



# Tongass National Forest

## Land and Resource Management Plan Amendment

### Public Comments Considered in Final Plan

The public comment period on the proposed Tongass Forest Plan Amendment and associated draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) closed on February 22, 2016. The Forest Service received more than 165,000 comments during the DEIS comment period. The planning process for the Tongass Forest Plan Amendment is now entering its final phase – administrative review of the plan amendment before approval.

Since initiation of the Tongass Plan Amendment on May 27, 2014, the Forest Service has been engaging the public throughout each phase of the planning effort. In addition to inviting public comment on the proposed Tongass Forest Plan Amendment and associated DEIS, the responsible official has encouraged participation by:

- Engaging interested individuals and entities at the local, regional, and national levels;
- Inviting Federal, State and local governments to seek cooperating agency status in the NEPA process;
- Engaging local youth at the Ketchikan High School to have their voice heard;
- Inviting consultation with federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations;
- Requesting advice and recommendations from the Tongass Advisory Committee, a Federal Advisory Committee established by the USDA;
- Posting news, information, updates, and documents on the Tongass Plan Amendment webpage; and,
- Conducting DEIS public open house meetings and subsistence meetings in nine communities in Southeast Alaska.

The specific interest areas and shared views in the comments submitted covered the spectrum of environmental, economic and social interests. Comments included support for and criticism of the DEIS preferred alternative (Alternative 5), or a desire to see more detailed and specific analyses included in the Final EIS. Substantive formal comments were assessed and considered both individually and collectively, and have been responded to by the Forest Plan Amendment interdisciplinary team (IDT). Responses to comments will be included in the Final EIS.

**Note: Public comments submitted are online:** <http://tinyurl.com/tongassplancomments>

The next opportunity for public participation is the pre-decisional administrative review (also referred to as objection) process, which gives an individual or entity an opportunity for an independent Forest Service review and resolution of issues before approval of the plan amendment. The objection filing period is anticipated to begin on June 25, 2016.



Looking northwest from above Neets Bay on North Revillagigedo Island.

#### Issue 4 - JUNE 2016

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### Tongass Plan Amendment Next Steps:

◆ June 24, 2016 (Anticipated) EPA Notice of Availability-Final EIS\* (*Begins 30-day public review period*).

Federal Register Notice and legal notices of Objection Filing Period\* (*60-day filing period begins the day following public notice*).

\*Final EIS & Draft Record of Decision will be made available for review at time of public notice.

See *Objection Process*: page 4.



## Open House and Subsistence Hearings Wrap-up

Open house meetings were held in January and February 2016 in a number of Southeast Alaska communities (Klawock, Wrangell, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Juneau, Sitka, Hoonah, Yakutat and Kake).



Tongass National Forest deputy forest supervisor Tawnya Brummett (center) and Ketchikan-Misty Fiords District silviculturist Michael Papa (left) and participants at the Ketchikan Southeast Alaska Discovery Center for the January 11 open house/ subsistence hearings.



Forest Plan Amendment project leader Susan Howle (center) discussing organization of the Draft EIS with members of the Tongass Youth Advisory Committee in Ketchikan.

More than 160 people received updates on the Forest Plan Amendment project, including:

- Explanations of the organization and content of the published Draft EIS and Proposed Forest Plan (e.g., a narrow 'purpose and need' for the project, and description of the four identified key issues),
- the legal and policy guidelines for comment submission and analysis, and
- advice on how to best structure comment language in relation to published Draft EIS analysis and management direction contained in the Proposed Forest Plan.

### Forest Plan Amendment Key Issues

(Developed from public input and internal review)

Issue 1 –Young-growth Transition

Issue 2 – Renewable Energy

Issue 3 – Inventoried Roadless Areas

Issue 4 – Wildlife Habitat and the Conservation Strategy

A formal Subsistence Hearing, as required by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was held after each open house meeting.

People were invited to provide oral testimony on the Forest Plan Amendment regarding potential impacts on subsistence uses on the Tongass National Forest.

