

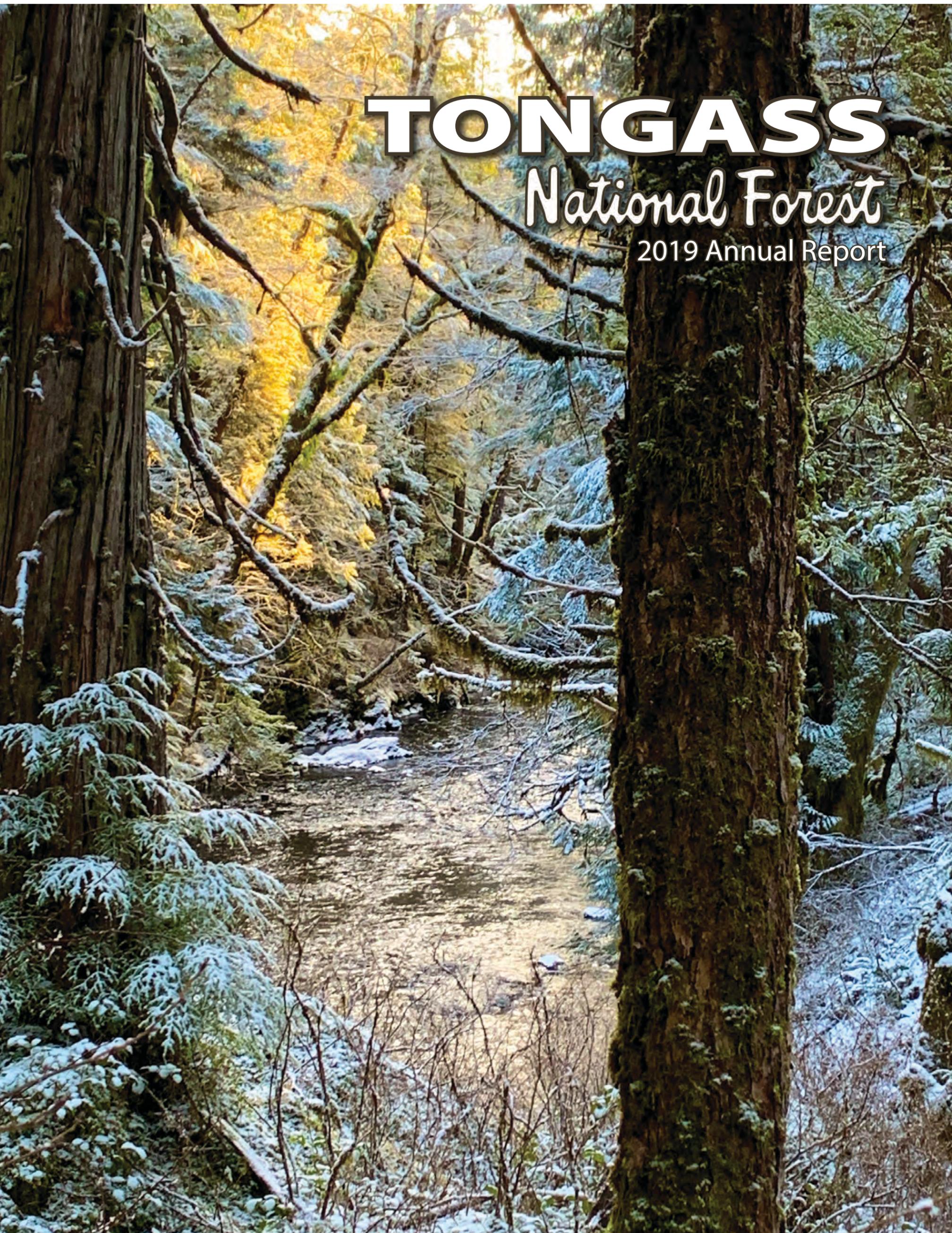


United States
Department of
Agriculture

TONGASS

National Forest

2019 Annual Report



Forest Service

Alaska Region

R10-FR-18

January 2020



M. Earl Stewart, Forest Supervisor

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." The forest's more than 300 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, which was completed and signed in 2019. This 15-year management plan was developed using a highly collaborative method with the public, and received its project proposals from an independently formed, broadly based collaborative group called the Prince of Wales Landscape Assessment Team. The Hoonah Native Forest Partnership is another great example. In 2019, some of our hydrologists worked with local landowners and partner agencies to restore 300 meters of Spasski Creek (a priority watershed) using only hand tools. The work increased flood resilience, and restored fish habitat and wildlife corridors.

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.

Nowhere is our commitment to efficiency and collaboration more apparent than within our partnership program, where we seek mutually beneficial relationships with other government agencies, tribal

entities, and non-profit organizations. In 2019, we had 201 active partnership agreements representing 75 partners, who increased our capacity to accomplish work throughout the Tongass. This included major partners like the National Forest Foundation and Rasmuson Foundation, who secured a large grant to restore recreation cabins on the forest, and youth programs like the Student Conservation Association, who provided 39 interns this past year to work on an array of projects across almost every district.

