The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Re: FR Doc No: 2014-12061- Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) that evaluates an amendment to the 2008 Tongass National Forest Plan

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We, the 62 undersigned organizations and businesses, are writing to express our support for a land management plan for the Tongass National Forest that ends large-scale old-growth logging and shifts management focus on the Tongass towards sustainable, job-creating industries like fishing, tourism and recreation.

The Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska is one of the last remaining intact temperate coastal rainforests in the world – and it belongs to all Americans. More than one million visitors come to the Tongass annually and millions more in Alaska and across the country benefit from the salmon hatched in its bountiful streams and rivers. Even those who will never visit its emerald shores can appreciate the Tongass for its spectacular beauty and incredible ecological significance. The massive old growth trees of the Tongass are a critically important global carbon storehouse. We have a responsibility to safeguard it for all Americans.

We applaud your 2010 announcement of a “Transition Plan” to move the Tongass away from the old-growth logging of the past and focus instead on sustainable industries. However, recent actions of the U.S. Forest Service do not support such a commitment. In fact, instead of facilitating a transition away from timber, scheduled timber sales are set to dramatically increase old-growth logging in the Tongass. The Forest Service already has more than 97 million board feet of timber under contract, and is trying to push forward the massive Big Thorne sale as well. At 120 million board feet of old-growth, Big Thorne would be the largest sale in the Tongass in two decades – a throwback to the days when two large taxpayer-funded pulp mills devoured massive swaths of timber. It should not be happening today.

Such outdated old-growth logging practices create devastating habitat destruction within the forest. Just one of several scheduled sales, Big Thorne alone would directly affect approximately 6,000 acres of old-growth forest on north-central Prince of Wales Island, an area which is vital to the fate of Sitka black-tail deer and Alexander Archipelago wolf populations and other wildlife. If the Forest Service’s management practices continue as they have, the negative impacts on the wolf could lead to the first ever listing of old-growth dependent wildlife on the Tongass under the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, this habitat loss will have negative impacts on hunting and fishing by Alaska Natives and other subsistence users in the region.

Today, Southeast Alaskans rely on the healthy watersheds that support sustainable jobs and strong fish populations. The Tongass is a world class tourist destination and fishery, billion dollar industries that provide more than 17,000 jobs in the region. Nevertheless, the Forest Service continues to subsidize roughly 100 logging jobs to the tune of more than $20 million annually– and potentially substantially more. Meanwhile the guides and outfitters whose jobs are key to the economic vitality of the region struggle just to get the permits they need from an underfunded and understaffed permit office. If the Forest Service truly wants to help provide economic opportunity to southeast Alaska communities, it should reallocate its priorities and resources to support fishing, recreation and other businesses that are compatible with the region’s world-class natural values.

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of people represented by the organizations and businesses below, we urge you to quickly finish the Tongass’ transition out of large-scale old-growth logging. By investing in fishing and
visitor services, and other non-logging sectors, the Department of Agriculture will secure a sustainable economy for southeast Alaska. As stewards of our nation’s public land, we have an obligation to protect this national treasure, the last great temperate rainforest in the United States.

Sincerely,

Adventure Smith Explorations
Todd Smith
President
Tahoe City, CA

Alaska Coalition
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Director
Santa Fe, NM

Alaska Wilderness League
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President
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Audubon Society of Omaha
Laurine Blankenau
President
Omaha, NE

Audubon Society of the District of Columbia
Tom Miskovsky
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Washington, DC

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Social Action Committee
Carol Jean Larsen
Member, Social Action Committee
Bismarck, ND

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Central Sierra Audubon Society
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Colorado Mountain Club
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Conservation Northwest
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Foothills Audubon Club
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President
St. James, NY

Green Alliance
Sarah Brown
Director
Portsmouth, NH

Howling For Wolves
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Michigan Audubon
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Executive Director
Lansing, MI

Minnehaha Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America
John Rust
President
Minneapolis, MN

Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America
Barry Drazkowski
President
St Paul, MN

Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
Matthew Schaut
President
Bloomington, MN

National Garden Clubs, Inc.
Marion Hilliard
Deep South Legislative Chairman
Orange Park, FL

Natural Resources Council of Maine
Lisa Pohlmann
Executive Director
Augusta, ME

Nature Abounds
Melinda Hughes-Wert
President
DuBois, PA
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<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>President/Chair</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>North Cascades Audubon Society</td>
<td>Pam Borso</td>
<td>Bellingham, WA</td>
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<td>PA Council of Churches</td>
<td>Rev. Sandy Strauss</td>
<td>Harrisburg, PA</td>
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<td>Palos Verdes/South bay Audubon Society</td>
<td>David Quadhamer</td>
<td>Palos Verdes, CA</td>
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<td>Perpetual Motion NW</td>
<td>David Egan</td>
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<td>Pilchuck Audubon Society</td>
<td>Kathleen Snyder</td>
<td>Snohomish, WA</td>
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<td>Prescott Audubon Society</td>
<td>Suzette Russi</td>
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<td>Dan Streiffert</td>
<td>Auburn, WA</td>
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<td>River Bluff Audubon Society</td>
<td>Dan Reed</td>
<td>Jefferson City, MO</td>
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<td>River Runners of Wilderness</td>
<td>Jo Johnson</td>
<td>Flagstaff, AZ</td>
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<td>Round Ideas Insitute</td>
<td>David Torney</td>
<td>Jemez Springs, NM</td>
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<td>San Diego Audubon Society</td>
<td>Ed Henry</td>
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<td>San Juan Citizen Alliance</td>
<td>Jimbo Buickerood</td>
<td>Durango, CO</td>
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<td>The Clinch Coalition</td>
<td>Diedre Donahue</td>
<td>Wise, VA</td>
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<td>The Conservation Alliance</td>
<td>John Sterling</td>
<td>Bend, OR</td>
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<td>The Wildlife Center</td>
<td>Katherine Eagleson</td>
<td>Espanola, NM</td>
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<td>Tribal Environmental Policy Center</td>
<td>Bob Gruenig</td>
<td>Corrales, NM</td>
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<td>Umpqua Watersheds</td>
<td>Joseph Quinn</td>
<td>Roseburg, OR</td>
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<td>West Virginia Highlands Conservancy</td>
<td>Cynthia Ellis</td>
<td>Red House, WV</td>
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<td>Wisconsin Audubon Council</td>
<td>Karen Etter Hale</td>
<td>Madison, WI</td>
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<td>Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society</td>
<td>Diane Lembck</td>
<td>Franklin, WI</td>
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Women Observing Wildlife-MN
Catherine Zimmer
Executive Director
St Paul, MN

Words to Go
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Greenwich, CT

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Brett Snyder
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Arendtsville, PA

Zumbro Valley Audubon
Joel Dunnette
President
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