



United States
Department of
Agriculture

TONGASS

National Forest

2018 Annual Report



Forest Service

Alaska Region

R10-MB-860

February 2019

We're in this together

"A team of passionate professionals working together to manage the functioning ecosystems and abundant resources of the Tongass in a way that meets our responsibility to the land and duty to the public"

From the Forest Supervisor

Above is the Vision Statement of the Tongass National Forest, which we use to guide our decisions and operations throughout the year. The key phrase from this statement is our "responsibility to the land and duty to the public." This Forest's roughly 400 employees strive to uphold that statement through the principles of Shared Stewardship, Accountability to the American Taxpayer, and Active Management Benefitting the Forest and Communities. You will see these principles in action as you continue through this report, but I'd like to expand on these principles a little before you do.

Shared Stewardship

We believe our approach to stewardship should be integrated and collaborative, with community involvement from development to implementation. The results of our efforts should produce ecological, social and economic benefit to our diverse constituencies across all land ownerships. This can only be done by building and sustaining partnerships, using all available authorities and instruments. We strive to maximize public and private investments in our forest.

Examples of this approach include the Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis project, developed using a highly collaborative method with the public, and receiving its project proposals from an independently formed, broadly based collaborative group called the POW Landscape Assessment Team. Similarly, the Central Tongass Landscape Level Analysis project, which is focused on the Wrangell and Petersburg Ranger Districts, will meet multiple resource goals using an integrated approach and extensive public involvement.

Accountability to the American Taxpayer

Our communities, and all American taxpayers, rightfully demand that we conduct their business efficiently, effectively, and with the utmost integrity. To do so, our actions must balance our responsibility to protecting resources with the expectations of our recreational users through prioritization of efforts, sound investments, collaboration, and community engagement. The demands for use on our forest and the operating budgets we have to meet them are ever changing, and we must adjust as they do in order to continue meeting our responsibilities.

One of the biggest ways we demonstrate our accountability is through partnerships and collaboration that increase our capacity to manage your public lands. The popular Nakwasina River in Sitka, a high-value to salmon T-77 watershed, was recently restored through collaboration with tribal, conservation, and private partners. Crucial Ooligan monitoring was completed in Ketchikan with the help of a tribal organization and a private landowner, and partnerships with other federal and state government agencies helped us complete renovations and improvements of the Lena Beach Recreation Area in Juneau.

Active Management Benefitting the Forest and Communities

From the harvest of wild Alaska seafood to the sustainable harvest of timber and forest products; and the celebration of cultural ties; the forest supports the Southeast Alaskan way of life culturally and economically. We recognize the importance of this forest to the vitality of adjacent



Herbert Glacier ice cave.

communities and strive to actively manage the Tongass for the benefit of all. This means different things to different communities, and we take pride in working to maintain the health of your forest, so its resources will be there for generations to come.

As just a few examples of our active management, we completed 1,976 acres of pre-commercial and wildlife thinning on Prince of Wales Island, worked with the State on the initial phase of the Kosciusko Good Neighbor Authority Young-Growth Timber Sale, supported several important sockeye subsistence projects in and around Sitka to improve salmon returns, and culminated a decade of work to improving watershed conditions in Iris Creek Watershed on Kruzof Island.



Thank you for taking the time to see what is happening on your forest, and I hope you enjoy the rest of the report. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all Tongass employees, our outstanding partners, and you (the public) for making it possible to accomplish all of this in 2018. I look forward to working with you in 2019 to accomplish even more, and to make sure our amazing temperate rainforest continues to provide the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run. After all, we're in this together.



Sincerely,

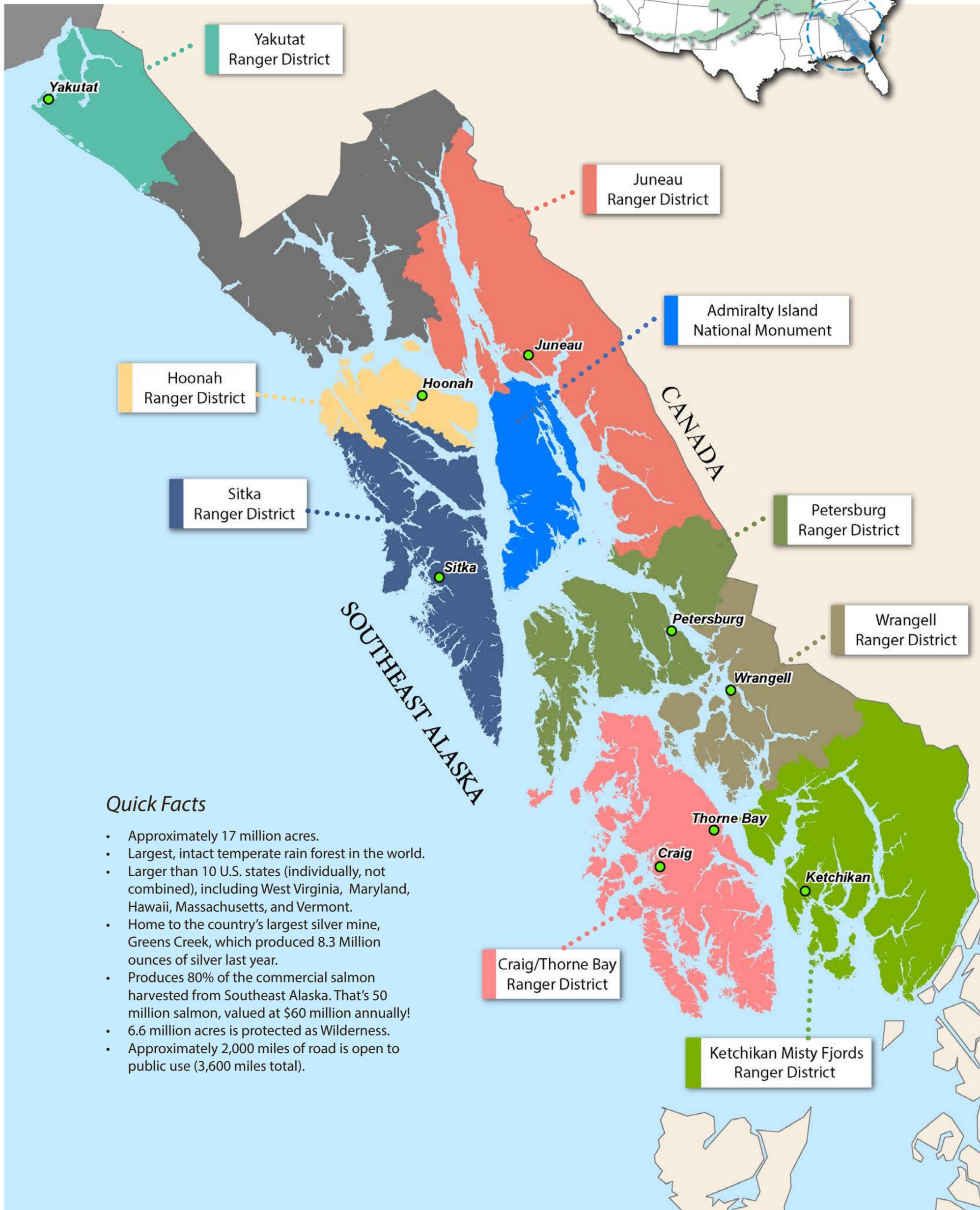
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Earl Stewart".

