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Senate Majority Members Optimistic About Court Decision to Uphold the Tongass National Forest Roadless Rule Exemption

JUNEAU-Today, members of the Senate Majority say they are optimistic about the decision from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold the exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Rule. The Court found the U.S. Department of Agriculture had articulated "a number of legitimate grounds" in a 2003 decision to temporarily exempt the Tongass from the roadless rule. Members of the Senate Majority had the following statements about the decision:

"The Ninth Circuit has, historically, not been kind to Alaska when it comes to natural resource development," said Senate President Charlie Huggins (R-Wasilla). "Today's ruling at least provides hope. Hope for people that want jobs. Hope for people that want a strong, diverse economy in Southeast Alaska."

"I'm pleased. The court found that the USDA's 2003 Record of Decision articulated legitimate grounds for exempting Tongass from the Roadless Rule," said Senate Majority John Coghill (R-North Pole). "The Record of Decision was neither arbitrary nor capricious, as some have claimed. Although there is work to be done, this is a positive step for people that want jobs in Alaska."

"I'm extremely pleased to see the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals finally recognizes the seriousness of the impact the roadless rule has on local communities in the Tongass National Forest," said Senator Bert Stedman (R-Sitka). "There are 32 communities in the region and the roadless rule would have condemned these communities to continued isolation and the inability to access resources for economic development."

"Getting the Tongass out from under a one-size-fits-all rule gives Alaskans the chance to do development right: supporting jobs while we protect our fish and tourism," said Senator Dennis Egan, (D-Juneau). "I'll keep an eye on the next court ruling – this issue won't be over for a while, but it's a step in the right direction."

"This is an outstanding victory for Southeast Alaskan families," said Senator Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage). "The ability to access and help direct development of natural resources in their region impacts the survival of the hardworking men and women who make this beautiful region their home. Access to energy projects is a particular concern I've had. This will open up more opportunities for more affordable, reliable sources of energy for Southeastern families."

The 9th Circuit did remand the case to the District Court for further consideration to determine whether a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act is required. To read the decision, please click [here](#).

For more information, please contact Senate Majority Press Secretary [Carolyn Kuckertz](#) at (907) 465-3803.

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