

SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS

Speech to the Senate

July 23, 1980

Mr. President, none of us can be indifferent to the issue of jobs. There is a saying: When you don't have a job, the unemployment rate is 100%. If my distinguished colleagues and I were insensitive to this crucial issue, all 100 of us would deserve to be voted into unemployment.

I believe that we must carefully consider the impact of environmental measures on jobs. Some worthwhile conservation possibilities may be prohibitively damaging to current or future employment.

In other cases, the failure to preserve the environment adequately can throw people out of work. This is a risk in southeast Alaska. It is one of many compelling reasons in favor of the National Forest Amendment.

Several of my distinguished colleagues have generated an abundance of heat about jobs and this particular amendment--which I appreciate. I am prepared to take the heat ... and to cast a little light on this issue.

Adequate protection of the Tongass National Forest is a vital interest of the region's commercial fishermen. They are concerned about their livelihood and about the effect of the timber and mining industries on the salmon fishery. Protection of spawning habitat is crucial to the

recovery of currently depressed salmon stocks. Thus, many individual fishermen and their organizations support extensive wilderness designations on the Tongass National Forest as the most certain and effective way of protecting water quality in spawning streams.

The appropriate protection found in the National Forest Amendment is also in the interest of another growth industry--tourism. The Tongass National Forest--America's largest--includes some of our most stunning public wildlands. The Misty Fjords National Monument, for example, has quickly become a popular attraction for visitors. The Alaskan economy profits from the unmatched, unspoiled natural beauty throughout the State.

The Tongass Land Management Plan

Mr. President, I have heard pessimistic speculation about wilderness designation and job loss for a long time. In the last Congress, I worked on this issue as a member of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. Opponents of a strong wilderness package in southeast Alaska said then, "Don't legislate wilderness now. It might create job loss. Wait for the Tongass land management plan (TLMP) from the Forest Service."

These days we don't hear much about the Tongass land plan from those people. That professional land management plan -- 2 years in the making -- was completed in April, 1979. It should be the blueprint for managing our nation's largest forest unit, which has some of the most spectacular and pristine areas in the world.

But a funny thing happened on its way to this forum. The Tongass land plan showed that the goals of timber production, fisheries and wildlife

protection, and wilderness preservation can be put together in a package like the National Forest Amendment -- with no job loss.

Some of the people who once urged delay for the plan now want to delay wilderness designations, despite this comprehensive land plan. Many of them still cling to the notion that this Amendment's provisions will throw a lot of people out of work. The National Forest Service's thorough plan flatly contradicts the broken-record rhetoric of those who used to argue: Wait for its conclusions.

This National Forest Amendment would adopt the Tongass Land Management Plan with only minor modifications. The Committee bill, instead, provides for a concoction of entirely new land classifications, dangerous timber harvest practices based on questionable concerns, and additional decisions by a future Congress.

The Committee proposes establishing an entirely new management system, the "special management areas" (SMAs), to deal with the perceived "uncertainties" in the economic findings of the Forest Service. These "uncertainties" include:

- whether the Native timber corporations would cut their timber, how fast, and where it would be sold;
- the effect of export of round logs from Native lands on the demand for processed sawtimber from the National Forest in the Japanese market;
- whether Congress would appropriate the money needed to offset the USFS's increased costs for providing timber sales following reduction in the land base and the reforms in harvest practices required in the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

Although supporters of the Committee bill hold out these special management areas as a "have your cake and eat it too" proposition, it is apparent that this untried and uncertain approach just won't work. The Committee recognizes that the special management areas have outstanding wilderness values. The Committee protects them all right -- but only for 10 years. During these 10 years, the Secretary must -- he has no discretion -- include their timber in calculating the proper sustained yield harvest for the entire forest -- the annual allowable cut. Thus the bill says: these lands are protected now, but when cutting elsewhere in the forest, assume that the lands will be available later -- a "now you see it, now you don't" system. This is anathema to professional foresters, because it subjects the Forest Service to future pressures from an industry operating on the assumption that these lands would be available. The Forest Service's only option is to reduce sales later because the sustainable yield has been exceeded.

This isn't the way we manage our forests in Oregon, or Arizona, or New England, and it is an unwise policy for our forests in Alaska.

At the end of 10 years, the Secretary must submit to Congress a request for a waiver of the prohibition on timber sales, if at any time -- not some 10-year or 5-year average, but any time -- the timber supply to industry falls below the supposedly magical figure of 520 million board feet (mmbf). Now I don't know where that 520 mmbf has come from, whether it has to come from the Tongass alone, whether it can come from the Native corporations as well, or from Canada -- undoubtedly the courts will have to decide.

But no matter where -- if at any time industry is 500 or 515 -- even though industry cuts only 440 now -- the Secretary must send this whole thing back to Congress.