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 our forest to the vitality of adjacent communities and strive to remain engaged and impactful in any way we can. This means different things to different communities, and we take pride in being ready and willing to step forward as needed.

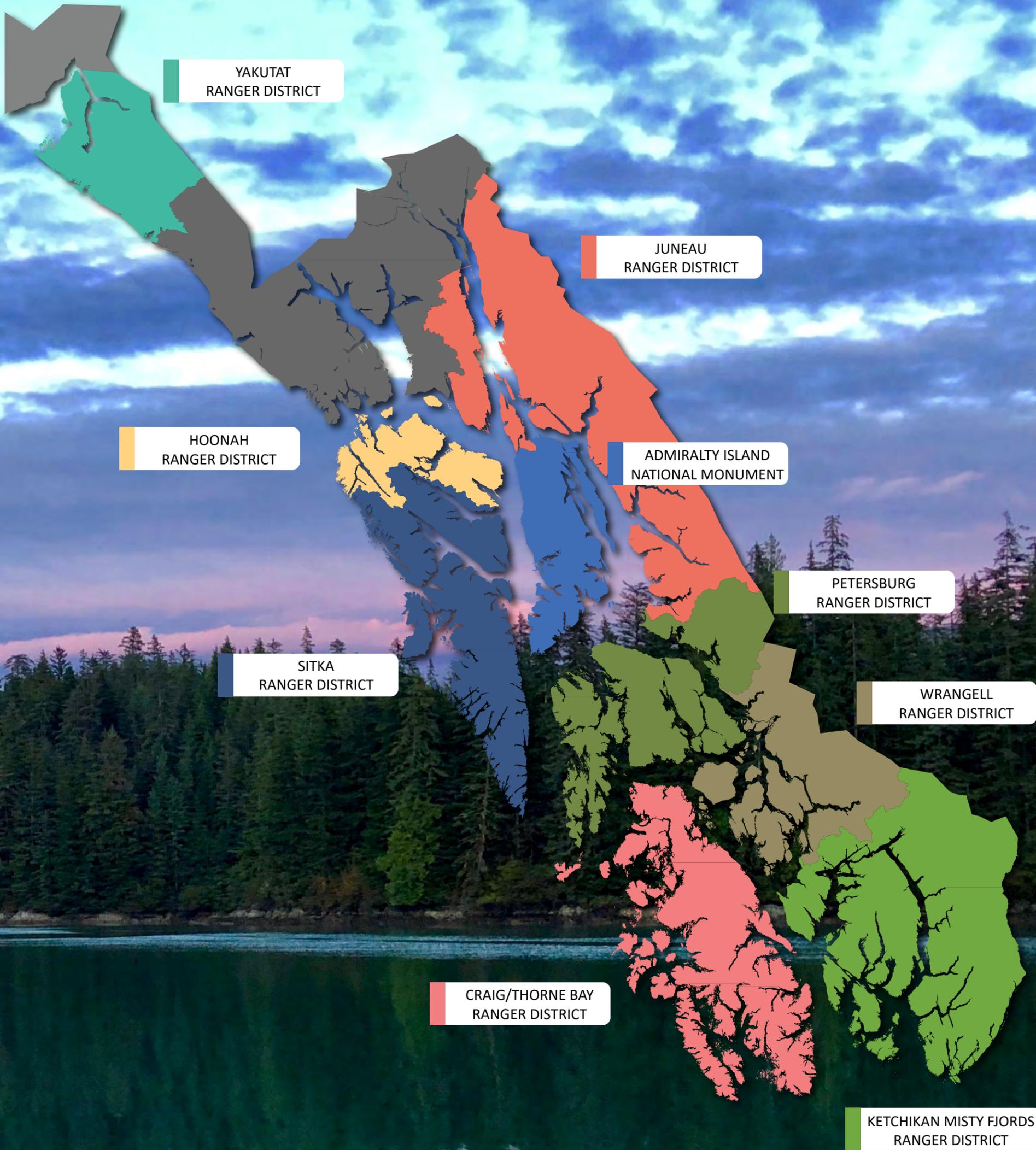
In Sitka, we reconstructed the upper Appleton fishpass to give coho salmon access to seven and a half more miles of stream, and reconstructed Sawmill Creek Campground, a site popular with locals and visitors alike. In Ketchikan, the district partnered with the Ketchikan Indian Community and a local landowner to conduct on-the-ground monitoring of Eulachon, an important fish species for cultural and subsistence use. In Wrangell, we helped the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration conduct a whale necropsy and then gathered the bones for a possible skeleton reconstruction project at Wrangell High School.

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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 2019. I look forward to working with you in 2020 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,

M. Earl Stewart, Forest Supervisor



YAKUTAT
RANGER DISTRICT

JUNEAU
RANGER DISTRICT

HOONAH
RANGER DISTRICT

ADMIRALTY ISLAND
NATIONAL MONUMENT

PETERSBURG
RANGER DISTRICT

SITKA
RANGER DISTRICT

WRANGELL
RANGER DISTRICT

CRAIG/THORNE BAY
RANGER DISTRICT

KETCHIKAN MISTY FJORDS
RANGER DISTRICT



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.
- 40% of the Tongass is non-forest land; mostly rock and ice fields, but also brush, alpine and wetland.
- 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).