M. EARL STEWART
Forest Supervisor, Tongass NF



TONGASS

NATIONAL FOREST



Quick Facts

- Approximately 17 million acres.
- Largest, intact temperate rain forest in the world.
- Larger than 10 U.S. states (individually, not combined), including West Virginia, Maryland, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and Vermont.
- Home to the country's largest silver mine, Greens Creek, which produced 8.3 Million ounces of silver last year.
- Produces 80% of the commercial salmon harvested from Southeast Alaska. That's 50 million salmon, valued at \$60 million annually!
- 6.6 million acres is protected as Wilderness.
- Approximately 2,000 miles of road is open to public use (3,600 miles total).

Bear viewing visitors at the South Spit area of Pack Creek. Photo by Michelle Duncan.

ADMIRALTY ISLAND

NATIONAL MONUMENT



Pack Creek bear viewing tower.

A Unique Blend at Pack Creek

A unique blend of attributes combine to make Admiralty Island's Pack Creek Viewing Area a world-class bear viewing area and a Tongass National Forest gem.

- Pack Creek bears are habituated to humans which allows for bear-viewing with no barriers.
- The intact rainforest-maritime ecosystem contains numerous features that support brown bears: a meandering creek with salmon runs, an old-growth forest with berry bushes and skunk cabbage, an estuary full of sedge grass and clam-laden tidal mudflats.
- state and federal agencies co-manage the area and uphold visitor protocols to keep humans predictable and of no concern to the bears.
- Knowledgeable guides familiar with the area and its protocols deliver quality experiences for their clientele—a critical component of the area's success.

Pack Creek was first recognized as a bear viewing area in 1935 when the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed a trail and observation tower for people to watch the bears feed on salmon, sedge grass, and clams. Stan Price, electrical engineer, fisherman, logger, miner, and fox farmer, moved to Pack Creek in the mid-1950s and maintained a residence there until his death in 1989. Stan played a large role in habituating Pack Creek bears. He and his wife raised several orphaned cubs that stayed in the area to raise cubs of their own, comfortable with the presence of people.

Since then, successive generations of bears have grown up accustomed to human visitors

watching them. Humans love seeing these large omnivores in their natural habitat. Demand for such experiences is nourishing a booming sector of the tourism economy. 1,728 visitors came to Pack Creek during the permitted season between June 1 and August 25 this year, setting an all-time record. As Dan Kirkwood, General Manager of Pack Creek Bear Tours, attests:

“Bear viewing is one of the most in-demand and high-end tours in Southeast Alaska. However, it's not just the bears. Plenty of people get to see a bear in a zoo, but our clients want to see a bear in Alaska. A relatively undeveloped, but well-managed, bear viewing area like Pack Creek presents an outstanding opportunity for local businesses to create a high-end visitor product.”

Another reason for the area's success is the thriving state-federal partnership between the Forest Service and Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Experienced staff from both agencies educate visitors by emphasizing the need to congregate in close groups, only using three areas for extended viewing, securing any attractants, and helping people remain predictable. They also inform visitors about bear biology, rainforest ecology, the human and natural history of Pack Creek and Admiralty Island and the purpose of public lands. Visitors to Pack Creek leave not only with an appreciation of brown bears and the rainforest, but with an appreciation of how conservation supports healthy habitat and wildlife populations and the role state and federal agencies play in stewarding public lands.



Brown bears foraging along the beach.



Picnic Creek before bridge restoration.



Newly restored Picnic Creek bridge work makes passage easier for spawning pink and coho salmon.

JUNEAU

RANGER DISTRICT

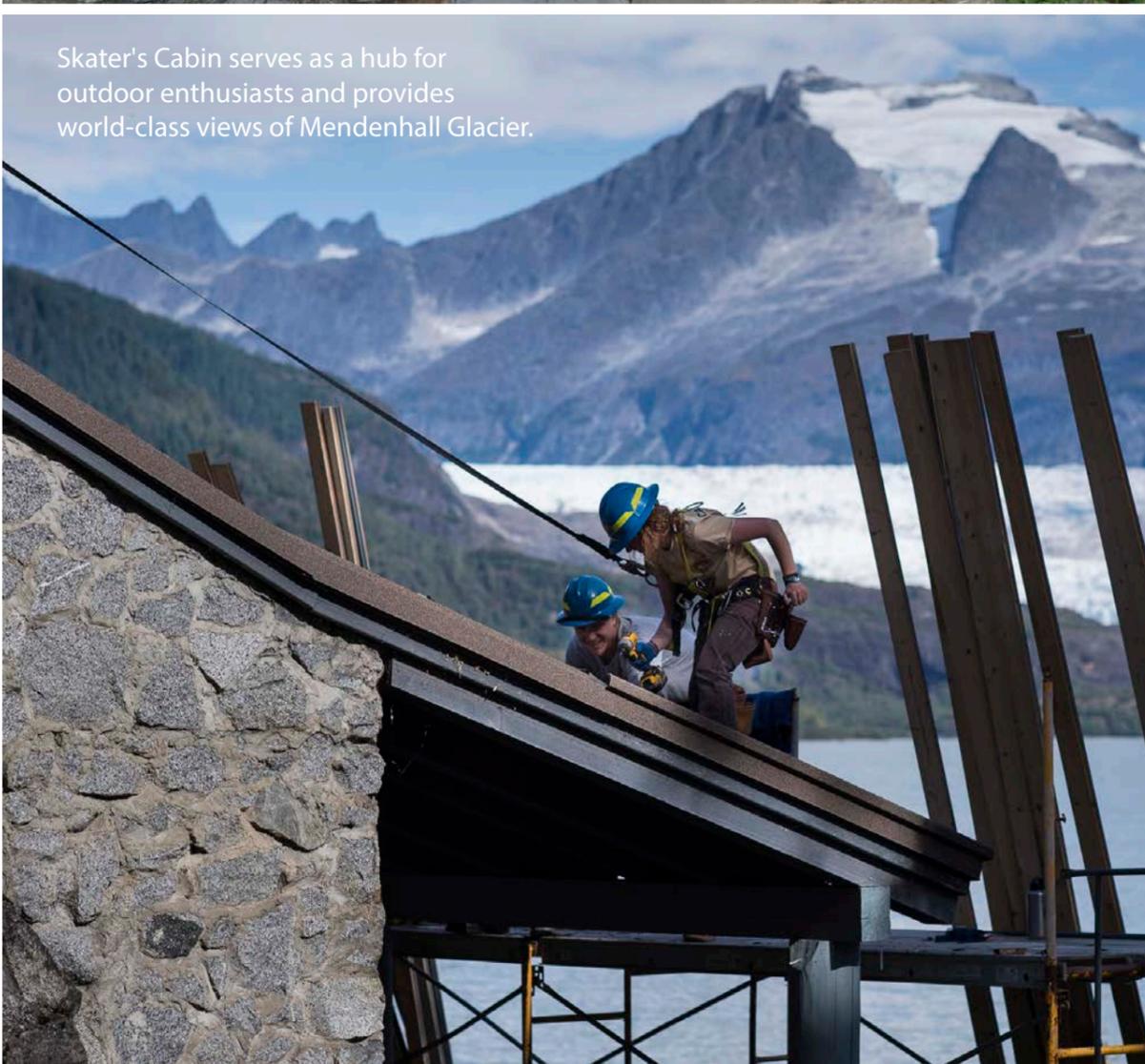


Biologists release coho salmon fry in Davidson Creek. Fry have developed to the point where they are capable of feeding themselves.

