

The State *of the* Tongass National Forest Fiscal Year 2009



Brown bear of Admiralty Island National Monument, 2008 Nick Jans ©



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of Agriculture

Forest Service
Alaska Region

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Message from the Tongass National Forest - 2009

Forrest Cole, Forest Supervisor

When the global financial crisis struck in the fall of 2008, leadership and employees on the Tongass National Forest knew that 2009 was going to be a critical year for our already struggling Southeast Alaska communities.

The first faint flicker of hope came almost instantaneously in the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools legislation in October 2008, providing \$21 million to Alaska to help fund schools, roads and other projects. An additional \$2.1 million from the act goes toward projects on the Tongass to maintain infrastructure, improve the health of ecosystems, protect communities, and strengthen local economies.

Stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) also made a difference in Southeast Alaska's economy in 2009. The Tongass received \$23.6 million for projects like rebuilding facilities, maintaining trails, clearing blocked fish passages, replacing failed



bridges and culverts, abandoned mine cleanup and road maintenance and storage. Because most of these projects are accomplished through contracts, those funds helped to keep local folks employed through the tough economic times.

The economy continued to be high-priority for our new administration as well. Two high-ranking officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture traveled to Southeast Alaska in late August. They met with community members to discuss economic opportunities with the goal of seeking new ways for the Tongass and USDA to support a diversified economy here. Many exciting prospects were brought forward at the community meetings, and three components for a diverse economy emerged—renewable energy, forest restoration, and mariculture and fisheries. These three themes shaped our 2009 State of the Tongass Report.

Rebecca Nourse, Deputy Forest Supervisor

How do you highlight all the good work our Tongass National Forest employees do in a year, yet stay within the three themes we have chosen? Truthfully—you can't. Even if you add a few pages, as we did. So as you read through the pages of this report, keep in mind that this is just the tip of the iceberg of incredible accomplishments by our employees and our many partners and volunteers. Many project completions in this report are the result of multi-year efforts.

One goal outlined in the Forest Plan is the transition from our current timber program to a young growth timber



program. We are currently working on a transition plan that will continue to conserve the natural resources on the forest, while supporting the economies of Southeast Alaska's communities, which rely on the forest for fishing, timber harvesting, recreation, tourism, mining, subsistence and more. The agency's Pacific Northwest Research Station has been a key partner in providing information we use to make science-based management decisions.

We on the Tongass have great hopes for the future of both the forest we care for, and the people who depend upon it.

Tongass National Forest Facts

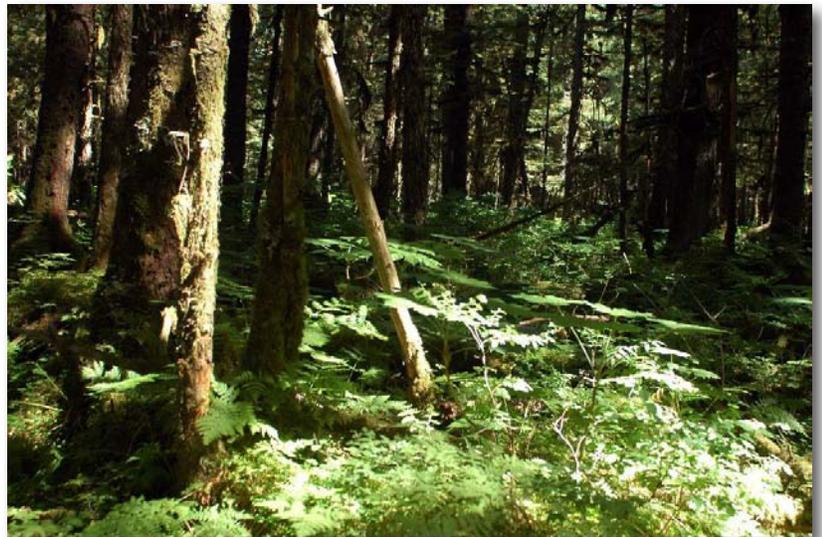


- The longest cave system in Alaska is located in the Tongass—El Capitan Cave on northern Prince of Wales Island.
- The Tongass boasts the largest tidewater glacier in the world—Hubbard Glacier near Yakutat, at 6 miles wide.
- The Forest also has the southernmost tidewater glacier in North America—LeConte Glacier between Wrangell and Petersburg.