Background photo by Eric Castro.

Admiralty Island

National Monument



The 2019 Angoon YCC crew and program leaders pose in front of the renovated Mitchell Bay Shelter.

The Angoon Youth Conservation Corps: Perpetuating a conservation legacy on Admiralty Island

The community of Angoon championed the protection of Admiralty Island in the 1970s when the fate of public lands in Alaska was debated in Congress. President Jimmy Carter designated most of the island a national monument in 1978, citing plentiful archeological sites from 10,000 years of rich Tlingit history and the area's unique island ecology and standing as the largest unspoiled coastal island ecosystem in North America. The U.S. Congress reaffirmed the monument status in 1980 and additionally designated most of the island as the Kootznoowoo wilderness area to protect its wilderness character and subsistence opportunities. Today the people of Angoon still have an intimate connection to Admiralty Island, relying on the bounty of its lands and waters to obtain fish, deer, berries, shellfish, seal, firewood and other foods and materials. A new generation of conservation-minded youths is stepping up to steward the special island as members of the Angoon Youth Conservation Corps.

When the Angoon Youth Conservation Corps (the Angoon YCC) started in 2015, no local youths applied. Four youths, two from Alaska and two from the Lower 48, were employed by the Forest Service and led by a single crew leader to conduct projects in the community and the surrounding wilderness. Many lessons were learned from that year and subsequent years which have contributed to the program's ongoing success. From 2016 on, only local youths have been employed to provide jobs to Angoon community members and to ensure youths had housing and guardian care. Since 2017, the Angoon YCC has employed six youths each summer and had two program leaders with a background in Social Work, one male and one female, to mentor and inspire the youths and to allow the crew to divide up and complete tasks more efficiently. The program leaders are now employed for six months to provide viable employment and give the leaders time to train and work alongside Forest Service crews to gain on the job experience. In 2018, assistant crew leader positions were created for up to two returning members with the experience and determination to assume more crew leadership responsibilities in exchange for increased wages. From 2015 to 2019, the Angoon YCC program has filled 26 crew positions (including four assistant crew leaders) and eight program leader positions dedicated to professional conservation work.

The Angoon YCC work is as varied as public lands stewardship. The youths have worked with the Admiralty Cabins and Trails crew to maintain the Cross-Admiralty Canoe Route, brushing back vegetation, hauling hundreds of pounds of cedar puncheon and replacing the rotting sills on the Mitchell Bay public use shelter. They have removed hundreds of pounds of marine debris from Admiralty Island's western shores, cleaned up camps in Mitchell Bay, Hood Bay, Chaik Bay, Whitewater Bay and on Hood Mountain, hauled out a ton of material from a defunct fish research camp, monitored solitude for many hours in remote settings and surveyed miles of coastline for invasive weeds. In Angoon, they have built a greenhouse for the community garden, hauled out cords of firewood from cleared land for elders to heat their homes, participated in and cleaned up after the 4th of July parade and launched an anti-littering campaign.



YCC members maintain good spirits as they conduct trail work in the rainforest.

The rich legacy of the Angoon YCC reflects the synergy of multiple partnerships underpinning the program. The Chatham School District, a 21st Century Service Corps partner, employs the youths, administers payroll and work permits and applies for grants. The Angoon YCC is part of the school district's Career and Technical Education program and youths gain high school credit when they report on their YCC work. MobilizeGreen, a Resource Assistant Program, hires the program leaders as resource assistants, provides them with weekly and housing stipends, benefits and reimburses per diem and travel costs. The National Forest Foundation combines smaller grants into a single Alaska Forest Foundation grant that the Chatham School District applies for and that covers the costs of YCC crew training, salaries, travel and per diem. Whaler's Cove Lodge in Angoon has provided landing craft and vehicle transportation at bargain rates. The Forest Service trains the youths and program leaders, determines work projects to meet Tongass National Forest priorities, provides project oversight and helps transport the crew to the field. The Forest Service also provides funding to MobilizeGreen for the program leaders. The community of Angoon has warmly embraced the YCC program, praising the growth they've seen in the youths and contributing generously to the end-of-season potluck, where smoked salmon, herring eggs on hemlock branches and gumbboot stew is served.

To modify the old proverb: it takes a village to raise a youth conservation corps program. The Angoon YCC will continue in 2020 and onward, empowering our future conservation leaders.



Angoon YCC records a culturally modified tree. Mapping CMTs helps archeologists determine where historic use has occurred.

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Juneau

Ranger District

Nugget Falls Trail

During the peak summer tourism season, the Nugget Falls Trail receives over 1,000 hikers a day. The recent phenomenon of glacier outburst floods on Mendenhall Lake have resulted in an increase in the number of days the trail was closed due to flooding.