We've already put the decision off until now. We have the information. Let us do it right now, instead of creating a whole new system the professionals don't want that will be left to the courts to decipher, and that will be right back here in 10 years.

What the Committee fails to address is that the National Forest that produced 520 mmbf no longer exists. It has been reduced by State and Native selection of fully one-quarter of the Tongass' best timber producing land.

The Forest Service tells us in TLMP that the National Forest existing today is capable of producing a sustained yield of 450 mmbf, and that is what the Amendment allows for. The Forest Service tells us that a cut of 520 mmbf would overcut the forest, and sacrifice the forest's other values that are the essence of multiple-use.

Some people opposing this Amendment say that the 450 mmbf production allowed under the TLMP is too low, that industry needs the arbitrary figure of 520 mmbf mandated in the Committee bill.

I do not understand why the industry "needs" 520 mmbf when, in recent years, it has existed quite well on 440 mmbf. How can a proposal that allows a cut of 450 mmbf in the Tongass National Forest remove jobs from an industry that cuts 440 there now ?

Bear in mind that the local industry can -- and we fully expect that it will -- process additional timber the State and Natives fully expect to cut from their newly acquired chunks of the old Tongass. The Forest Service estimates the potential yield to equal at least 150 mmbf annually, while Native corporation spokesmen put the figure at 250 mmbf. That production means jobs -- contract logging jobs, longshoremen's jobs, and local pulpwood contracts -- jobs that are being filled right now, this year.

Our Amendment, in effect, replaces the guessing game of the Committee bill with the professional analysis of TLMP. This Forest Service Plan says that the national forest can provide 450 mmbf, that this will be supplemented with what the State and Natives say they plan to harvest, and designates now those wilderness proposals that so obviously deserve such protection.

#### The Amendment Wilderness Proposals

The amendment wilderness proposals include the full Admiralty Island National Monument and wilderness -- the last remaining large island that hasn't been extensively clearcut. It is home to more bald eagles than in all of the other states combined, home to the famous Admiralty Island brown bear and home of the one Tlingit village that wishes to retain their traditional cultural values and live a subsistence lifestyle as their ancestors did before them.

Our Amendment restores a full Misty Fjords National Monument, the largest, most spectacular and diverse of the proposals for protection in southeast Alaska and an area of unparalleled fisheries production. And we provide wilderness protection for all but an area of 30,000 acres surrounding the molybdenum claims of U.S. Borax Corporation. We provide for guaranteed access and development of the Quartz Hill claims, as does the Committee bill,

in accordance with an agreement Senator Stevens and I made during Committee deliberations last year, an agreement, I might add, that was favorably received by representatives of U.S. Borax.

Since its creation in 1978, the Misty Fjords National Monument has quickly become a popular attraction for visitors to southeast Alaska and is now visited by special cruise ships and the Alaska State Ferry. As I said, our Amendment maintains the full spectrum of Misty Fjords waters and mountains, while explicitly providing for potential development of the molybdenum claims.

The Amendment includes the full West Chichagof-Yakobi wilderness proposal, a smaller but self-contained and diverse peninsula of rugged outer coast, and serene inner waterways heavily used by local hunters and fishermen, recreational boaters and hikers.

In addition, the Amendment provides wilderness protection for two smaller units, Karta River and Rocky Pass, which are identified by the State and federal fish and wildlife agencies as vital habitat with high recreational and scenic values as well.

But there is another important reason for full wilderness protection for all these proposals now. Unlike much of interior Alaska, a land of vast potential, southeast Alaska is currently an active, intensively managed working national forest with existing towns and cities scattered throughout the archipelago.

The Forest Service is mandated to manage this land for multiple uses, including timber development -- development which will probably occur within the next decade on commercial quality lands outside those designated by the Congress as wilderness. This is as it should be.



But up to now, there has been no designated wilderness in the Tongass National Forest. The difference in wilderness acreage is relatively small -- 4.3 million in the Committee bill, and 5.9 million acres in the Amendment. But the 1.6 million acres involved contain the heavily forested lowland ecosystems where the real wildlife, fishing and recreational values lie, as well as significant timber resources.

The Forest Service has recommended a good, balanced package to the Congress, if adopted, it will protect the gems of the Southeast without interfering with other goals. If we ignore this recommendation, or even create a special system which assumes that the areas will be available for development later, we not only desert our duties to act responsibly on these recommendations, but we likely will foreclose our future options -- right now.

Mr. President, again I thank those who once argued forcefully that the Tongass land plan be considered fully before a Congressional decision on this issue. I urge its thorough, analysis to my colleagues. I am confident that they will find it persuasive. It demonstrates that the Alaskan economy can develop in a way that complements our priceless natural heritage there. Indeed, economic prosperity in the future is dependent on the adequate protection that this amendment guarantees.

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