

June 3, 2016

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

We are writing to request more information about the Tongass National Forest provision found in the draft "*Wildfire Budgeting, Response, and Forest Management Act of 2016*". We appreciate your ongoing efforts to support recreation programs in the Tongass National Forest, as well as this important legislation to fix wildfire funding. We understand that the practice of "fire borrowing" continues to hurt recreation budgets nation-wide.

As you know, in Southeast Alaska the Tongass National Forest is a significant economic engine, supporting our tourism and recreation industries as well as our fisheries. How will the provision delaying finalization of the Tongass Land Management Plan, pending a comprehensive young growth inventory, impact efforts to ensure that recreation programs are prioritized by the Forest Service? Will this delay in finalizing the forest plan have consequences for on-going efforts to modernize recreation programs or improve access and opportunity for businesses in the region?

For example, we recently learned of an effort to modernize the Forest Service Special Use Permitting system, a system many businesses find cumbersome and frustrating. (Leslie C. Weldon, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, memo to Regional Foresters of April 5, 2016.) We have been corresponding with the Forest Service to share our interest in participating this effort. Given the importance of tourism jobs in the region, we hope that the Tongass can be an example nation-wide for modernizing the Special Use Permitting system.

The Juneau Economic Development Council's Visitor Products Cluster Working Group has worked hard over the past 6 years to collaborate with the Forest Service to improve recreation management in Southeast and advocate for appropriate levels of funding for the Forest Service programs that support tourism businesses. Again, we appreciate your efforts and continued commitment to our communities.

Sincerely,

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