To minimize the number of days the Nugget Falls Trail was closed due to flooding the trail crew added 270 tons of 3/8" minus gravel to trail surface, assisted by 120 hours of volunteer labor. The precise elevation to which the trail surface was constructed to was determined through a topographic survey of the trail and the trail's destination, the sandy delta at the base of the falls.

To bring sections of trail to the elevation of the sandy delta up to a foot of gravel was added to the trail surface in some places. Once compacted, the composition of the aggregate results in a firm, smooth surface, ideal for accessibility standards.



Treadwell Ditch Trail

The Forest Service partnered with Trail Mix, Inc. and the City and Borough of Juneau to construct a new gravel trail to replace a long-standing temporary reroute through a muskeg. The project was funded by the Federal Lands Access Program which Trail Mix, Inc. applied for in cooperation with the City and Borough of Juneau. The 9.03% required match was provided by Trail Mix volunteers and contributions to Trail Mix from the public. The Forest Service participated through layout and design, and inspections throughout the project. The Forest Service provided no cash to the project. The 1,400 foot gravel trail averages 24" wide with a 10% - 12% grade and 20% maximum grade. The muskeg route had never been hardened so it was wet and muddy. Half of its length was through blueberry patches and required intense brushing effort. The new trail is routed through the forest with drier, better drained soils, constructed drainages, a hardened surface, and passing through areas of light understory growth so brushing demands will be less.

The Juneau Community Foundation, a new partner in continued efforts to improve the Treadwell Ditch Trail, secured \$660,000 dollars of Pitman-Robertson funds, a Federal program administered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. With the 25% match provided by the Juneau Community Foundation the project funds total to \$880,000. The work along the Treadwell Ditch Trail will replace bridges and improve sections of tread from the Blueberry Hills trail intersection to Eaglecrest.

Trail Mix replaced four large bridges on the Treadwell Ditch Trail ranging in length from 31' to 45'. The bridges cross Kowee Creek, Eagle Creek, North Fork Eagle Creek, and Falls Creek. Kowee Creek bridge was the only one that was still in place, but the stringers were failing. The other three creeks had no bridges, so the new bridges are a great improvement. Secure Rural Schools, Title II RAC-awarded funds funded this bridge project.

Windfall Lake Trail

The downstream-most large bridge over Herbert River, along the Windfall Lake Trail, was replaced this summer. At 90 feet long, it is 17 feet longer than the bridge it replaced. Though longer, the new structure is similar in design to the old bridge which employs steel open web truss stringers to span the river. This project was funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program and included phases for an analysis of crossing options and a design/cost estimate phase which were both contracted. The bridge features a 54" railing height to provide a greater degree of safety when there are 2 or 3 feet of snow on the bridge deck. Wire rope tensioned through galvanized steel uprights takes the place of wood posts and rails for the guard rail. At 5'-2" the clear width of the bridge deck is wide enough to accommodate motorized maintenance equipment and engineers designed the superstructure of the bridge to sustain those types of loads.

The Windfall Lake Trail terminates at Windfall Lake, the location of the Windfall Lake Cabin. The 3-year average use of 262 nights per year results in a steady flow of people crossing the bridge. A second bridge, farther upstream, will be replaced in 2020 by the same contracted builders who replaced the first bridge.



Craig/Thorne Bay

Ranger District

Work across the District

Prince of Wales completed the Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis (POW LLA) Project. POW LLA is a large scale, condition-based National Environmental Policy Act analysis that produced one decision authorizing a variety of actions on national forest system lands on Prince of Wales Island over the next 15 years. The purpose of the project is to improve forest ecosystem health, help support community resiliency, and provide economic development through an integrated approach to meet multiple resource objectives. A broad-based collaborative group representing 9 communities across Prince of Wales Island – the Prince of Wales Landscape Assessment Team – provided highly valued input throughout the analysis process. The Final Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Record of Decision for the POW LLA Project was made available to the public in November 2018. The Final Record of Decision was signed at a public ceremony in March 2019. Implementation began with a spring public workshop in April 2019.

With the help of many neighboring district and Forest Supervisor's Office employees, all resource surveys, and unit design and layout were completed for the Twin Mountain Timber sale contract. 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 Kosciusko Good Neighbor Authority 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 36 free-use permits were issued. In addition, resource surveys were completed for several hundred acres for the Staney Cone Helicopter Sale.

The Fish, Wildlife, Watershed, and Subsistence (FWWS) staff supported Wolf Hair Board Research in partnership with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Hydaburg Cooperative Association and coordinated upland restoration and Sitka deer research thinning experiments, partnering with The Nature Conservancy, Idaho State University, and University of Alaska Fairbanks. They also supported local tribes by permitting Culture Camps and ceremonial deer harvest for memorials. With engineering staff support, Prince of Wales replaced three aquatic organism passage (AOP) culverts that were a barrier to fish passage at certain water flows in the Staney Creek watershed, providing fish passage to 2.5 miles of stream habitat, and executed additional contracts and agreements with Tribal associations for eight AOP replacements in 2020 that will restore fish passage to 1.4 miles of Class I anadromous salmon habitat, and 2.9 miles of Class II resident salmonid habitat.

