

U.S. Nationally Determined Contribution
March 28th, 2021

To: The Honorable Gina McCarthy, White House National Climate Advisor
The Honorable Ali Zaidi, White House Deputy National Climate Advisor
The Honorable John Kerry, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate
Cc: Robert Bonnie, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Senior Advisor for Climate
Re: Inclusion of carbon-rich forests in the U.S. Nationally Determined Contribution

We undersigned organizations respectfully request the Biden Administration, in its update to America's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris climate agreement, to specify a commitment for protecting a network of carbon-dense forests across the country and to highlight the Tongass National Forest (America's largest national forest and largest forest carbon sink) as a key component.

Article 5 of the Paris Agreement encourages Parties to conserve and enhance sinks and reservoirs, including forests. The United States' NDC cannot approach the needed commitment level without strong, science-based natural climate solutions that include protecting all of our remaining old and mature forests, like those in the Tongass. Including the Tongass and other old forestlands in our NDC will send a signal to the world that the U.S. is ready to lead on protecting critical natural climate solutions. It will require the U.S. Forest Service to promptly restore full Roadless Rule protections that were stripped out by the previous administration. It will also require administrative action to immediately end, in consultation with Indigenous and other affected communities, logging of other mature and old-growth stands and trees. These are two essential components in your effort to achieve carbon budget deliverables for COP 26.

Centering protections for the globally-significant Tongass National Forest in the nation's first forest-based NDC deliverable is essential to ensuring the U.S. proposes strong climate targets before the COP 26 conference in Glasgow, Scotland. Combined with reserves for high carbon forests across all our federal lands and protections for all other large trees, we can demonstrate our commitment to climate protection domestically and lead by example in efforts to protect forests, like the Amazon, and other critical carbon sinks globally.

We propose the following language for adoption within the U.S. Nationally Determined Contribution:

The United States is committed to the development of a network of carbon-dense forests across the country that protects old-growth and mature forest stands and trees including within the Tongass National Forest, America's largest carbon sink.

Thank you for your consideration.

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