

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-26

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA SUPPORTING THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE IN THE ALASKA ROADLESS RULEMAKING PROCESS

WHEREAS, the City and Borough of Sitka expands across Baranof Island and a portion of West Chichagof Island and contains extensive local use areas on Northern Baranof Island, Hoonah Sound, Kruzof Island, and islands throughout Sitka Sound; and,

WHEREAS, the sustainability of the future of Sitka’s economy, the livelihoods of our citizens, the visitor industry and the commercial fishing industry are highly dependent on a pristine and productive natural setting throughout Southeast Alaska; and,

WHEREAS, salmon populations are facing increased challenges from changing ocean conditions, climate change, ocean acidification, rising water temperatures in streams, and ocean warming events in the Pacific Ocean, and freshwater habitat development in the contiguous United States; and,

WHEREAS, the approximate combined economic value of Southeast Alaska’s ports, including commercial fishing, tourism, recreation, scientific research, fisheries enhancement and community subsistence totals over \$2 billion annually; and,

WHEREAS, Southeast Alaska is the most visited region in Alaska, with two-thirds of all visitors to the State coming to this region and therefore acting as a significant contribution to the local and regional economy; and,

WHEREAS, the Roadless Rule, first adopted in 2001, was widely supported then, and now overwhelmingly supported throughout Southeast Alaska, to protect 58 million acres of our nation’s most essential and intact roadless areas in the National Forest system; and,

WHEREAS, the Sitka Fish and Game Advisory Committee opposed the Roadless exemption by supporting the no action alternative 1 without opposition at its November 13, 2019 meeting; and

WHEREAS, at a recent public comment session in Sitka with over 100 in attendance and 41 given testimony’s, 100% in favor of supporting a no action alternative 1; and

WHEREAS, roadless areas on the Tongass are essential to Southeast Alaska’s way of life and represent some of the most spectacular and unique roadless areas anywhere in the National Forest System that support hunting, fishing, customary and traditional uses, unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities, and opportunities for businesses; and,

WHEREAS, the amount of carbon stored in the intact old growth forests and soils of the Tongass National Forest represent one of the highest carbon stores in the world, and the conservation of intact roadless areas and old growth forests on the Tongass are essential for maintaining local and national climate resilience and slowing down climate change throughout the world; and,

51 **WHEREAS**, increased logging of old growth forests in existing roadless areas would incur a
52 significant cost to taxpayers, as new reports estimate that the subsidization of logging on the
53 Tongass has cost taxpayers over \$600 million over the past twenty years, and the State of
54 Alaska's own economic analysis states Tongass timber will be fundamentally uncompetitive on
55 the world market; and,

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57 **WHEREAS**, the City and Borough of Sitka has passed multiple resolutions in support of the the
58 aforementioned Transition and revised Tongass Land Management Plan, including Resolution
59 2010-18, in Support of the USDA Transition Framework, and Resolution 2013-10, a Resolution
60 of the City and Borough of Sitka Supporting Amendments to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
61 2008 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) to Facilitate the Development of
62 Adequate and Reliable Sources of Renewable Energy for Sitka and Southeast Alaska; and,

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64 **WHEREAS**, the City and Borough of Sitka believes that the resources and time of the Forest
65 Service is better spent improving and streamlining existing permitting process for projects in
66 inventoried roadless areas without pursuing a wholesale exemption;

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68 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the City and Borough of Sitka strongly supports
69 lasting protection for all inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest as provided
70 for in the 2001 Roadless Rule; and

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72 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the economic livelihoods of Sitka residents would be
73 irreparably harmed by the effects of a full exemption from the Roadless Rule on the Tongass,
74 which would lead to increased climate change, increased threats to fish habitat, and
75 development occurring in pristine natural areas that showcase the tourism potential and natural
76 beauty of the Tongass National Forest; and,

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78 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the City and Borough of Sitka encourages the USFS to invest
79 in programs, workforce development, and employment opportunities for Southeast Alaskan
80 residents to restore the health and productivity of the Tongass National Forest's degraded
81 watersheds and streams, as a means of supporting vital ecosystem services and economic
82 opportunities such as carbon sequestration, small-scale timber production, fish and wildlife
83 populations, natural vistas, visitor amenities, subsistence, hydrological resources, and more.

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85 **PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED** by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka,
86 Alaska on this 26th day of November 2019.

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 Gary L. Paxton, Mayor

91 ATTEST:
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 Sara Peterson, MMC
95 Municipal Clerk

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98 1st reading 11/26/2019
99 Sponsor: Knox/Eisenbeisz