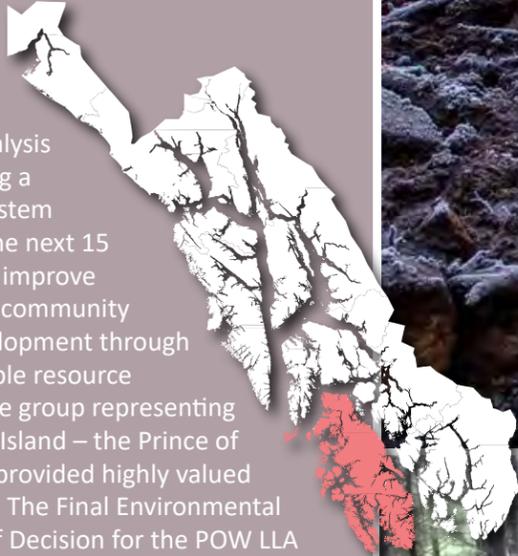
Community Partners and Assistance

Prince of Wales facilitated disaster response during a large scale catastrophic landslide. Forest Service staff worked with other agencies and affected local communities to provide public health and safety and seek solutions for road reconstruction. District personnel also participated in the local Natural Resource Program, sponsored an annual Kids Fishing Day, participated in Science Fair Judging and Stream Team Presentations at the local schools.

Recognition

We also partnered with Hydaburg Tribal Association to employ local Tribal members to survey over 77 road-stream crossings to determine fish passage and map approximately 2.5 miles of fish streams. Fisheries staff completed the Luck Creek stream restoration monitoring effort, and with help of Student Conservation Association volunteers, surveyed post restoration sites in the Staney watershed and completed pre-restoration monitoring in the Nahania, Flicker, Buster, and Shaheen watersheds. Continuing with our strong partnership vision, we submitted a 2020-2022 Prince of Wales Landscape Level Restoration Project – Joint Chiefs Proposal. This partnership proposal focuses on restoring uses, and fostering science-based education. The Thorne Bay and Craig Ranger districts once again partnered with the Student Conservation Association and Training Rural Alaska Youth Leaders and Students program to do trail maintenance.

The Craig and Thorne Bay Districts was in partnership with Southeast Island School District (SISD). SISD completed Sandy Beach Day Use Site restoration, installed a vault toilet at Winter Harbor, and reconstructed the Cavern Lake viewing platform and trail.



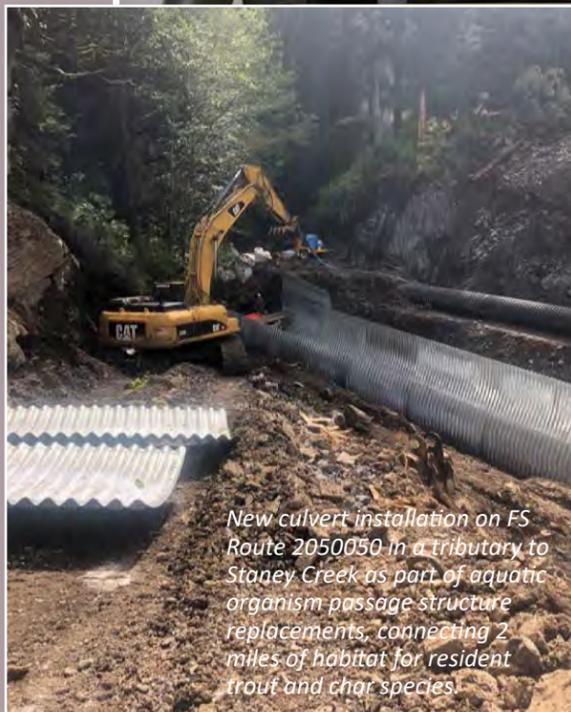
Forest Geologist Jim Baichtal assessing a catastrophic landslide above Kasaaan Road in January 2019 to make recommendations for remediation.



Post treatment wildlife upland habitat thinning unit in Shaheen watershed for forage production for Sitka Blacktail Deer. Completed in partnership with the Nature Conservancy in September 2019.