Lena Beach Recreation Area Renovations

Lena Beach Recreation Area is located near mile marker 17, along Veterans Memorial Highway, northwest of Juneau. It is approximately 30 acres and was established in the 1950s. Juneau residents use the site every day of the year, and it is known as the sunset spot. Besides picnicking, folks enjoy fishing, surfing, crabbing, and diving at Lena Beach.

The Forest Service partnered with the Federal Highway Administration, and the Fish and Wildlife Service to renovate the Lena Beach Recreation Area in 2018. This project addressed safety concerns, environmental issues, deferred maintenance, and the functionality of the high-use Lena Beach Recreation Area. Specific projects included softening curves in the road, re-grading, making trails accessible, construction of two new shelters and restoration of Picnic Creek. The removal of a large concrete fish ladder and culvert, and restoration of Picnic Creek below a new bridge provides easier passage for spawning pink and coho salmon. Funds are being sought to pave the road and rebuild three remaining shelters in 2019.



Skater's Cabin serves as a hub for outdoor enthusiasts and provides world-class views of Mendenhall Glacier.

Davidson Creek Fish Passage and Bio-enhancement

Davidson Creek, located in the Taku River watershed 16 miles east of Juneau, had a waterfall 650 feet upstream from the mouth that limited anadromous fish passage. In partnership with Douglas Island Pink and Chum, Inc. (DIPAC), the Forest Service modified the barrier in 2015 to open an estimated 12 miles of spawning and rearing habitat, and began a bio-enhancement effort to introduce coho salmon. In the second year, biologists transported 100,000 fry from DIPAC's Macaulay Hatchery by boat and helicopter into Davidson Creek this summer. The results of this project will benefit both the commercial and sport coho salmon fisheries.

Skater's Cabin

In 1936, the Admiralty Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) constructed Skater's Cabin as a warming cabin on the west side of Mendenhall Lake. The shelter has served as a hub for outdoor enthusiasts year-round and stood as witness to a retreating glacier and growing lake. In 2018, the structure received a new roof that replaced rotting cedar shakes. The new roof is made of metal, but mimics the historic look of the former cedar shake roof.



Newly cut timber.

CRAIG/THORNE BAY

RANGER DISTRICT

Work across the District

District staff continued to administer the Big Thorne Integrated Resource Timber Contract and associated stewardship items, and worked with the State of Alaska on the initial phase of Kosciusko Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Young Growth Timber Sale. Rough Luck Timber Sale and several small sales were offered and administered on Prince of Wales Island as well. Over 200 cords of commercial firewood were permitted and approximately 40 free-use permits were issued. Reconnaissance for the Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis (POWLLA) Project continued with surveys completed on several thousand acres. In 2018, 1,976 acres of pre-commercial and wildlife thinning was accomplished. District personnel once again participated in the local Natural Resource Program, taught at the Klawock High School.

Staney Headwaters

Collaboration with The Nature Conservancy allowed for treatment of an even-aged young growth stand within an old-growth reserve. The Staney Headwaters Co-intent was completed under a contract between The Nature Conservancy and Rimco Construction LLC, with Forest Service personnel designated as the Contractor Officer's Representative and making on-the-ground inspections. This contract resulted in acceleration of the development of old-growth characteristics by introducing spatial complexity through mimicry of natural disturbance; improvement of bear and deer habitat by creating conditions that re-initiate understory forage growth; production of timber for a nearby instream restoration project; and commercial young-growth timber to a local mill located in Coffman Cove, AK to experiment with local markets and the viability of young growth.



Prince of Wales Recreation

Work continued on the Sunnahae Trail located in Craig, with Phase Three being completed. Sunnahae is a high-use trail that offers expansive views of the region from the trail's end. Seven portages on the Sarkar Canoe Trail were refurbished through a partnership with Trail Mix. The 16-mile Sarkar Trail transits several lakes and waterways within the central portion of the island, providing a remote freshwater adventure. Improvements were made to the Balls Lake Trail as part of a stewardship agreement from the Big Thorne timber sale. Over 4,000 feet of new boardwalk was constructed to complete the trail loop. The Thorne Bay and Craig Ranger districts partnered with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and Training Rural Alaska Youth Leaders and Students (TRAYLS) program to do trail maintenance.



TRAYLS crewmembers learn trail building techniques alongside SCA leaders.



HOONAH

RANGER DISTRICT

Hoonah Native Forest Partnership

The Hoonah Native Forest Partnership (HNFP) continued its fourth year of working towards improving watershed health across private, city, and federal lands. The partnership also brings the additional benefits of local workforce development, improving working relationships among landowners, and incorporating community values in management decisions. The HNFP Steering Committee and Technical Team is made up of the core partners: Sealaska, Huna Totem, The Hoonah Indian Association, The City of Hoonah, The Nature Conservancy, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Subsistence Division and the U.S. Forest Service. Together, the group supported the field crew in making considerable progress in 2018. The District provided the five person field crew with a week of field safety orientation in May, and the Hoonah-based fire module provided chainsaw training and certification to the field crew in June. The focus in the 2018 field season was on upland and riparian thinning in the Spasski Watershed, which was a large-scale effort led by The Nature Conservancy; and validation surveys for Coho Intrinsic Potential (IP) modeling in the project area throughout mixed ownership lands. The Hoonah Ranger District also provided personnel support, and most of the field gear and supply needs to complete six weeks of Coho IP validation work.

Improving watershed health across private and public lands.

Project planning for implementation in 2019 has also begun with the recent award of a tribal wildlife grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for work in the HNFP project area, specifically the Spasski Watershed, with the Forest Service providing technical assistance.

Hoonah Youth Training and Summer Employment

The District participated in a youth workforce development project through a memorandum of understanding with Training Rural Alaska Youth Leaders and Students (TRAYLS). The effort was in coordination and cooperation with the Student Conservation Association, Hoonah Indian Association and other community partners as well. The project employed five Hoonah youth, ages 15-23, from mid-May through mid-August. After two weeks of leadership and life skills training in Anchorage, the TRAYLS crew worked for three weeks in the Hoonah Ranger District. The crew received training and instruction to complete fish pass maintenance, in-stream restoration monitoring, and cabin and trail maintenance in the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership project area. They also assisted with timber sale layouts and road/sign maintenance, and participated in the 29th Annual Kids Fishing Derby and the Fourth of July parade float entry.

Hoonah Indian Association employee working in Spasski Valley.



TRAYLS Crew working on the fish pass in Suntaheen Creek.



Wilderness Ranger monitoring floatplane activity.

KETCHIKAN MISTY FJORDS RANGER DISTRICT

Cultural and Heritage Monitoring

The District hosted the annual cooperative effort: *Joint University of Alaska Southeast and Forest Service Archaeological Survey and Monitoring Expedition to Southern KMRD*. Volunteers contributed 280 hours surveying nine acres and monitoring the condition of 23 known sites. The crew also located and documented three new sites, including a shell midden that has been carbon dated to BC 152 to AD 148, and a lead/zinc mine dating to the early 1900s.

