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## **Alaska Roadless Rule Citizen Advisory Committee submits final report**

(Anchorage, AK) - The Alaska Roadless Rule Citizen Advisory Committee has finalized a report for the State of Alaska to consider when providing input on state-specific Roadless Rule for the Tongass National Forest. The State is one of several cooperating agencies working with the U.S. Forest Service as it prepares a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the state-specific rule.

The committee was established by Governor Bill Walker to advise the State on future management of inventoried roadless areas in the Tongass. Members were appointed by Governor Walker in late September and asked to submit a report to the State by late November. The committee's report is posted at [www.merid.org/AKroadless](http://www.merid.org/AKroadless) and has been shared with the Forest Service as part of the ongoing cooperating agency review.

Last week Governor Walker met with the committee to discuss the report. He praised the committee for its dedicated efforts over the past two months to gather public input and develop options. "It is critical to include local stakeholders in the development of land management decisions that impact them," Governor Walker said.

The committee included representatives from the Alaska Native community, conservation organizations, local communities, and various industries, including mining, timber, tourism, energy, and commercial fishing. The committee hosted public meetings in Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka, and considered written and oral public comments to ensure its deliberations accounted for a wide range of perspectives in the region.

The committee developed four options in its final report. All four options would allow roadbuilding and associated tree cutting in roadless areas of the Tongass for projects associated with transportation and utilities, mining, hydroelectric and other renewable energy, cultural uses, and habitat and forest health improvement. The options also include removing certain locations from the roadless inventory to allow for commercial timber harvest and other economic development activities, while retaining or designating additional areas for conservation of their roadless values. These four options would be in addition to a "no-action" alternative that keeps the current national Roadless Rule in place, and an alternative restoring a full exemption of the Tongass from the national rule.

With its initial task completed, the committee is prepared to reconvene after release of the DEIS, estimated for summer of 2019, to review how the draft aligns with its recommendations and provide additional input to the State, if requested. The public will also have an opportunity to weigh in on the DEIS at that time through a public comment period offered by the Forest Service.

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