Twelve people offered testimony, providing personal perspectives about their own subsistence use, voicing concerns, and offering advice on a range of issues.

**The Forest Plan Amendment analysis of Subsistence: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences can be viewed online:** <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/R10/Tongass/PlanAmend>, within the "Plan Amendment Draft EIS Part 2" document, beginning on page 3-381.

## Coverage of the Plan Amendment Process

To inform the public, a news release was sent to media outlets throughout Southeast Alaska. This release identified the start of the public comment period and requested public comment. The news release also stated the Preferred Alternative, the narrow focus of the changes, and the schedule of public meetings and hearings in Southeast Alaska communities.

A variety of media has reported on the Plan Amendment through a variety of articles. Examples of these articles are referenced below, and linked from the Plan Amendment Newsroom page online.\*



### News Releases and feature Articles

#### **Tongass National Forest Draft Land Management Plan Amendment Available for Public Comment**

SitNews, November 20, 2015

#### **Tongass EIS proposes transition to young-growth harvest Alaska**

Journal of Commerce, December 2015

#### **Young growth transition focus of open house**

KRBD Community Radio, Ketchikan, January 14, 2016

#### **Forest Service nears finish line for long-term Tongass plan**

Juneau Empire, January 21, 2016

Other groups and individuals also responded through news releases and letters to the editor. Examples of these are included below. Due to space, not all are included here.

### Other Views

#### **Locals fault forest plan for impacts to deer, salmon habitat**

KFSK Community Radio, January 22, 2016

#### **Bumps likely in the long road to a new Tongass plan?**

KCAW Raven Radio (Sitka), February 4, 2016



Tongass Forest Plan Amendment project leader Susan Howle (left), explaining national policy direction from the 2012 Planning Rule, at the Ketchikan Open House meeting/Subsistence Hearing. Members of the Tongass Youth Advisory Committee are in attendance as well as the community reporter from KRBD public radio (with microphone).



Kent Cummins, Tongass National Forest Public Affairs & Partnerships (right) discusses the Comparison of Alternatives table taken from the published Draft EIS.

\* Read what's being reported about the Forest Plan Amendment. Linked from the Plan Amendment Newsroom page, under the Media Coverage subheading: <http://go.usa.gov/cuhZB>



## Forest Plan Amendment Objection Process

Following publication of the Draft EIS and Proposed Forest Plan, submitted written comments were assessed and considered by the Plan Amendment IDT in developing the Final EIS. As required under the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR 1503.4), the Forest Service will respond to these comments in the Final EIS.

Prior to the responsible official issuing a decision approving the plan amendment, there will be an objection process per Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 219, subpart B; published April 9, 2012 (77 FR 21162) that applies to plan amendments. This proposed plan amendment is subject to 36 CFR 219, subpart B.

All documents (Draft Record of Decision, Forest Plan, Final EIS) will be made available online at the time of public notice for the objection period. Individuals and entities as defined in 36 CFR 219.53 who have submitted substantive formal comments related to the plan amendment during the opportunities for public comment as provided in subpart A (reference 36 CFR 219.16) may file an objection. Objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted substantive formal comments related to the plan amendment during scoping or the 90-day Draft EIS comment period. The objection period and required 30-day timeframe for reviewing the Final EIS will run concurrently.

Official notices detailing the formal objection process for the Tongass Forest Plan Amendment will be published in the newspapers of record (Juneau Empire and Ketchikan Daily News). All notices will be published on the Tongass National Forest Plan Amendment website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/R10/Tongass/PlanAmend>. Those who have subscribed to receive Forest Plan Amendment project E-mail updates will be notified.

## Find Documents and Notices Online

Available for review on the Tongass Plan Amendment website:  
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/R10/Tongass/PlanAmend>

## Contact Us

If you have questions or need information about the Forest Plan Amendment, contact:  
**Susan Howle**  
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**(907) 228-6340**

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