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Alaska Delegation Introduces Legislation Repealing Roadless Rule

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Mark Begich and Congressman Don Young today introduced legislation to repeal the 2001 Roadless Rule in Alaska’s National Forests. Senator Lisa Murkowski co-sponsored the Senate measure.

“This cookie-cutter rule is a bad fit for Alaska,” **Begich** said. “With high unemployment and high energy costs in Southeast Alaska, the Forest Service needs greater flexibility to address these issues. Repealing the rule will help keep the few existing mills alive and allow for the development of hydro projects throughout the region as well as two promising mining projects on Prince of Wales Island. Instead of adding options, the roadless rule takes them away.”

"The Roadless Rule was ill-conceived and based on a one-size-fits-all theory," said **Young**. "As we have seen time and time again, the one-size-fits-all approach rarely ever applies to Alaska. The economic well-being and way of life for many Alaskans relies on responsible resource development and this legislation will ensure that this rule doesn't harm Alaska more than it already has. Over the last few decades I have watched the timber industry go from thousands of jobs to nothing; we cannot allow the government to decimate this area more than they already have. This legislation is an economic necessity so that Alaskans may start to responsibly develop our resources in these areas again."

“The roadless rule never made sense for Alaska since 96 percent of the Tongass and 99 percent of the Chugach are already protected by ANILCA and forest management plans,” **Murkowski** said. “Exempting the Tongass from the roadless rule will help make certain that what little remains of the timber industry in Southeast can survive long enough for the Forest Service to

implement its second-growth harvest policy. The exemption will also ensure that hydropower and other affordable energy projects in Southeast can move forward.”

As the latest step in a complex history of litigation, a March 2011 Federal District Court ruling set aside the Tongass Exemption and reinstated the application of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule in the Tongass National Forest. A 2003 administrative ruling had previously blocked the rule’s implementation in the Tongass. The legislation introduced today would prevent use of the rule in planning and decision making for Alaska’s Chugach and Tongass National Forests.

As implemented, the rule prohibits new roads in inventoried roadless areas and prohibits most timber harvest in these areas. The March court decision reinstating the rule effectively places 300,000 acres of inventoried roadless area in which logging would have been allowed under the Tongass Land Management Plan off limits to development.

Alaska’s two national forests are the nation’s largest. The Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska, at 17 million acres, covers an area the size of West Virginia. The Chugach National Forest, stretching from the eastern Kenai Peninsula to most of Prince William Sound is 5.4 million acres.

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