Hubbard Glacier photo courtesy of USGS

- At nearly 17 million acres, the Tongass National Forest is the largest national forest in our country—about the same size as West Virginia.
- 35% (5.9 million acres) of the Tongass is congressionally-designated Wilderness—to be managed as Wilderness in perpetuity for all current and future generations of Americans.
- The Tongass National Forest is unique in the national forest system--there are no threatened or endangered species on the forest.
- There are more brown bears on one island (Admiralty) within the Tongass than there are in the entire lower 48 states combined.



- Old growth trees on the Tongass range from about 200- 700 years old.
- 92% of the Tongass is protected from roaded development.
- Close to 70% of old growth on the Tongass is protected in reserves, and will never be eligible for harvest.
- Native Alaskans in Southeast Alaska are mainly Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian.
- Native Alaskans are among the more than 70,000 people who live in Southeast Alaska and depend upon the natural resources from the forest.

Cabins

Recreation use on Alaska's national forests has grown 70% in a decade. It's a good thing the Tongass has more than 150 rustic cabins available for rent by the public. Our cabin locations offer great outdoor recreation opportunities such as wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and more. Some cabins are in remote locations accessible only by boat or floatplane. Others are on local community road systems. A growing number of cabins are ADA accessible.

Here are some highlights from our 2009 cabin program.

Eight Fathom Cabin

Residents in the community of Hoonah had the opportunity to watch the day-by-day construction of the Eight Fathom Cabin. The cabin is an "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act" stimulus project, bringing work to 12 people in various stages of the construction. Workers from Icy Straits Lumber milled the locally harvested Alaska Yellow Cedar used to build the cabin.

Upon completion of construction, the cabin was moved by barge from Hoonah to its permanent location, Eight Fathom Bight at the head of Port Frederick, 23 miles southwest of Hoonah. Finishing touches will be completed on the cabin in spring 2010. It will then be available to rent as a Forest Service public use recreation cabin.



Eight Fathom cabin

Middle Ridge Cabin

The Middle Ridge Cabin on the Wrangell Ranger District is already available to rent through the national recreation reservation website (www.recreation.gov). It is Wrangell's first road-accessible public rental cabin, and was built through the combined efforts of partners, volunteers and community support. It is located about 20 miles from Wrangell at an elevation of 1,500 feet. The lake-side setting provides an ideal location for many recreation opportunities, such as cross country skiing, snowshoeing, berry picking, firewood gathering and deer hunting.



Middle Ridge cabin

The Middle Ridge Cabin was constructed from young growth Sitka spruce logs through a partnership with the University of Alaska Southeast (Sitka). The Wood Utilization center at the campus hosted a two-week log cabin building course in May 2009, during which the logs were hand scribed, cut, and fitted together. At the end of the workshop, the cabin was disassembled and shipped to Wrangell, where assembly at the cabin site began in early September.

The Stikine Sportsmen's Association is providing temporary furnishings for the cabin interior to allow for occupancy this winter. Additional work on the interior will be completed in the spring. Two Wrangell High School students are installing some of the cabin's interior fixtures as their senior project.

The Wrangell District will host an open house at the cabin in spring 2010.

Three C's Group Use Site

Thanks to grants from the Ketchikan Resource Advisory Committee, the Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District opened a new group use site to the public in August 2009.

Located in the Ward Lake Recreation Area, the Three C's Group Use Site has historical significance. Members of the Civilian Conservation Corps used the site as their camp during the 1930s; Native people from the Aleutian Islands were evacuated from their homes during World War II and relocated and housed at Three C's. Work—including construction of a group use shelter, fire ring, tent pads and picnic tables—was completed in July 2009.



Three C's pavilion

Renewable Energy



Flying in structure 20 near upper Carroll Inlet, for the Swan Lake to Tyee Lake intertie.



Workers clipping conductor line.

We look forward to the day that lower electricity rates are a reality for Angoon residents.

Swan Lake to Tyee Lake Electrical Intertie

Construction of the electrical intertie connecting Ketchikan's Swan Lake hydroelectric plant with the Tyee Lake hydro facility was completed in August 2009. Most of the intertie's 57-mile route crosses the Tongass, including the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords and Wrangell Ranger Districts.

Existing hydroelectric power had not been adequate to meet Ketchikan's needs, while Wrangell and Petersburg had not used all of Tyee Lake's generating capacity. The intertie will help meet Ketchikan's shortage of hydroelectric power and improve energy reliability.

