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Alaska Indigenous Women to Senator Murkowski: End The Assault On Our Communities and Lands

The Alaska senator is sneakily collaborating with the Trump administration in eliminating protections and handing sacred land to corporations.

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Alaska Indigenous Women to Senator Murko...

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WOLFGANG KAEHLER VIA GETTY IMAGES

Wanda J. Culp— Tlingit, Artist, Activist, WECAN Coordinator Tongass Project

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Bernadine DeAsis — Environmental Specialist, Douglas Indian Association Tribal Government

Loretta Marvin — Tlingit, Thunderbird Clan from the Sun House

Ernestine Hanlon-Abel — Tlingit, Indigenous basket weaver, Old-Growth Advocate

Jerry Ann Gray — Tlingit-Tsimshian Indigenous Woman

Our people, the Tlingit and Haida, have lived in what is now known as the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska since time immemorial. Today our treasured forest faces one of its greatest and most immediate threats to date.

As the end of the year approached, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) introduced two legislative budget riders aimed at allowing thousands of acres of old-growth forest in the Tongass (and the Chugach National Forest) to be clear-cut.

As indigenous women whose ancestors are from this forest, we vigorously oppose these attacks on our public lands. In the coming days, we urge lawmakers to reject these riders, and instead maintain the existing protections for our ancient forest and its peoples.

The U.S. Forest Service and the timber industry should have stopped destroying our ancient forest a long time ago. Our original and historic use and occupancy of the Tongass is essential to our people's identity and culture as our people have depended upon the bounty of the forest and its waters for millennia.

Our matrilineal societies are built from the Laws of Living Nature. Our relationship with the ancient trees of the Tongass extends beyond concepts of wild, untamed, peaceful, quiet, spiritual, and beautiful — for us, the forest is life.

This spiritual, physical, and cultural connection to the land allowed our ancestors to thrive when we were the only ones in this forest. And to this day, our people depend on the healthy watersheds and abundant fish and wildlife habitat found in Alaska's old-growth forests.



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prevents logging companies from clear-cutting roads into our wild lands and sacred places.

These are some of most important areas of the Tongass because our forest is already threatened by the effects of decades of old-growth logging and now global warming. We depend on these areas and their vast expanses of the great Spruce, Hemlock, and Red and Yellow Cedar.

Continued indigenous existence depends wholly on the good health of the wild Tongass in its entirety and that means wild and roadless areas must continue to be protected from industrial exploitation.

Sen. Murkowski's other rider seeks to repeal the Tongass Forest Plan, which is equally threatening. Our connection to the land is so paramount that the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act gives each of us a legal voice in the management of the forest. During the planning process for the forest plan, we called on the Forest Service to end old-growth logging on the Tongass in an effort to protect our forest and our way of life.

After years of public process, the Forest Service adopted a plan that protects roadless areas and other unique, biologically diverse areas from logging, and, though not fast enough, it begins to transition the Tongass away from old-growth logging altogether.

Sen. Murkowski's efforts to eliminate these protections and reject the long-overdue transition away from old-growth logging ignores our voices and our people.

With Sen. Murkowski's sneaky rider legislation, public lands will be converted immediately to corporate industrial exploitation. We lose our voices! All of us! When lawmakers rollback long-standing and vital protections for our wild and sacred places, we all lose. When corporations are allowed to pursue an unrelenting attack on our public lands, we all lose.

It is for these reasons we, as indigenous women of the Tongass National Forest, are asking for your individual and collective support in contacting Alaska's and your own congressional delegation to loudly oppose Sen. Murkowski's sneak attack on Alaska's ancient forests and our people!

From Standing Rock to Bears Ears and beyond, we stand in solidarity with indigenous peoples across the country in their calls to end the relentless assault on our lands. We ask

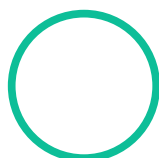


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