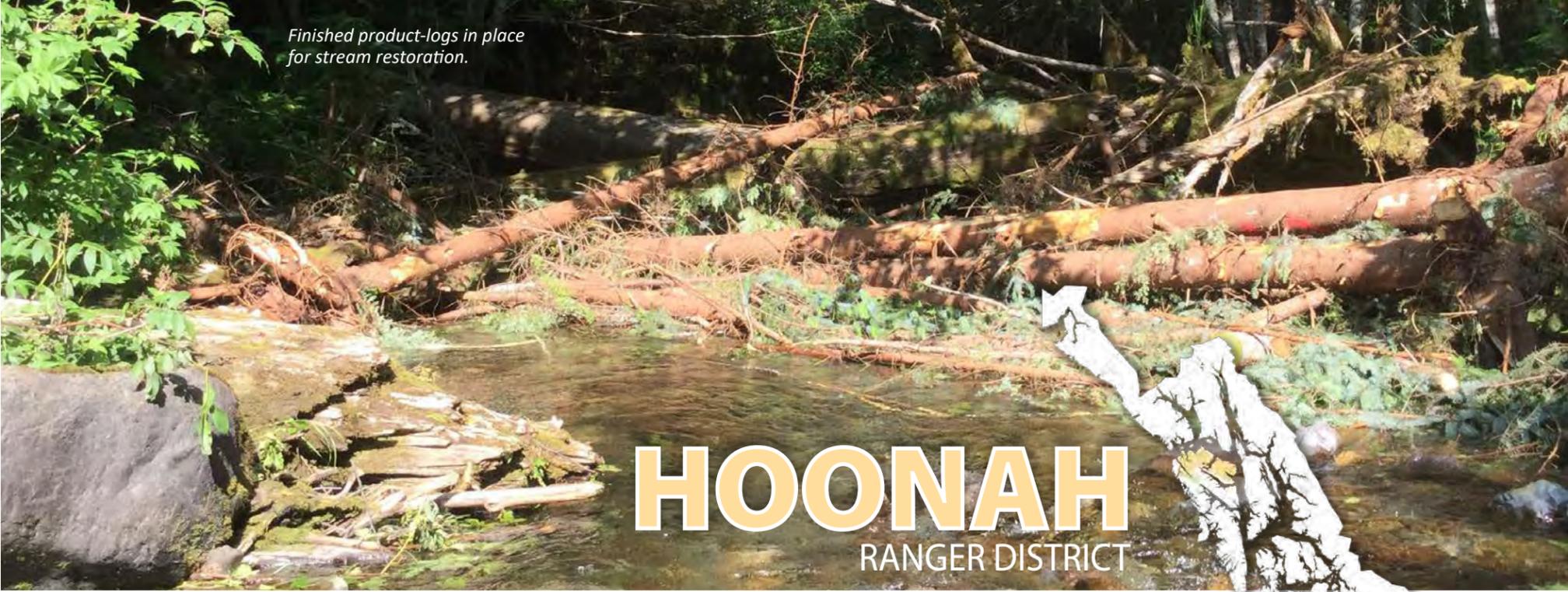
Forest Supervisor M. Earl Stewart signs the Record of Decision for the POW LLA among staff, community leaders and members of the POWLAT.



New culvert installation on FS Route 2050050 in a tributary to Staney Creek as part of aquatic organism passage structure replacements, connecting 2 miles of habitat for resident trout and char species.

Employees on the FWWS Team, along with our The Nature Conservancy partners, received the National Rise to the Future Award in Collaborative Integrated Aquatic Stewardship for the Staney Creek Restoration Project. Judd Manuel of our recreation program received a Regional Foresters Sustainable Recreation Award for his invaluable service to Alaska's outdoor recreation heritage. Delilah Brigham, Interdisciplinary Team Leader for POW LLA, received the R10 Regional Foresters Employee of the Year Award for her incredible contributions to the POW LLA. And last but not least, the Craig/Thorne Bay District employees working on the POW LLA, along with our POWLAT partners, received the Chiefs Award for Sustaining our Nation's Forests and Grasslands.

Finished product-logs in place for stream restoration.



HOONAH

RANGER DISTRICT

Hoonah Native Forest Partnership Continues its Watershed Restoration Efforts

How the Partnership Began

The Hoonah Native Forest Partnership (HNFP) entered its fifth year as a landscape scale, community forest collaborative effort providing for watershed planning and project implementation across all landownerships in the project area. An memorandum of understanding was signed in 2015 and renewed in 2019 to support conservation and economic development activities on public and private lands near Hoonah, Alaska. Core partners include Sealaska Corporation, Hoonah Indian Association), The Nature Conservancy, City of Hoonah, Huna Totem Corporation, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, and United States Forest Service. Each party brings a unique set of assets and resources that are pulled together for increased collective impact to inventory and manage natural resources in a landscape context while supporting a diversified local economy and healthy watersheds. The project area is approximately 150,000 acres covering all complete watersheds within which Regional Native Corporation (Sealaska) and Village Corporation (Huna Totem) lands exist, as well as Forest Service lands.

Priority Watershed Designation

In 2019 Forest Supervisor Earl Stewart designated, with mutual support of partners, the 21,000 acre Spasski Watershed (one of ten watersheds in the HNFP project area of Northeast Chichagof Island) as a Tongass National Forest priority watershed. This area is managed by Huna Totem Corporation (47%) and the Tongass National Forest (53%).

2019 Restoration Work

In 2019, the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership, through its work crew, successfully restored 300 meters of Spasski Creek, thinning riparian areas to create wildlife gaps. Previous logging activities and a dense road network had altered streams, reducing their ability to provide quality habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms. Using hand tools, the thinned trees were cut, dragged and strategically placed instream as a restoration effort on Huna Totem Lands in the Spasski Watershed. Approximately 25 riparian trees were cut to support existing log jams, resulting in 13 structures being installed in two channels. The areas of thinned trees resulted in increased light and productivity in the riparian areas for both flood resilience, restored fish habitats in the creek and wildlife corridors.