Solar Power

All of the Tongass camp barges are now running on solar energy. These barges are used to house field crews. In 2009, we completed energy conversion of the last of four camp barges, the Chickamin, and also upgraded the first solar power system installed on the Steelhead camp barge in 2004.

These solar-power systems have cut power costs by up to 50%, fuel consumption by 75%, and eliminated risk of spills.

Energy is the lifeblood of our communities. Reliable power is needed to sustain families and businesses, and to attract new economic opportunities to the communities of Southeast Alaska— all located within the surrounds of the Tongass National Forest.

Many of our communities depend on diesel fuel for power, a source that has become very expensive with the increase in oil prices. The Forest Service is helping our communities reduce their air emissions and move towards energy independence through clean, low-cost, renewable energy projects.

Angoon Hydroelectric

The City of Angoon, located on Admiralty Island, has some of the highest electric rates in Alaska due to the use of diesel-generated power. Construction of a hydroelectric facility to power the community would offset the use of fossil fuels with clean, renewable energy.

In 2009, the Forest Service completed the NEPA process necessary to develop a hydroelectric plant and associated facilities at Thayer Creek. The Tongass forest supervisor signed the record of decision for the project in May.

Once the proponent, Kootznoowoo, Inc., secures project funding and obtains the necessary state and federal permits, the Forest Service will issue a land use permit giving the Native corporation authorization to construct, and upon completion, operate the hydroelectric facility.

Chickamin barge at dock



Self-tracking solar panels



Forest Restoration

Forest restoration encompasses a wide variety of activities, from invasive species eradication to young growth thinning. What these projects have in common is their benefits —improved forest health and diversification of local economies.

An analysis of restoration industry economic impacts shows there are about 20-22 jobs created for each \$1 million spent on restoration projects. As restoration-related spending circulates through the economy, it creates additional indirect economic benefits leading to more jobs and income. Economic benefits from Southeast’s restoration industry are estimated at more than \$10 million a year.*



Harris River before restoration work



Same stretch of Harris River after adding downed trees.

Integrated Resource Service Contract

The Tongass is exploring how to build on the restoration industry in Southeast to maximize benefits to the local economies. One way is through an integrated resource service contract, a new approach to implementing a restoration economy with an all-encompassing, multi-year service contract.

The goal is to accomplish resource management activities on a selected landscape by offering projects suitable for small, local contractors to be accomplished over a 5-year period. This will allow business owners and their employees greater income stability for a longer time.

The Forest Service is using an IRSC for a variety of projects on Revilla Island, on the Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District. This effort will maximize cost effectiveness, efficiency, and outputs. These IRSC projects are being funded through a variety of sources, including economic recovery funds.

**An Assessment of the Economic Impact of Forest Restoration Efforts in Southeast Alaska –Report by the McDowell Group, an Alaska research and consulting firm, and funded by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) with support from the National Forest Foundation.*



Harris River Restoration

Economic Recovery Act funds are helping to restore the Harris River on the Craig Ranger District. Early 1960s logging practices in the Harris River watershed have had long-lasting detrimental effects on watershed and stream-side conditions, and has impacted productive salmon habitat. A basin-wide restoration approach for the Harris River watershed was initiated in 2004 and is scheduled to be completed in 2011.

Watershed improvements include 250 acres of young growth riparian forest thinning; six miles of road storage and decommissioning; and fish habitat improvements along 10 small tributary streams.



Restoration work completed in 2009 focused on one mile of the lower Harris flood plain channel. Crews replicated the natural state of downed trees in eight work areas by constructing log jams using 113 whole trees (root wad attached) and 300 large logs. The downed trees create pools of water for fish habitat.

Harris River restoration to date has cost almost \$2 million, about half from grants. Another \$700,000 in economic recovery funds will go toward completion of the final phase of main stem restoration work.

Project partners include The Nature Conservancy, Alaska Department of Transportation, Department of Fish and Game, and Department of Natural Resources, and the NOAA Coastal Restoration Program.

Middle page: USDA Deputy Under Secretary Jay Jensen is impressed by the large run of pink salmon returning to stream reaches after restoration work in the Harris River system.

