United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Alaska Region
Tongass National Forest
648 Mission Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901
Phone: (907) 225-3101
Fax: (907) 228-6215

File Code: 1950-3
Date: September 10, 2007

Planning Participant

Dear Planning Participant:

Enclosed is your copy of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Iyouktug Timber Sales project on the Hoonah Ranger District, Tongass National Forest. The DEIS proposes four action alternatives for harvesting timber and one no-action alternative. The action alternatives would make available approximately 16.8 to 59.8 million board feet (MMBF) of timber for harvest in the Iyouktug area. The Iyouktug project area is located north of Freshwater Bay, west of False Bay and Chatham Strait, and south of Icy Strait, approximately 12 miles east-southeast of Hoonah, Alaska, along National Forest System Road 8530. Proposed harvest includes partial harvest and clearcut, and uses shovel, cable, and helicopter yarding systems. My preferred alternative at this point is Alternative 3, which was developed to minimize impacts to deer habitat and connectivity while providing for an economic timber supply. However, any of the alternatives may be selected in the Record of Decision for the Final EIS.

A Forest Plan amendment process is currently underway on the Tongass that could change some management direction, pending the outcome of that analysis and decision. No decision on the amendment was made prior to the analysis displayed in the Iyouktug DEIS. The ROD is expected to be released prior to the mailing of this DEIS. The decision on the Iyouktug project will be consistent with the Forest Plan amendment decision, following the procedures in the Forest Service handbook FSH 1909.15, section 18.

Reviewers should provide the Forest Service with their comments during the review period of the DEIS. This will enable the Forest Service to analyze and respond to all the comments at one time and to use information acquired in the preparation of the Final EIS, thus avoiding undue delay in the decision-making process. Written, oral and electronic comment of the DEIS will be accepted for 45 calendar days following the date of publication of the notice of availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register*. Reviewers have an obligation to structure their participation in the National Environmental Policy Act process so that it is meaningful and alerts the agency to the reviewers' position and contentions [Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978)]. Environmental objections that could have been raised at the Draft stage may be waived if not raised until after completion of the Final EIS [City of Angoon v. Hodel (9th Circuit, 1986) and Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980)]. Comments on the DEIS should be specific and should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed (40 CFR 1503.3).

The publication date of the NOA in the Federal Register is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this DEIS.

Please send written comments to:
Hans von Rekowski, IDT Leader
Sitka Ranger District, Tongass National Forest
204 Siginaka Way
Sitka, Alaska 99835
e-mail: comments-alaska-tongass-hoonah@fs.fed.us, subject line: "Iyouktug"

For appeal eligibility rights, submissions from individuals or a representative from each organization submitting comments must be signed or verification provided upon request. Comments must be received during the 45-day comment period. An electronic username is insufficient for electronic comment submittals.

Copies of the DEIS are available for review at Forest Service offices throughout the Tongass National Forest. For more information, contact the Sitka Ranger District at 907-747-6671 or Hoonah Ranger District at 907-945-3631 during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Oral comments can be provided at the above office during normal business hours via telephone or in person, or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments. Subsistence hearings will be planned between the Draft EIS and Final EIS.

Your interest in the management of the Tongass National Forest is appreciated.

Sincerely,

FORREST COLE
Forest Supervisor