The District also completed an archaeological survey and monitoring expedition along the shorelines of Humpback, Manzanita, Ella, and McDonald Lakes by kayak. During the 17-day expedition, three new archaeological sites were documented and 40 known sites were monitored for evidence of erosion, vandalism, or artifact collecting. The District Archaeologist and volunteers completed a new inventory of approximately 53 acres, paddling 80.4 miles of shoreline, and performing 2.6 miles of land surveys.

Hyder Film Permit

The Fish Creek Wildlife Observation Site in Hyder hosted Plimsoll Productions, a U.K. based documentary filming company this summer. Utilizing a state of the art thermal imaging camera, the film crew gathered high quality footage of wolves fishing at night. Displaying an extraordinarily high standard for wildlife photography ethics, they captured amazing video expected to air on the British Broadcasting Corporation in 2019.

Kids Fishing Derby

About 1,500 chinook smolts, raised by the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, were released into the Ketchikan City Park pond in June for the annual Ketchikan Kids Fishing Derby. Forest Service personnel and Student Conservation Association (SCA) interns were joined by Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and local volunteers to host kids aged 3-15 and their families for fishing, lure making, casting challenge, angler ethics, fish printing, prize drawings and other activities.

Unuk River Ooligan Monitoring

Eulachon, locally known as ooligan or smelt, are an important cultural and subsistence species. Populations of ooligan, once abundant in the Unuk River have been critically low since 2005, leading to annual closures to provide for conservation of ooligan. In 2018, the District partnered with the Ketchikan Indian Community and a local landowner to conduct in-person monitoring for the duration of the expected return of the fish to the Unuk River, augmenting other survey methods. Our goal is to better understand the actual number of fish present, allowing the Forest to better manage harvest restrictions.

Ward Lake Recreation Area

The District and SCA interns continued to improve the Ward Lake Recreation Area. Funding from the local Ketchikan Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) allowed ongoing replacement of picnic tables and fire rings as well as the repair of a foot bridge near the Grassy Point.

Wilderness Monitoring

The District Wilderness Ranger and a SCA intern spent a total of 28 days in Misty Fjords National Monument Wilderness monitoring floatplane activity on freshwater lakes and general activity on saltwater, reviewing trail and shelter conditions, and conducting remote site surveys. An artist was hosted in the annual Voices of the Wilderness program where the artist creates an artistic representation, in their own medium, of the wonders of the Misty Fjords National Monument Wilderness.

Youth Programs

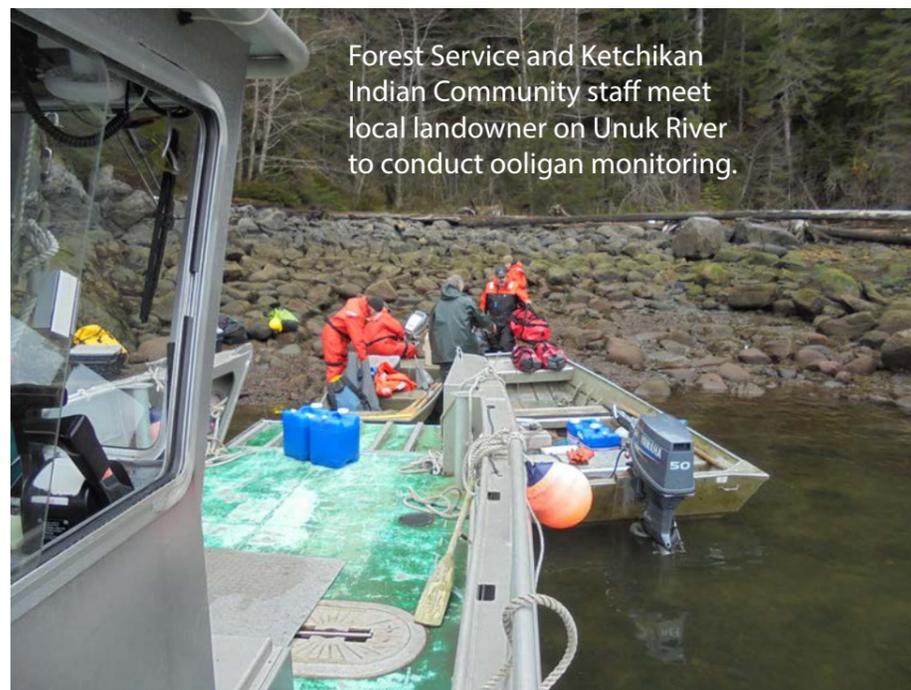
The 2018 Ward Lake Outdoor School, held May 8 – 11, was a partnership between the Forest Service, Ketchikan Indian Community, and Ketchikan Schools to provide an educational experience about forest resources for approximately 200 fifth and sixth grade students. Forest Service specialists, scientists from the Ketchikan Indian Community, SCA interns, and volunteers operated four learning stations: fish and water quality, wildlife, shellfish, and orienteering. A second event was held for 114 first and second graders to walk around Ward Lake to ask questions and explore the environment.



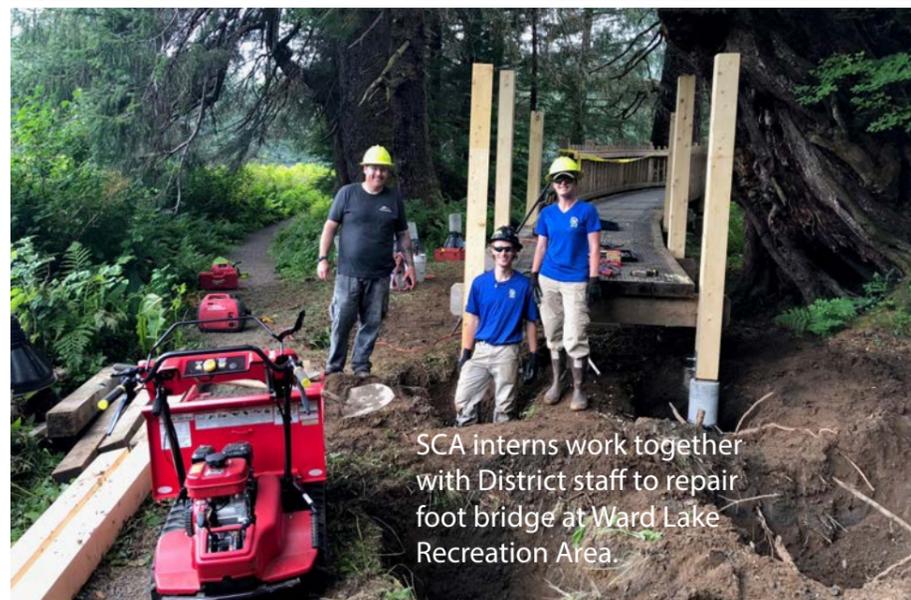
Community of Ketchikan enjoying a sunny day at the Kids Fishing Derby in June.



District Staff Ecologist Jon Hyde explores the environment with Ketchikan youth at the 2018 Ward Lake Outdoor School.



Forest Service and Ketchikan Indian Community staff meet local landowner on Unuk River to conduct ooligan monitoring.



SCA interns work together with District staff to repair foot bridge at Ward Lake Recreation Area.



PETERSBURG

RANGER DISTRICT

Wilderness monitoring
from kayaks.