Economic Recovery Act Projects

The Tongass National Forest was successful in competing for American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 funds at the national level, receiving \$23.6 million toward 39 projects in the areas of recreation, fire, administrative and other facilities, roads, trails, abandoned mines and forest health. The projects supported by these funds will have lasting impacts on the economy of Southeast Alaska communities.

Recreation/Facilities

- Reconstruction of an administrative office
- Construction of a joint recreation/administrative cabin
- Maintenance of 2 visitor centers, including new interpretive movies and video equipment upgrades
- Reconstruction of a floating administrative camp

Roads

- Reconstruct 39.5 miles of roads
- Decommission 138.6 miles of roads
- Establish 40 miles of motorized trails
- Remove 420 stream crossings
- Repair 18 deficient bridges
- Replace 11 deficient bridges
- Resurface 36 miles of forest roads
- Remove 40 culverts that block fish passage
- Re-establish 5 miles of anadromous stream habitat

Trails

- Upgrade/repair 44.5 miles of existing trails
- Replace 27 trail bridge structures
- Reconstruct 3 miles of trail and 1 bridge for accessibility at the most heavily visited visitor center in Southeast Alaska

Watershed

- Re-establish 45 stream crossings
- Restore access to 25 miles of anadromous stream habitat
- Restore 6,000 acres of watershed
- Restore an acre of salmon spawning beds
- Restore 5.5 miles of anadromous stream channel
- Open up 238 acres of wildlife habitat through thinning, improving fish passage and access

Abandoned Mine

- Preliminary clean up of the number one priority CERCLA mine site on the Tongass

Mariculture and Fisheries

Seventy percent of wild caught Pacific Salmon produced on National Forest System lands comes from one single forest—the Tongass National Forest. Millions of salmon from the Tongass are harvested each year through commercial fisheries, outfitter and guide operations, and subsistence.

The Tongass also issues special use permits for the operation of aquatic businesses, like hatcheries and shellfish-mariculture operations. One such business is the oyster nursery in Nakauti, on Prince of Wales Island. It produces oyster spat that is sold as seed stock to mariculture operations worldwide.

Mariculture and fisheries supported by the Tongass help to diversify the economy of Southeast Alaska. The forest has 45,000 miles of streams, 20,000 lakes and ponds and more than 11,000 miles of saltwater shoreline, providing habitat for five species of salmon, five species of trout, and other aquatic wildlife.

A large part of the Tongass fisheries program is watershed restoration. In 2009, these projects enhanced or restored 8,000 acres of lake habitat and 78 miles of stream fish habitat.

Bakewell Coho Stock Re-colonization

The Bakewell Coho Stock Re-colonization is a multi-year cooperative with the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association. In its first year, this project is credited with the return of over \$100,000-worth of coho salmon to the commercial catch, and at least \$50,000 in sport-caught fish. Over 2,166 adult coho have returned to the lake system as of September 2009.

Meter Bight Creek Fishway Repair

Forest Service crews repaired two areas on the Meter Bight Creek near Wrangell in 2009. The upstream site involved the replacement of missing fish weirs with a short section of steeppass, a type of fish ladder. The downstream site involved the replacement of a reinforced concrete weir in-kind.



Constructed "beaver dam" to divert flow from Colorado Trail ditch back into natural stream courses.

Colorado Trail Watershed Restoration

We've already mentioned one of our regional showcase projects for multi-year watershed restoration—Harris River. Another multi-year effort is the Colorado Trail Watershed Restoration project in Yakutat.

In the 1960s, the Colorado Trail was established for oil exploration across a 3,000-acre wetland between the Yakutat Airport and the Situk River. The 5-mile long trail became a ditch filled with water, deep and wide enough to canoe—water diverted from nearly 50 streams in the Situk and Lost River watersheds. The Situk River is one of the most productive anadromous fisheries in Alaska, and the community of Yakutat depends on it for subsistence, commercial fishing and commercial sport guiding.

Members of SAGA (Alaska Youth Conservation Corps)—one of our many project partners—have been working since 2006 to restore wetland drainage, reconnect fish-rearing habitat, and construct "beaver dams" to divert water into original channels. In 2009, SAGA crews restored fish access to an additional 25 miles of upstream habitat and improved riparian function to nearby wetlands.



Installation of steeppass at Meter Bight Creek nearly complete. The downstream site involved the replacement of a reinforced concrete weir in-kind.



Jill Grady measures for the missing weir replacement.



Aerial view of dam and reconstructed stream channel below the Colorado Trail ditch.