This work was supported by a US Fish and Wildlife Service Tribal Wildlife grant. The work was implemented by the local workforce, but also in part by the Hoonah Youth from the Training Rural Alaskan Youth Leaders and Students program, Hoonah Indian Association Environmental Staff, Forest Service members and US Fish and Wildlife Service members. Structures will be monitored to see how they perform in high flows during the coming years.



Tools of the trade.

Members of the TRAYLS Crew, HNFP Crew, Katherine Prussian (USFS), and Neil Stichert (USFWS) move a log into place using hand tools during the 2019 stream restoration in the Spasski Watershed.



Spasski was chosen as a priority watershed, as it is valuable to residents of Hoonah for fish, deer, timber and other resources and it is easily accessible to the native population and residents. As a priority watershed, a Watershed Restoration Action Plan will be completed by December 2020 for Forest Supervisor approval, using the restoration project list already compiled and endorsed by Huna Totem.

This designation will allow the Tongass to claim improved watershed condition upon completion of restoration, as guided by the [Forest Service's Watershed Condition Framework](#). Improved watershed condition is a regional and national accomplishment target. The Priority Watershed designation in this mixed-ownership watershed capitalizes on tangible progress, and provides a unique demonstration of Shared Stewardship in the Alaska Region.

This work is not only beneficial to the environment, it also established a pattern of reliable employment for local residents to work on the lands they use. The Hoonah Native Forest Partnership is invested in ensuring a local workforce can continue to excel at completing natural resource projects. The 2019 the work crew was made up of Phillip Sharclane, Derek Barton, Ricky Contreras, and Jeremy Johnson. All of them are returning veterans to this work because they enjoy working outside and they value the community they live in.

Right: Stream restoration takes a team. Posing on one of the structures made with hand-tools are K.K. Prussian (USFS), Neil Stichert (USFWS), local members of the HNFP crew, and local youth participating through the TRAYLS program.



Smokey Bear paddles towards the Ward Lake Recreation Area for his 75th birthday celebration.



KETCHIKAN MISTY FJORDS RANGER DISTRICT

Ward Lake Recreation Area Trail Work

The district and local contractor Ketchikan Ready Mix performed repairs on the Ward Lake Trail. Funding from the Ketchikan Resource Advisory Committee allowed for critical repairs of drainage structures, construction of a retaining wall, and restoration of accessibility to portions of the trail.

Unuk River Eulachon Monitoring

Eulachon, locally known as ooligan or smelt, are an important cultural and subsistence species in southeast Alaska. Once abundant in the Unuk River, the Eulachon population collapsed in 2005, causing managers to close federal subsistence harvest. Though populations appear to be returning, observed numbers are still below acceptable levels to allow sustainable harvest. Since the collapse, managers have monitored the eulachon population intermittently by foot surveys, aerial surveys, and boat surveys. In 2019, the district enhanced monitoring efforts by partnering with the Ketchikan Indian Community and a local landowner to conduct continuous on-the-ground monitoring during the entire Unuk River spawning run, with the goal of providing more accurate data.

South Revilla Integrated Resource Project

On November 18, the Tongass National Forest and the Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding, establishing KIC as a cooperating agency on the South Revilla Integrated Resource Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As a cooperating agency,



Susan Howle, Ketchikan Misty Fjords District Ranger; Norman Skan, President of KIC; and M. Earl Stewart, Tongass National Forest Supervisor.

KIC is providing their specialized expertise on land management, subsistence, traditional ecological knowledge, and natural resources toward the development of the EIS. This is the first time the Tongass National Forest has had a local, federally-recognized tribe participating as a cooperating agency on a NEPA project. Field surveys continue in the Carroll Inlet area of Revilla Island to support the South Revilla Integrated Resource Project.

Partnering with Alaska Department of Fish and Game

The district continues to partner with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to better understand fish and wildlife through various projects. Projects include: Citizen Science bats surveys; North American Bat protocol

surveys; deer pellet counts; and salmon surveys in Hyder, Alaska. Working together on projects is cost effective, rewarding, and strengthens working relationships between the State of Alaska and the USDA Forest Service.

Youth Programs

Ward Lake Outdoor Education Week

The Ward Lake Outdoor School week is an annual event, held in May, which engages youth about fish, wildlife, botany, forestry, and many other educational outdoor topics. This is an ongoing partnership between the USDA Forest Service, district and six elementary schools within the Ketchikan School District to provide a fun and educational experience centered on forest resources. Nearly 200 fifth and sixth grade students participated in the event. Forest Service employees, Student Conservation Association interns, and volunteers led multiple learning stations including: maps & orienteering, fish identification and sampling, a bears and fish game, engineering, law enforcement, and botany.

Coho in the Classroom

District staff continue to partner with the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA), and the North Point Higgins Elementary School for the district's annual Coho in the Classroom program. In 2019, two first grade classrooms reared coho salmon eggs collected from the SSRAA's Deer Mountain Hatchery. Students monitored the eggs' development from February through May, until they grew into fry. District biologists then led field trips to the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center in May to release the fry into an interpretive fish tank display and teach the students about Alaska's aquatic resources. While at the Discovery Center the students also watched a documentary film, *The Salmon Forest* and participated in a scavenger hunt.