Central Tongass Project

The Petersburg and Wrangell Ranger Districts have joined together on a landscape-scale planning effort called the Central Tongass project. The project is located on both Districts, with a purpose to meet multiple resource goals and objectives identified in the 2016 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, using an integrated approach. Some of the project needs include improving forest ecosystem health, supporting resilience through economic development opportunities within Southeast Alaska communities, providing sustainable recreation opportunities to local visitors and the tourism industry, and offering a variety of wood products to regional mills and local communities. The variety of management activities identified through numerous public meetings and the Central Tongass planning team fit into four broad categories: watershed restoration and improvement, vegetation management, access management, and sustainable recreation management. The implementation of the management activities would occur over the next 15 years. The planning team is currently developing alternatives and will engage more community input through public working sessions over the spring of 2019.

Petersburg Wilderness Character monitoring work in 2018

The Petersburg Ranger District is home to three wilderness areas, which is piloting the implementation of a national interagency Wilderness Character Monitoring (WCM) program. The Forest Service, along with other federal agencies, has partnered with the Society of Wilderness Stewardship (SWS) to address the backlog of wilderness stewardship work across the National Wilderness Preservation System. SWS is a non-governmental organization which employs highly-educated, young professionals as Wilderness Fellows to provide additional capacity to land management agencies. Wilderness Fellows are specifically trained in developing baseline assessments of wilderness areas. The WCM effort measures the outcomes of management decisions affecting wilderness areas. Trends in wilderness character are measured by monitoring locally relevant indicators, which fall within five qualities: untrammeled, natural, undeveloped, opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and other features of value. A Wilderness Character Narrative is written to highlight what is unique and special about each wilderness area, which informs management about what is important and relevant to monitor. By participating in this pilot program, Petersburg Creek-Duncan Salt Chuck, Tebenkof Bay, and Kuiu Wildernesses will all see improved Wilderness Stewardship Performance scores, reflecting the positive actions taken by management to better protect these wildernesses.

Mitchell Creek Fish Pass Reconstruction

U.S. Forest Service personnel, Student Conservation Association staff and interns, and a few family members gathered at the project site of the Mitchell Creek Fish Pass, August 16, 2018, for a small ceremony to recognize the longstanding partnership between the Forest Service and the Student Conservation Association (SCA), and to place a plaque in memory of John "Slim" Pickens, a 20-year Forest Service employee who mentored many SCAs and worked on the original pass in 1992. The new structure is a sturdier, thicker-walled replica of the original, which allows coho salmon access to an additional 26 miles of stream and nearly 10 acres of lake and pond habitat past the barrier on Mitchell Creek. Besides the Mitchell Creek Fish Pass, Petersburg RD has eight other fish passes requiring monitoring and maintenance for fish access. Fisheries personnel visited these eight passes a total of 18 times this season to remove rocks, logs and sticks from the aluminum slot passages. The most outstanding effort utilized the Mitchell SCA interns' skill with cable and grip hoists to help move a pair of boulders that had blocked passage for years, and weighing nearly 1000 pounds total, from the Kwatahein Creek Fish Pass.



Petersburg Creek-Duncan Salt Chuck Wilderness



Ellen Ray, Wilderness Fellow, in the Russell Fiords Wilderness Area.



Petersburg District Ranger David Zimmerman, and Student Conservation Association staff at Mitchell Fish Pass project site.

Indian River trail construction crew members.



SITKA

RANGER DISTRICT

Sitka Tribe and Forest Service Potato Garden

The Sitka Ranger District and Sitka Tribe of Alaska joined forces for the third year to create an educational opportunity and support local food security in the community. Tlingit potatoes (sometimes called Maria's) are a well-adapted traditional food that have been grown in Southeast Alaska for over 200 years! On Earth Day, student volunteers from Pacific High School and Tribal Citizens came together with Forest Service staff to plant and learn

about Tlingit potatoes at the Sitka District office. With sand, seaweed, and fish heads added to the soil in the spring to maximize the yield, we harvested 90 pounds of potatoes in the fall. The majority of the harvest goes to the Tribe's Traditional Foods Program for the community, while remaining potatoes were taken home by volunteers to grow their own next year.



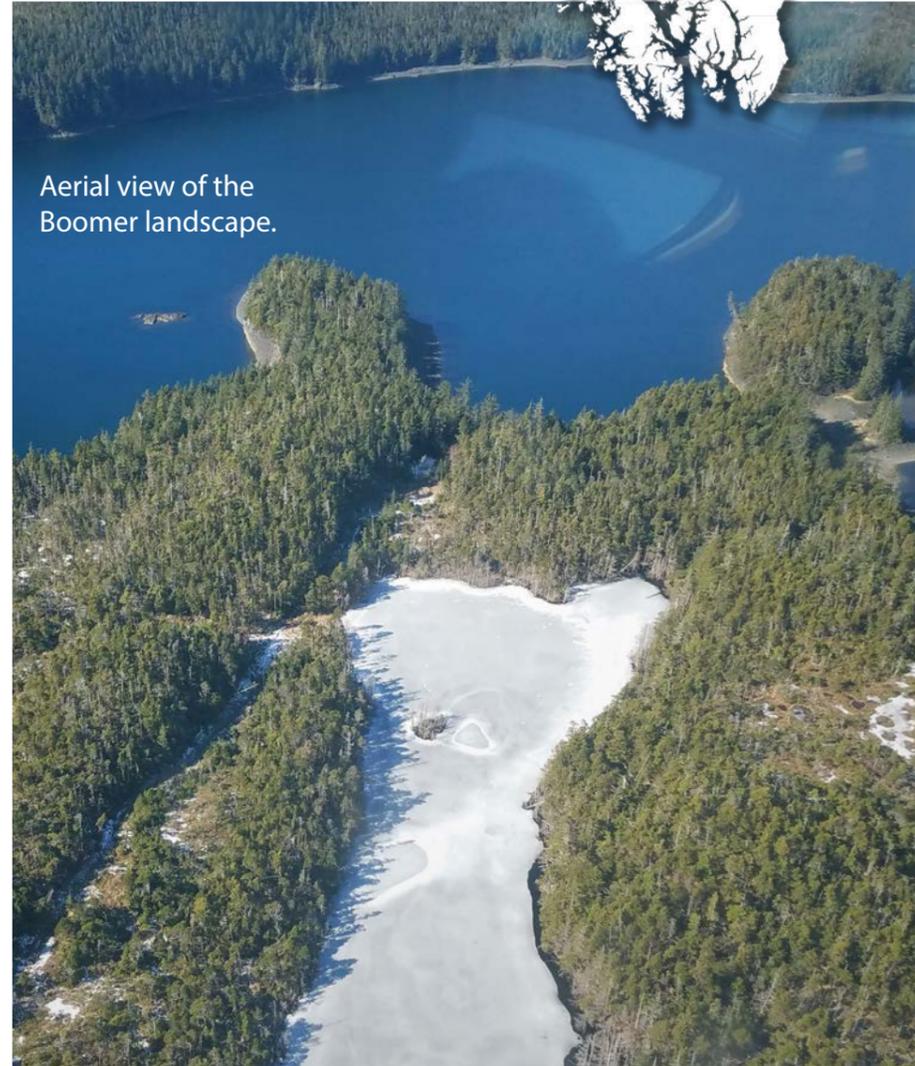
Indian River Trail Reconstruction

Extensive maintenance and new construction was completed on the Indian River trail in 2018. Multiple partners worked with the District trail crew including Juneau Trail Mix, Outer Coast student volunteers, Student Conservation Association interns, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The group completed reconstruction on 1.5 miles of trail, in addition to a reroute with two new log bridges, each over 50 feet long. The project was paid for using Secure Rural Schools funding, and additional work on this trail is planned for summer of 2019.

