

Alaska Rainforest Defenders

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Alaska Rainforest Defenders mission: *“To defend and promote the biological integrity of Southeast Alaska’s terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations.”*



ARD has been quite busy defending our forest ecosystems since reporting to you last fall. In particular, ARD’s defense of the never ending continuum of forest onslaughts is an ongoing challenge. We have met every comment deadline with comprehensive facts in support of no further diminishment of local habitats. This fall, we sent action alerts to members and other interested folks on the Roadless Rule and proposed Central Tongass Project. A big “thank you” to folks who were able to submit comments on those proposed forest destroying actions. As a consequence of these time consuming tasks, updates to our website content have taken a back seat, but as time allows we will continue to update it. Above all, we remain committed to defense of our local ecosystems in the face of these serious threats.

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Following is a brief description of our activities in 2018:

Alaska Roadless Rule. Trump's Forest Service and Governor Dunlevy's (formerly Walker's) State of Alaska are in the process of federal rulemaking to permanently exempt the Tongass national forest from the Roadless Rule. Although labeled as a "state specific" exemption, it does not include the Chugach National Forest and is intended for the singular benefit the SE Alaska timber industry. In late August 2018, the Forest Service initiated a new scoping process for the exemption and held a series of public information sessions throughout Southeast Alaska, and Washington DC. The public spoke loud and clear—they do not support any change to the existing Rule. In an effort to stack the deck, Governor Walker appointed a thirteen member Citizen's Advisory Committee largely composed of timber industry supporters and quasi environmentalists. As mandated upon their formation, the committee fast-tracked various roadless options to the Governor by Nov. 30. As detailed in our 37-page comments to the proposed exemption (available on our website), the roadless rulemaking process is flawed. There is already and continues to be overwhelming public support for the existing Rule. This attempt to exempt or tamper with the Rule should be dropped. In a late-breaking news to this update, a group of signatories including 3 conservation groups and fishing/travel organizations sent a letter to Sec. Perdue and Governor Dunlevy in support of diminishment of the Rule. Alaska Rainforest Defenders are very disappointed with their position and wholeheartedly disagree with their stance.

Prince of Wales Landscape Level Assessment. While there is no excuse for logging anymore old-growth forest on Prince of Wales Island, this project would log 435 million board feet and build 164 miles of road. We submitted scoping comments last December (and had commented at previous opportunities in late 2016 and mid-2017). In May, we joined with other organizations in comments on the Draft EIS, and in addition independently submitted our own 58 pages of comments to take a stronger stance and provide more details and reasoning. These comments are also posted to our website.

Central Tongass Project (aka Central Tongass Landscape Level Assessment). This project masquerades as an "integrated resource project" that includes recreation improvements and such, but is in reality a massive logging project. The intent is for 150 million board feet of old growth logging as well as 80 million board feet of young growth logging. The Forest Service is presently conducting a third project scoping public comment period on the project; all three were held this year. We commented in February and May, and submitted further comments on Sept. 24 (available on our website).

South Revilla Project. Other than that it would log 60 million board feet of old-growth from the Carroll Inlet area in the middle of Revillagigedo Island (the island Ketchikan is on), this project is not yet well defined. There is no excuse for the habitat damage this project would cause. It is adjacent to the 13 square miles of forest the Alaska Mental Health Trust recently acquired from the Tongass and which will be clearcut and AMHT's existing 4,000 acre clearcut at Leask Lakes and adds to the landscapes already logged in the project area by Ketchikan pulp mill. We submitted scoping comments in early September opposing the project.

Wrangell Island Project. The Forest Service made its final decision on this project in December, backing off logging levels to "5-7 million board feet". The range of alternatives in the Final EIS (July 2017) ranged from 39 to 56 million board feet, and ARD filed strong formal objection to those alternatives and the project as a whole. We made a big difference on this timber project. (The decision is unusual in specifying the volume as a range.)

North Kuiu Timber Sale. In April we joined other organizations in suing the Forest Service to block this 13.5 million board foot timber sale, and the suit is still in progress. The EIS and record of decision on this timber project date to 2008.

DNR Edna Bay Parlay Timber Sale. The DNR commissioner's decision on our second administrative appeal of this project was issued in February. He deleted logging of old-growth forest in the northwest quarter of Section 34, but allowed the rest of the sale to proceed. Earlier, as a result of our 2014 comments on the proposed sale, the amount of logging was downscaled. The commissioner's decision of our first (2016) appeal withdrew the project decision and ordered further planning and a new decision, leading to our second appeal.

Southeast State Forest Five-year Schedule. In March we filed comments opposing the DNR Division of Forestry's schedule for timber sales on state land in southern Southeast. DOF proposes to extract 173 million board feet (MMBF) of mostly old-growth timber including nearly 90 MMBF from Prince of Wales Island and surrounding outer islands, 63 MMBF from state lands near Ketchikan, Wrangell and Petersburg and 10 MMBF for the small sale program. The market for nearly all of this timber volume is raw log export to Asia.

University of Alaska timber sale in Haines. In May we joined Lynn Canal Conservation in commenting against a 13,000 acre, 150 million board foot timber sale by the University of Alaska, for which decisionmaking was rammed through on a very short timeline, for an undisclosed buyer who approached the university. The market is raw-log export.

