

# Alaska State Legislature

Senator Dennis Egan  
Representative Cathy Muñoz



State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska  
99801-1182

March 30, 2015

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate and House Appropriations Committees:

The Tongass National Forest (TNF) is the largest in America. We represent four communities surrounded by the Tongass, including Alaska's capital city. Our communities make a living on a diverse mix of sustainably extracting the forest's resources, the bounty of the sea, and the people who come to see both. We're writing to ask that you increase funding for TNF recreation program services.

Recreation and tourism in the TNF support essential jobs and services. But making a living on the national forest requires a federal permit. Despite increased demand for recreation program services, funding for these programs has declined by about 40 percent over the past five years. Last year, the Forest Service released a "Leader's Intent" document showing its inability to provide even the current functions, and its plans to decommission some facilities.

If the federal government is going to own the land and resources surrounding our communities, it needs to make it possible for the Americans who live here to show those national resources to others. Make no mistake: more than one million people – almost all of them Americans – come to our region each year to enjoy the Tongass. The tourism industry in this region directly employed 6,707 people in 2013, in sight-seeing, outdoor recreation, sport fishing, hunting and adventure. Those jobs exist alongside Southeast Alaska's sustainable timber and mining industries. A stable, diversified economy for our constituents requires both.

In 2010 the recreation industry created \$1.1 billion in economic activity and \$407 million in annual labor income. Sales and bed tax revenue in Southeast Alaska are a significant part of what runs our communities. U.S. Forest Service recreation programs support more than just a good time; they support a central pillar of our economy.

With more than 95 percent of Southeast Alaska's land base under federal management, we are highly dependent on the investments you make. Business owners rely on the Forest Service to issue permits to operate on federal land. From remote wilderness trails to crowded visitor centers, Forest Service infrastructure is a foundation of our economy.

We understand budgets are tight, and all investments in federal programs must be carefully weighed to assess the benefits they provide to our communities and the nation. Responsible, sustainable resource extraction is part of the mix. Recreation and tourism are another.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Sen. Dennis Egan, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by a horizontal line.

Sen. Dennis Egan

A blue ink signature of Rep. Cathy Muñoz, written in a cursive style.

Rep. Cathy Muñoz