River and Watershed Restoration

Nakwasina River, a high-value salmon watershed, is a popular area with anglers, hunters, subsistence users, and hikers near Sitka. In the 1960s, the Nakwasina watershed was one of the first areas to be logged on the Tongass, and much of the timber along the river was removed with practices no longer permitted, leaving the river in a degraded condition. The Sitka Ranger District worked with Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Sitka Conservation Society, Trout Unlimited, and Student Conservation Association to provide local youth with job training and the opportunity to assist with on-the-ground habitat improvement projects. This included using young growth trees to build dozens of instream log structures in tributaries of Nakwasina River, improving several miles of stream for juvenile and adult salmon.

This year the Sitka Ranger District culminated nearly a decade of work to improve watershed conditions in Iris and Shelikof Creeks, a National Priority Watershed, located on Kruzof Island. Ultimately, 18 miles of stream were restored for salmon habitat, nearly 1,500 acres of riparian and upland habitat were improved for wildlife, 3 new culverts were installed to provide passage for salmon, and 7 miles of OHV trails were reconstructed to prevent erosion and sedimentation into streams and provide better access to popular recreation, hunting, and fishing areas. The Nature Conservancy, Sitka Conservation Society, NOAA, the State of Alaska, National Forest Foundation, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation contributed to make this project a reality.



Aerial view of the Boomer landscape.



Boomer mine cleanup area.

Land Acquisition to West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness

Forty-eight acres of land were added to the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness in 2018. When the City and Borough of Sitka raised the level of the Blue Lake dam, 362 acres of National Forest System lands were inundated. To compensate for this loss, the City gave the Tongass a parcel of land known as the Boomer mine to be included in the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness. A local contractor cleaned up the mining claim in collaboration with the City, the Sitka Conservation Society, and the Sitka Ranger District.

Subsistence Fisheries

The Sitka Ranger District supports several important sockeye salmon subsistence projects, including Redoubt Lake near Sitka, and Falls Lake near Kake. We work with interns from Organized Village of Kake, the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, and the Student Conservation Association to monitor the sockeye salmon returns as part of the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. This year we had one of the highest sockeye returns ever recorded at Redoubt Lake with 72,000 adult sockeye coming through the weir to the lake while subsistence fishermen (dip netting or snagging) caught 8,849 and commercial seine fishermen catching 16,000.



Habitat improvement on the Nakwasina River.



National Civilian Conservation Corps crew.

WRANGELL

RANGER DISTRICT

Partnering with our Community

A 10-person, National Civilian Conservation Corps (NCCC) crew was in Wrangell working on projects not only for the Tongass, but the Wrangell community as well. This included improving city parks, digging new garden beds for the elementary school, painting the retirement home, and helping the Wrangell Cooperative Association (WCA) maintain their tribal sites in town. One big project for the Wrangell District involved trail improvements on the High Country/Institute Creek trail. The NCCC crew worked with the WCA trail crew, led by a Student Conservation Association (SCA) Intern trail crew leader. They replaced over 70 boards and installed approximately 1,000 feet of non-skid material on the trail.

Knowledge Sharing at Anan

Anan Wildlife Observatory is one of Wrangell's highest profile sites due to up-close bear viewing at established viewing areas, but this year new wildlife cameras funded by Secure Rural Schools grants were installed to give visitors different views of the wildlife. One camera provided a view from within the stream to see the salmon, while a camera at the Upper Falls on Anan Creek provided a glimpse into the wildlife activity in an area closed to the public. Also at Anan this year, a Tongass diversity grant connected WCA members with Tongass archeologists on a trip to share information on cultural sites in the Anan Creek area. And plans for a new observation deck to replace the aging infrastructure were shared with the public.

Eyes on Wilderness

Fee retention funds from outfitter and guides were used to perform inventory and monitoring of Wilderness resources, outfitter and guide use, and archeological resources in the South Etolin Wilderness. The 10-day boat trip allowed resource managers to access sites that had not been seen in many years and update current understanding of use patterns in the Wilderness. In the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness, work continued on a multi-year effort to conduct control treatments on invasive plant species found along the Stikine River. Forest Service biologists also participated in meetings with international biologists in Bellingham, Wash., as part of the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative. The Stikine River is included in the network of stopover sites along the Pacific Flyway utilized by migratory shorebirds as they venture to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. The meeting was a way for biologists to share and collaborate on projects involving shorebirds.

Forest Health

The District silviculture team assisted the Forest Health and Protection group with the ongoing study of cedar decline in young growth. Staff installed monitoring plots to gain understanding of the impacts of porcupine damage to young growth. Silviculture staff also assisted in the Young Growth Inventory, an effort under the Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the State of Alaska.



Wildlife biologists and Anan crew test new Anan bear and fish cameras.



Wrangell/Petersburg archeologist Jane Smith participates in South Etolin Wilderness monitoring.



Wrangell Cooperative Association tribal members investigate traditional fish traps on Anan field trip.



A landing strip provides access to the remote cabins.

YAKUTAT

RANGER DISTRICT

Remote Cabins at Yakutat

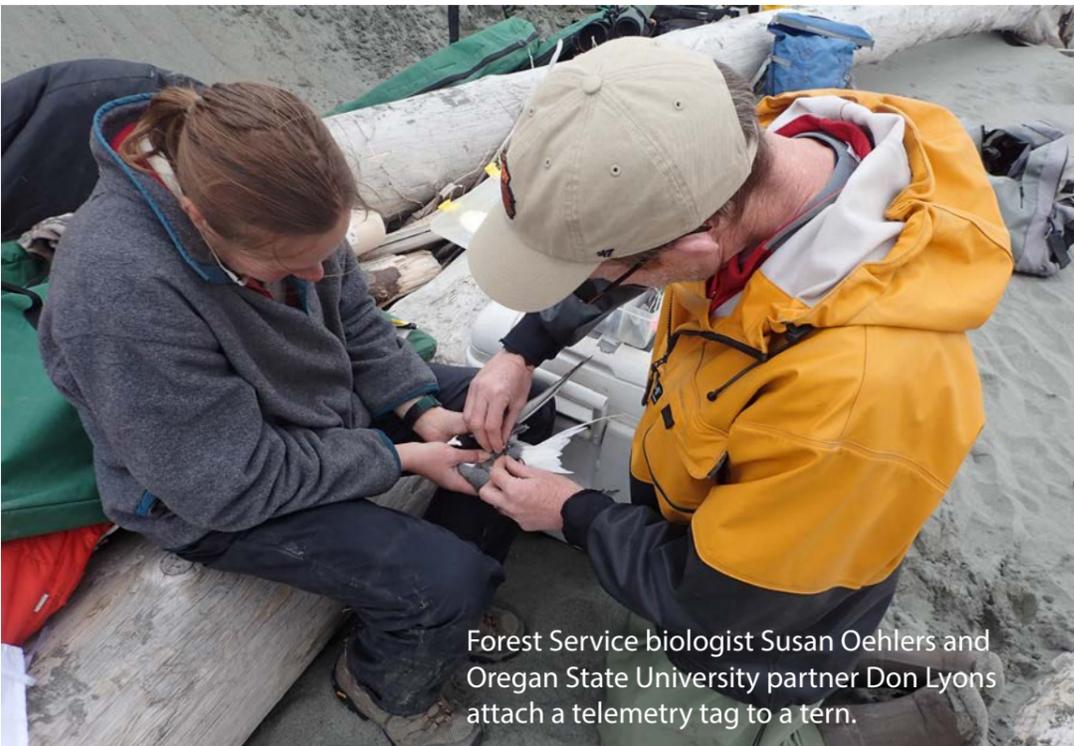
Two of the most remote cabins on the District are the Tanis Mesa Cabin and the Alsek River Cabin. These cabins are most commonly accessed by small-wheeled bush planes on an adjacent runway. These cabins are located on the southeast end of the ranger district at the base of the Brabazon Mountain Range. Every year, it is quite a feat to mow the airstrips with devices that fit in small aircraft and maintain the cabins. If these airstrips don't get mowed, they become dangerous and unsafe to aircraft.