Wilderness

Many visitors choose the Tongass National Forest as a destination because of the opportunities for remote recreation and solitude. And with 5.9 million acres of congressionally-designated Wilderness, there's no shortage of either. In fact, by law, 35 percent of the Tongass is to be preserved as Wilderness in perpetuity for all current and future generations of Americans.

In 2004, on the 40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, the Chief of the Forest Service challenged the agency to bring each Wilderness area up to a minimum management standard by 2014—the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. The Tongass has made great progress in meeting that 10-year challenge. To date, 12 of the 19 Wilderness areas on the Forest meet the level of stewardship called for in the Chief's Challenge— five more areas have met this goal since 2008.

Wilderness Air Quality Monitoring using Lichens

Tongass ecologists continue an air quality monitoring program in Wilderness using lichens—a program which first began in 2005.



One of the lichens in the genus Hypogymnia used in air quality monitoring on the Tongass.



Lichens are well known sensitive receptors for air pollution. Airborne contaminants are absorbed easily into the lichen body and become concentrated in the lichen. Forest Service ecologists collect samples of particular species of lichen, and then analyze them in a laboratory for contaminant concentrations.

In 2009, ecologists revisited Coronation and Warren Island Wilderness areas to collect additional lichens to be analyzed and compared to samples collected there in the past. They also established air quality monitoring sites in the Maurelle Islands Wilderness. That accomplishment means that now all 19 Wilderness areas on the Tongass contain at least two lichen bio-monitoring sites.

Using lichen samples to check air quality allows scientists to monitor and map air quality conditions over space and time—research that would be prohibitively expensive using instrument monitors. By monitoring trends in contaminant concentrations in lichens, the Forest Service can be better informed concerning wilderness use and possible air pollution impacts.

Ecologist Kristin Lease collects lichens for air quality monitoring on the Maurelle Wilderness.

Wildlife

The Tongass National Forest truly is where the wild things are. Healthy and diverse wildlife populations on the Tongass support many facets of the Southeast Alaska economy, especially tourism and recreation, commercial fisheries and subsistence. In 2009, we continued our emphasis on science-based enhancement and restoration of wildlife habitat through a wide variety of projects.

Alaska Key Coastal Wetlands Projects

The Stikine River near Wrangell, and the Yakutat Forelands, are both part of the Alaska Region's key coastal wetlands. These naturally functioning wetlands not only support Alaska's local economies and subsistence, they affect fish and wildlife populations throughout the world, providing important migratory and breeding habitat for more than 200 species of waterfowl.

Bird watching has been identified as one of the fastest growing recreational activities in the world. Communities like Yakutat and Wrangell, which have access to millions of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl each spring and fall, could benefit from providing birding tours and festivals. One Tongass wildlife biologist in Wrangell has developed a program to teach outfitters and guides the basics on bird watching and how to offer "birder friendly" eco tours. The plan is to take this training to other Southeast Alaska communities to increase skills and capacity for birding tours.



Stikine River Delta photo courtesy Ducks Unlimited



Local students learn the joys of birding during spring migration in Yakutat.

Aleutian Tern Project

The Aleutian Tern colony on Black Sand Spit in the Yakutat Forelands is one of the largest in the world, supporting up to 3,000 Aleutian Terns, or one-third of Alaska's population, and a significant proportion of the global population.



A nesting tern

Although the Black Sand Spit colony appears to be stable, populations elsewhere in Alaska appear to be declining—prompting the tern's designation as a species of concern by several agencies and non-government organizations.

Little is known about the Aleutian Tern, making management and conservation decisions difficult. The Tongass led an inter-agency working group to develop monitoring protocols for the Aleutian Tern. Those protocols were applied to the Black Sand Spit and other known colonies during the 2009 field season.

Forest Thinning

Wildlife enhancement projects on the Tongass include the thinning of trees in dense stands to reintroduce sunlight to the forest floor allowing for increased wildlife forage, and accelerating the return to old growth forest conditions. In 2009, the Tongass implemented thinning of a total of 335 acres in high priority wildlife habitat on Mitkof Island and Stoney Creek on Prince of Wales Island.



A scientist takes measurement on a tern nest on the Yakutat Forelands.

Naturewatch

Thanks to several Naturewatch projects, the Tongass was able to offer fans of wildlife viewing near and far the opportunity for new experiences in 2009.

