



## THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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Dear Member of Congress:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments on the Chabot/Andrews Amendment to the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations bill. The Wildlife Society realizes the importance of conserving the roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest and does not support federal subsidies for new road construction in the Tongass. Therefore, The Wildlife Society respectfully requests your support of the Chabot/Andrews Amendment, which halts taxpayer subsidies for the construction of logging roads by private companies into the remaining roadless areas of Alaska's Tongass National Forest.

The Wildlife Society (TWS), founded in 1937, is an international non-profit scientific and educational association dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve species diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society. TWS membership includes over 8,000 professionals and university students with expertise in all aspects of wildlife research and management, including forest ecology and the conservation and management of forest wildlife.

TWS supported the 2001 Roadless Rule, particularly the inclusion of the Tongass National Forest. Based on that decision and our continued involvement and expertise in this issue, TWS requests your support of the Chabot/Andrews Amendment to the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations bill. This amendment would eliminate federal subsidies for the construction of logging roads by private companies into the remaining roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest.

The conservation of roadless areas is one of the cornerstones to sustainable public lands management and biological diversity conservation. Roadless areas within the national forest system are important to maintain healthy and productive terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems on our nation's public lands.

The network of over 4 million miles of roads that traverse the contiguous United States exceeds by 1 million miles the total length of the nation's streams<sup>1</sup>. The extensive road system allows the public to drive within a mile of more than 80% of all lands within the contiguous United States. Although federal lands provide the greatest opportunity to maintain relatively intact ecosystems, the extensive road network on these lands already exceeds 400,000 miles. For example, over 5,000 miles of logging roads have been constructed in Alaska's Tongass National Forest.

The ecological consequences of roads include: (1) increased soil erosion; (2) degradation of air and water quality; (3) spread of invasive species; (4) mortality, avoidance, and displacement of

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<sup>1</sup> K.H. Ritters and J.D. Wickham. 2003. How far to the nearest road? *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 1(3):125-129.

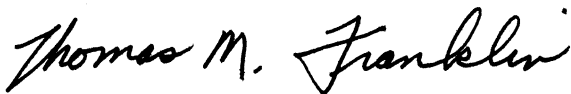
wildlife; and (5) habitat fragmentation<sup>2</sup>. These impacts may extend out to a quarter of a mile on either side of a road, creating a road-effect zone that includes nearly one-fifth of the total surface area of the nation<sup>3</sup>. Road-related habitat fragmentation has been documented for every region of the contiguous United States<sup>4</sup> and portions of Alaska<sup>5</sup>. Alteration of hydrologic flow, degradation of streamside and other riparian habitats, and fragmentation of aquatic habitats are additional impacts<sup>6</sup>.

Most roadless areas exist because their remoteness has insulated them from human development. Roadless areas are important reservoirs of wildlife habitat and provide critical ecological functions, including: (1) relatively high levels of intact old-growth forests; (2) habitat for species of conservation concern; (3) a broad array of habitat types; (4) buffer areas from invasive species and edge effects; (5) winter range for deer, elk and moose; (6) refugia for road sensitive species such as grizzly bears and wolves; (7) landscape and regional connectivity; and (8) strongholds for salmonids and other aquatic species. The inclusion of roadless areas in the nation's network of protected areas is vital to conserving our nation's biological diversity. The Chabot/Andrews Amendment would encourage safeguarding roadless areas that provide these habitat features for fish and wildlife.

The scientific literature suggests that logging and road construction may have long-term negative impacts on fish and wildlife resources of the Tongass National Forest. The Wildlife Society believes that existing logging roads in areas previously harvested for timber should be properly maintained for public use and future forest management. We do not recommend federally subsidizing new road construction into the remaining unlogged watersheds.

Roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest provide clean water, productive salmon streams and high-quality wildlife habitat for wildlife that are rare or threatened in the lower 48 states (e.g., brown bears, wolves, goshawks, marbled murrelets, and five species of Pacific salmon). The Wildlife Society does not support federal subsidies for new road construction in the Tongass. We respectfully request your support of the Chabot/Andrews Amendment to the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Franklin  
Executive Director (Acting)

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<sup>2</sup> Conservation Biology. 2000. Special Section: Ecological Effects of Roads. Volume 14. Issue No. 1.

<sup>3</sup> R.T.T. Forman. 2000. Estimate of the area affected ecologically by the road system in the United States. Conservation Biology 14(1):31-35.

<sup>4</sup> G.E. Heilman, Jr., J.R. Strittholt, N. C. Slosser, and D.A. DellaSala. 2002. Forest fragmentation of the conterminous United States: assessing forest intactness through road density and spatial characteristics. *Bioscience* 52(5):411-422.

<sup>5</sup> J.R. Strittholt. In preparation (October 2004). Tongass National Forest Intactness Assessment.

<sup>6</sup> S.C. Trombulak, and C.A. Frissell. 2000. Review of ecological effects of roads on terrestrial and aquatic communities. Conservation Biology 14:18-30.