Export monitoring. In January we monitored the week-long loading of the log freighter New Face, in Klawock. The logs were shipped to China. The load included Viking lumber logs from the Big Thorne timber sale and Alcan Forest Product logs from its logging of a large University of Alaska landholding on Kosciusko Island. The M/V New Face, shown here and two sister ships (Whisper and Alaska), which haul logs to Asia from B.C. and the Pacific Northwest, are owned by Alcan's parent company, the multi-national Transpac Group.



Complaints to USDA Office of Inspector General. We filed complaints with the USDA Office of Inspector General this year, asking for investigation of what we believe is illegal planning and contracting in Forest Service timber sales on Kosciusko and Heceta Islands, under the so-called Good Neighbor Authority (see next item). The complaints stem from information we obtained through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). We combined efforts with Public Employees for Environmental Ethics (PEER) on the Kosciusko complaint.

Forest Service "Good Neighbor Authority" timber sales, through State of Alaska. Congress passed law allowing states to, in the place of the Forest Service, sell contracts for restoration projects on national forests and administer the work and those contracts. The law is known as the Good Neighbor Authority. On the Tongass, the Forest Service is abusing this law by allowing the state to take over what actually are timber sales, not restoration projects, such as its Kosciusko, Vallenar and Heceta projects. We believe this is flatly illegal, and that Division of Forestry methods will lead to environmentally detrimental corner-cutting. For example, in administering the Forest Service's Kosciusko project, DOF allowed the timber purchaser to do the cutting unit layouts. Alaska's State Forester has said, "Turning federal land over to the state was a step too far, but this [the Good Neighbor Authority] gets us halfway there." By "turning land over" he was referring to Murkowski's 2016 bill to give the state two million acres from the Tongass, to be added to the Southeast State Forest for the purpose of logging.



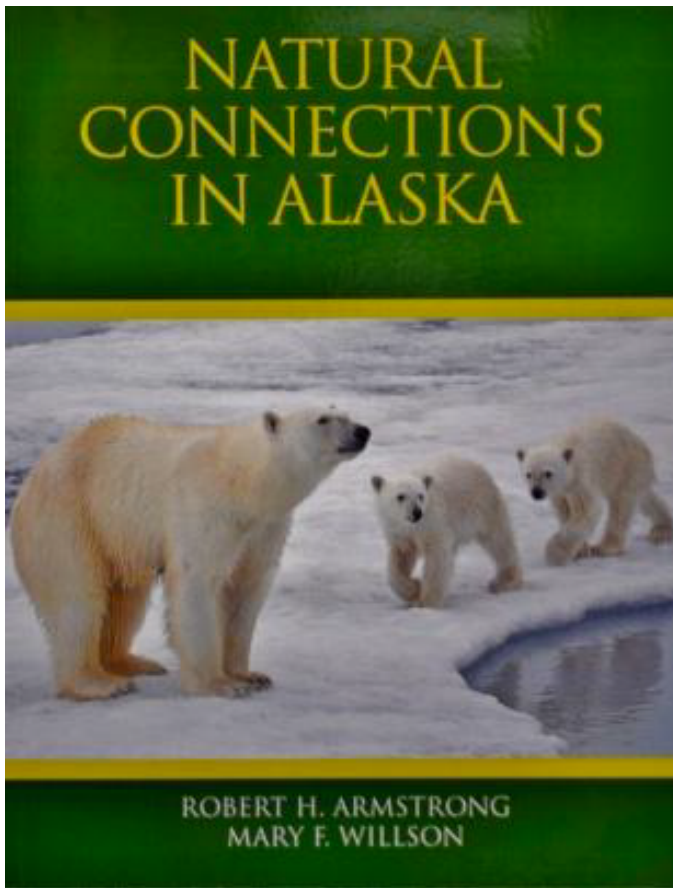
DONATIONS ARE WELCOME

We are an all-volunteer organization, yet there are expenses we must meet in order to accomplish as much as we do. To pay those expenses, we count on donations, annual membership renewals, and increasing our membership.

If you would like to join, make a donation, or have not yet made a 2018 membership renewal contribution, we hope that you will take this opportunity to do so in whatever amount best fits your budget. Our donation/membership webpage is newly improved. Alaskans might consider donating a portion of their Permanent Fund Dividend.

Secure on-line donations can be made on our web site <https://alaskarainforest.org>, or mail a check to:

**Alaska Rainforest Defenders
P. O. Box 6064
Sitka, AK 99835**



Special Donation Incentive:

Those donating will receive, upon request, a complimentary copy of Bob Armstrong's and Mary Willson's 80-page book, "Natural Connections in Alaska." It contains over 175 color photos and makes for interesting and informative reading for students and anyone who appreciates Alaska's fish and wildlife treasures.

From the authors' Introduction:

"This is a book about natural connections among organisms, so we should make clear at the outset what we mean by 'connections.' Here is an excellent example that began to be understood when researchers noticed that populations of sea lions and sea otters in western Alaska had declined markedly, even catastrophically.

As researchers delved more deeply into probable causes, they began to understand that these declines were probably the result of a long chain of interactions, reaching back into history . . ."

~A sincere "Thank You" to all our supporters~

~Alaska Rainforest Defenders~