The Tanis Mesa Cabin has two rooms, there is a north side and a south side, and both sides have bunk beds, a diesel (#1) heating stove, loft, table, benches and a small countertop. There is also an outdoor fire pit, picnic table, meat shed and outhouse. The recreation crew brushed out two trails in the area to provide access to spectacular wildlife viewing and a small, clear stream to obtain water.

The Alsek River Cabin is a one room, hunter-style cabin with two sets of bunk beds (four beds), a diesel (#1) heating stove, table, benches, a small countertop, an outdoor fire pit, picnic table, meat shed and outhouse. Every year, staff brush out around the cabin and about 300 feet from the cabin to the slough behind to obtain drinking water. This year, the recreation crew replaced the shed next to this cabin with a yellow cedar structure to hang game and for storage. The new shed should last at least 15 years longer than the old one did.



Alsek cabin



Forest Service biologist Susan Oehlers and Oregon State University partner Don Lyons attach a telemetry tag to a tern.

Aleutian Terns

The district continues to collaborate with partners to monitor Aleutian Terns, a colonial nesting seabird which nests only in coastal Alaska and Russia, and appears to be declining statewide. Biologists are working to fill information gaps regarding this poorly understood seabird in order to determine the population status and trend and ultimately work towards conservation of the species. As part of this effort, and with additional support by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, University of Alaska Southeast, University of Hawaii, and Oregon State University, biologists deployed satellite telemetry tags on seven birds in 2017 and six in 2018. Data from this study are providing a wealth of information on breeding season movements, migration routes, and overwintering areas.



Hubbard Glacier Monitoring

The annual advance of the Hubbard Glacier creates one of the most unique and critical land management issues in the Alaska Region. Historically, and in contemporary times (once in 1986 and again in 2003), the Hubbard Glacier has blocked the outlet of Russel Fiord at Gilbert Point, creating Russel Lake. With the Fiord outlet blocked, water in the 80-90 square mile Russel Lake rises in search of a new outlet. In 1986, it rose 80 feet above sea level before the Gilbert Point ice dam broke. To apply some contextual scale to this event, it is equivalent at peak discharge to almost twice the flow of the Mississippi River (Trabant, et. al. 2003). If waters behind the ice dam reach approximately 130 feet, then the lake will find a new outlet down the Old Situk River Corridor, which would radically transform the Situk River corridor and threaten roads, infrastructure, and possibly the Yakutat Airport.

The Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Cold Regions Research Lab, and the City and Borough of Yakutat have been cooperating on Hubbard Glacier monitoring since the last closure event. A glacier monitoring station is located at Gilbert point. This site is closest to the Hubbard Glacier Gap, and most important for monitoring a potential closure event. The gauging station is made up of a laser range finder, a camera, wind, and temperature sensors. All data is uploaded via the Iridium Satellite network to the web, where it can be viewed in real time by managers and the public alike. The Haenke Island site records weather variables, also accessible from the web.



Hubbard Glacier



The Tongass Leadership Team (TLT) pose in front of a mural depicting the four Tlingit Clans in Hoonah.

TRIBAL RELATIONS

CARING FOR THE LAND AND SERVING PEOPLE

The relationship between the Tongass National Forest and the Indigenous Peoples of Southeast Alaska is quite unique and multi-faceted in comparison to the agency's relationships with Tribes in the rest of the continental United States. This striking difference can be seen where Forest Service endeavors to fulfill the federal government's trust obligation both to Alaska Native Tribes as well as with Alaska Native Corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). In addition, since the issuance of the 2016 Forest Service Tribal Relations Directives, the Tongass has broadened its outreach in order to strengthen working relationships with non-federally recognized Tribes, Tribal entities and Alaska Native nonprofit Organizations.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 began with an annual report out to the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood (ANB/ANS) Grand Camp Convention. The Tongass National Forest and the ANB/ANS Grand Camp executed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013 establishing a framework for cooperation and exchange of information between the parties to advance the skills, knowledge and goals of each regarding mutual stewardship issues and concerns within the Tongass National Forest. An important component of the MOU is the annual report of Tribal Relations to the Convention.

Earlier this year a partnership was arranged with the Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI). The first collaboration began with SHI granting full use and sharing of their Lingít (Tlingit), Xaad Kíl (Haida), and Sm'alg'yax (Tsimshian) language dictionaries on the Forest Service Alaska Region web page. This project then led to the creation of another web publication showcasing bird species in Alaska and their names in Lingít, including voice recordings of their pronunciation. Additional work to include Haida and Tsimshian language representation is currently in progress. As part of the agreement SHI reviews all content for accuracy prior to final publication on the web.

Another fun example of active working relationships with Alaska Native groups is the securing of permission from the Tlingit Áak'w Kwáan to create a segment for a children's educational smart device app designed to take participants on a scavenger hunt throughout the Auke Recreation

Area in Juneau. Working with designated Áak'w clan leadership from the Yaxté Hít (Big Dipper House), Tribal Relations provided clan history and traditional ecological knowledge to assist with the development of the "Agents of Culture: Territory of the Áak'w Kwáan".

As demonstrated above, a key focus area for Tribal Relations is applying specialized knowledge publically and within the agency. To help accomplish this, an interactive presentation on Southeast Alaska Native Cultures was created. The presentation was initially offered only to seasonal Rangers and Natural Interpreter Staff in FY2017, as they are usually the first line of contact with the millions of visitors to the Tongass each year. Then, in 2018 the Orientation was expanded and is now provided regularly throughout the year to all program areas, including Forest and Regional Line Officers and staff.

In May, the Tongass National Forest hosted the Alaska Tribal Leaders Committee (ATLC) annual meeting, held on Prince of Wales Island with meetings in Kasaan and Craig. The ATLC is a joint committee of elected Tribal Delegates and Forest Service Leadership.

Rounding out the fiscal year, Tongass Tribal Relations was able to finalize a one-of-a-kind Cooperating Agreement between the Forest Service and Sitka Tribe of Alaska utilizing authorities under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). This agreement seeks to advance knowledge and skills for each party through mutual exchange and project collaborations that deal with food security and traditional ecological knowledge. One such project will be the building of a smokehouse, to be installed on Sitka Tribe's property, for the education of Tribal citizen youth to learn the ancient methods of putting up traditional Native foods and perpetuating a subsistence lifestyle.

