest system. Over 90% of the Tongass is inaccessible by road. The lack of access to timber not only costs Alaskans good-paying jobs in an important, but artificially declining industry - but also promotes premature tree death and degenerating forest health from disease and infestations. The Roadless Rule also effectively blocks implementation of the multiple-use mandate that applies by law to federal forest lands.

The regulation as it stands limits harvesting to under 8% of the Tongass. This fact makes conservation within the Forest significantly more difficult because locations with less tourism and conservation value are largely precluded from selection for timber. Conservation and logging interests directly compete for the same limited accessible acreage.

The State of Alaska sued for relief from the rule, and was granted a temporary exemption to Roadless in 2003. At that time, the Bush administration concluded that the social and economic hardships to Southeast Alaska imposed under the rule outweighed its potential long-term ecological benefits because the Tongass Forest Plan adequately provided for the ecological sustainability of the Tongass. That exemption was lifted in 2011, and the issue is once again making its way through the courts.

As a consequence, a clear statutory exemption such as is provided with Congressman Young's amendment is the most appropriate means of returning to commonsense policy.

See the text of Congressman Young's amendment [here](#). A press release by Congressman Young on the amendment's passage can be found [here](#).

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