Internet users worldwide connected to the new beaver camera at the Juneau Ranger District, while visitors to Hoonah received interpretation and educational information via new touch screen kiosks.

New interpretive signs enhanced user experience at the Dog Salmon Bear Viewing site on Prince of Wales Island.

Financial Information

FOREST REVENUE - 2009

Program	Dollars
Timber (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$95,877
Timber (Knutson-Vandenburg Earnings)	\$147,839
Timber (Salvage Sale)	\$329,130
Land Use (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$285,503
Recreation (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$106,750
Power (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$71,032
Minerals (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$145,117
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - Outfitter/Guides & Collection Support	\$878,405
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - Rec Sites & Collection Support	\$1,221,035
Recreation Fees, Forest Service -National Pass Sales & Collection Support	\$16,633
Employee Quarters	\$356,339
Cooperative Work - Other (Roads & Other Co-op Deposits)	\$121,950
Gifts, Donations & Bequests	\$12,541
Commercial Film - Local Admin Unit & Collection Support	\$13,463
Cost Recovery Lands, Major & Minor Projects	\$7,607
FOREST REVENUE TOTAL	\$3,809,221

FOREST EXPENDITURES - 2009

National Forest System Programs	Project Costs
Forest Products	\$14,314,654
Inventory & Monitoring	\$3,053,577
Land Management Planning	\$325,594
Land Ownership Management	\$1,996,236
Minerals & Geology Management	\$1,229,927
Recreation/Heritage/Wilderness Management	\$5,018,705
Vegetation & Watershed Management	\$2,334,332
Wildlife & Fisheries Habitat Management	\$4,239,677
National Forest System Programs Sub-Total	\$32,512,702

American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Programs	Project Costs
Facility Improvement, Maintenance, and Renovation	\$742,334
Road Maintenance and Decommissioning	\$1,110,735
Trails Capital Improvement and Maintenance	\$5,819
Watershed Restoration and Ecosystem Enhancement	\$0
American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Sub-Total	\$1,858,888

Capital Improvement & Maintenance Programs	Project Costs
Facility Capital Improvement & Rec Maintenance	\$6,100,163
Fire, Admin & Other Facility and Visitor Center Facility Maintenance	\$1,137,370
Infrastructure Improvement (Deferred Maintenance)	\$754,424
Road Capital Improvement & Maintenance	\$10,012,023
Trail Capital Improvement & Maintenance	\$1,963,826
Forest Legacy Roads	\$828,084
Capital Improvement & Maintenance Programs Sub-Total	\$20,795,890

Fire Programs	Project Costs
Wildland Fire Preparedness	\$1,056,686
Emergency Suppression & Rehabilitation	\$109,505
Fire Programs Sub-Total	\$1,166,191

Miscellaneous	Project Costs
Subsistence	\$1,775,154
Federal Highways	\$663,348
Land Acquisition	\$66,078
Payments to States - Title II	\$63,200
Reforestation Trust	\$1,250,550
Roads & Trails for States, 10% Fund	\$0
Timber Roads Purchaser Election	\$0
Restoration of Forest Lands	\$3,165
Cooperative Work - Knutson-Vandenburg	60,851
Cooperative Work - Regional Knutson-Vandenburg	\$562,789
Cooperative Work - Other	\$115,022
Salvage Sales	\$155,147
Quarters Operation & Maintenance	\$356,391
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - Outfitter/Guides	\$733,647
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - Rec Sites	\$1,020,958
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - Collection Support	\$406,021
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - National Pass Sales	\$0
Gifts, Donations & Bequests	\$8,410
Recreation Site Improvement	\$295,846
Commercial Filming - Local Admin Unit & Collection Support	\$1,498
Conveyance Program (Admin Sites)	\$60,199
Cost Recovery Lands, Major & Minor Projects	\$29,362
Miscellaneous Programs Sub-Total	\$7,627,636

Cost Pool Programs	Overhead Costs
Cost Pools	\$7,553,066
Cost Pool Programs Sub-Total	\$7,553,066

FOREST EXPENDITURES TOTAL	\$71,514,373
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Sitka, AK 99835-7316
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Admiralty National Monument
8510 Mendenhall Loop Road
Juneau, AK 99801
(907)586-8790

Craig Ranger District
P.O. Box 500
900 Main Street
Craig, AK 99921
(907)826-3271

Hoonah Ranger District
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