Through these collaborations we have begun to understand and acknowledge that while the Forest Service and Tribes may have different sciences, methodologies and terminologies – the core values of each as stewards of the land remain similar: "Caring for the Land, and Serving People."



Group photo in Angoon with Youth Conservation Corps Crew 2018.



Forest Service staff gather with Áak'w Kwáan Clan Spokesman, Fran Houston (right), in Berner's Bay.



Upgrades to the Suntaheen bridge provides for a water crossing with no constrictions.

ENGINEERING

Engineering oversees design, maintenance, construction, and decommissioning of roads, bridges, and facilities, and manages the Tongass fleet of vehicles, equipment, and vessels. Engineering also supports other program areas like recreation, lands, and environmental compliance.

The Tongass has more than 3,586 miles of roads throughout the forest. About half of these roads are open for use and the other half are closed and “stored” to facilitate forest management activities in the future. There are 642 vehicular bridges on these roads and 538 are “active” and open for use. Engineering supports routine inspection, maintenance, and repairs to these roads and bridges. To protect public and employee safety, the engineering staff inspect approximately 260 of these bridges annually. A total of 15 bridges were installed and major maintenance was accomplished on an additional 4 bridges in 2018, and approximately 660 miles of road were maintained. Engineering staff also administered repairs to approximately 160 Fire, Administrative and Other (FA&O) facilities on the Tongass.

Most major repairs are accomplished under contract. Engineering and Fleet Management administered approximately 135 contracts in 2018. Important facilities maintenance projects completed included: fire sprinklers in the Petersburg bunkhouse, repairs to the Petersburg Ranger house, snow guards on many of the roofs in Hoonah, repairs to the Yakutat housing septic system, repairs to the Wrangell crew quarters bathroom, rehabilitation of utilities on the Yakutat Ranger District Compound, water heater replacements for Thorne Bay housing, repairs to Shoal Cove field camp bathroom, repairs to the Thorne Bay Bunkhouse, flooring replacement for the apartments in Craig, forest-wide energy and water audits, forest-wide water management plans, and improvements to the Petersburg security system.

Fleet management staff administer procurement, maintenance, safety, and operator qualifications for the Tongass fleet of vehicles. The fleet is comprised of approximately 165 motor vehicles that drive more than 600,000 miles per year, or about 2.5 times the distance to the moon. The Tongass also currently owns and operates 52 boats, 4 barges and numerous ATVs and UTVs.



Staney watershed restoration.



View of the Lena Beach shelter roof beam and joists- designed to with stand wind loads during 50 year event storms.



Mechanical brushing, ditch cleaning, and placement of borrow; this road was reconstructed with minimal borrow to reduce cost, impact to the land and resources.



BEAR VIEWING

Bears live, forage, and travel everywhere in the Tongass. Here is a selection of five sites where visitors can watch and learn about bears without disturbing them. Forest Service staff are on-site throughout July and August. Watch for group size limits and other restrictions. Pets, food and camping are not allowed at these sites.

Anan Wildlife Observatory is located 30 miles south of Wrangell, and accessible by boat or floatplane. Season is late-June through mid-September. Passes required during peak season July 5 to August 25, and cost \$10 plus reservation fee. Passes are obtained at <http://www.recreation.gov>. Commercial guides are available at nearby communities.

Facilities: Boardwalk trail is 1/2-mile from beach to observation deck, shelter, viewing blind, and outhouse. Look for brown and black bears, eagles and salmon.

For more information or to obtain a pass, please contact the Wrangell Ranger District at 907-874-2323.

Fish Creek Wildlife Observation Site is located 75 air miles northeast of Ketchikan and three miles north of Hyder, by road, in the Salmon River valley. The site is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Entry fees for July 1– September 15: \$5 a day; \$10 for 3 days; \$20 for 7 days. Fees payable at Hyder Forest Service Office and at local vendors.

Facilities: parking area, viewing deck, restroom. Camping in Hyder. Look for brown and black bears, eagles, geese, ducks, mink, beaver, songbirds, and chum salmon.

For more information, call the Ketchikan Misty Fjords Ranger District at 907-225-2148 year-round or the Hyder office from May 1– September 25, at 250-636-2367.

Pack Creek Brown Bear Viewing Area is located on Admiralty Island, 27 air miles south of Juneau, accessible by boat or floatplane. Season runs June 1 through September 10. Permit required, commercial guides available. Adults \$50 and youth \$25 per person during peak season

Facilities: Beach walk to observation pad, camping on nearby Windfall Island, no shelter or restroom. Look for brown bears, deer, and birds.

For more information, call the Admiralty National Monument at 907-586-8800.

Margaret Creek Wildlife Observation Site is located on Revillagigedo Island, 26 miles north of Ketchikan. Accessible by boat or floatplane. Forest Service hosts are on site intermittently in August and the first two weeks of September. No fees or permits required. Commercial guides available.

Facilities: 1/4-mile gravel trail located one mile from Margaret Bay dock takes visitors through old-growth temperate rainforest to viewing platform. Look for black bears, birds, and four species of salmon.

For more information, call Ketchikan/Misty Fjords Ranger District at 907-225-2148

Steep Creek Observation Site is near Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center in Juneau, and is home to spawning salmon from mid-July through October. The site is open from 6 a.m. to midnight daily.

Facilities: A short, raised accessible boardwalk provides opportunities to view salmon, bears, and other wildlife. Restrooms are located near the visitor center. Fees are \$5/person ages 16-yrs and over, May – September. Current America the Beautiful passes accepted. Mendenhall Season Passes available. Look for black bears, sockeye and coho salmon, ducks, songbirds, and porcupines.

For more information: Call Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center at 907-789-0097.





Supervisor's Office
648 Mission Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901-6591
(907) 225-3101

Admiralty Island National Monument
8510 Mendenhall Loop Road
Juneau, AK 99801-8041
(907) 586-8800

Craig Ranger District
P.O. Box 500
Craig, AK 99921-0500
(907) 828-3271

Hoonah Ranger District
P.O. Box 135
Hoonah, AK 99829-0135
(907) 945-3631

Juneau Ranger District
8510 Mendenhall Loop Road
Juneau, AK 99801-8041
(907) 586-8800

Ketchikan Misty Fjords Ranger District
3031 Tongass Avenue
Ketchikan, AK 99901-5743
(907) 225-2148

Petersburg Ranger District
P.O. Box 1328
Petersburg, AK 99833-1328
(907) 772-3871

Sitka Ranger District
2108 Halibut Point Road
Sitka, AK 99835
(907) 747-6671

Thorne Bay Ranger District
P.O. Box 19001
Thorne Bay, AK 99919-0001
(907) 828-3304

Wrangell Ranger District
P.O. Box 51
Wrangell, AK 99929-0051
(907) 874-2323

Yakutat Ranger District
P.O. Box 327
Yakutat, AK 99689-0327
(907) 784-3359



For more information, visit us online at
www.fs.usda.gov/tongass/

USDA is an equal opportunity provider,
employer, and lender.

Front cover: Eagle Glacier and the roaring Eagle River. Back cover: Looking up the Gastineau Channel from the shoulder of West Peak at Sunset.