Kids Fishing Derby

On June 8, district staff and SCA interns joined the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and local volunteers to host the annual Kid's Fishing Derby at Ketchikan City Park. Events included fishing, lure making, a casting challenge, fish printing, and other fun and educational activities. Approximately 200 youth fished for chinook smolts, raised and stocked by Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association.

Naha Day

On May 31, the district closed the office and all staff traveled to Naha Recreation Area by boat to begin improvements on the Naha River Trail, a National Recreation Trail. Naha is a popular and important area to the community for various forms of recreation. Staff built new picnic tables, brushed trails, and replaced sections of decaying boardwalk with gravel. More work on the Naha River Trail planned for 2020.





Raven trail pre-construction.



Raven Trail post-construction

PETERSBURG

RANGER DISTRICT



The Raven Trail Gets a New Life

After several years of planning, design narratives, surveys, wetland permits, easements and grant acquisition, ground was broken on the upper Raven Trail Reconstruction project on Mitkof Island. Helicopters flew in supplies and a crew laden with tools descended from the Raven Roost Cabin to begin moving rocks, installing cement stairs, and laying gravel. While the trail was closed during the construction period, outdoor enthusiasts in Petersburg anxiously awaited the re-opening and a chance to hike up the trail on the new gravel tread. They were not disappointed.

Oregon Woods holds the contract and completed much of the two miles of trail in 2019. They will return during the summer of 2020 to complete the project. The project goal is a sustainable Raven Trail for locals and visitors to enjoy into the future.

Kake YCC/ TRAYLS: Building Capacity with Partners

Located on the northwest coast of Kupreanof Island, Kake is a Tlingit village rich in cultural history and tradition. Career opportunities for new high school and college graduates are limited within the community, with a population under 600. The Kake Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program was developed by the Forest Service with the vision of helping to grow community capacity through youth employment and training. Concurrently, a coalition of nonprofits, tribal organizations and community leaders, recognized a need to prevent the outflow of youth from rural Alaskan communities and developed the Training Rural Alaskan Youth Leaders and Students (TRAYLS) program.

The Petersburg Ranger District's youth development-focused program in Kake was created in 2019 as a partnership between the Forest Service, the Organized Village of Kake, Spruce Root, Sustainable Southeast Partnership and Sealaska Corporation.

Through the 2019 season, the Kake crew spent half of their time with Forest Service resource specialists helping layout a new trail and picnic sites, trapping fish in local creeks, and performing a wetland delineation. Evaluation of the 2019 season resulted in commitments from all partners to continue and augment investment in the program. The performance of the Kake youth participants brought the partners together to sustain the program into the future.

The Central Tongass Project

In August 2019, the Petersburg and Wrangell Ranger Districts published the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for this large landscape planning effort that encompasses the districts' 3.7 million acres of National Forest System lands. The purpose of the project is to improve forest ecosystem health, help support community resiliency, and provide economic development through an integrated approach within the project area. The districts aim to meet these objectives by implementing, over the next 15 years, a suite of activities (such as cabin construction, timber harvest, stream restoration and road construction) identified by the public and the Central Tongass planning team.

An aim of analyzing and planning a large landscape-level project is to allow for a final decision that is flexible, adaptive, and responsive to on-the-ground conditions over a large geographic area, while also integrating the diverse interests of local communities into the long-term management of public lands. And because multiple projects could be implemented over the life of this decision (approximately 15 years),

it could allow resource groups like fisheries, timber and recreation to plan project logistics together. Benefits include sharing on-site resources (large equipment, vehicles, seasonal workforce, mobilization costs, and contractors), which saves money and provides a more efficient flow of work. This approach also could provide "shovel ready" projects that would allow the districts to take advantage of short-term funding opportunities within the agency, as well as those of potential partners.

Monitoring trip cleans beaches on the Tongass

The 2019 special uses, archaeology, and wilderness monitoring trip to remote areas of the Petersburg Ranger District accomplished multiple monitoring objectives while reducing plastic pollution on approximately two miles of remote, wild beaches of the Tongass.

The vessel "RB" was contracted to provide transportation, food, and lodging for an interdisciplinary group of six Petersburg employees during a ten-day trip along the shores of southern Kuiu and Kupreanof Islands.

A total of 36 stops were made on the trip. Six outfitter/guide campsites,

two trespass cabins, an outfitter/guide vehicle storage site, and float house shore tie permit site were monitored. Six Petersburg Outfitter/Guide Environmental Analysis Study Areas were also visited. The group also conducted wilderness solitude and campsite monitoring, and campsite inventories for invasive species. Light maintenance was completed on an historic period public use cabin (Devil's Elbow Cabin), ten known Alaska Heritage Resource Survey sites were monitored, and condition assessments of three Priority Heritage Assets were performed. Archaeologists recorded two prehistoric fish trap sites and a historic fur farm site, and found new components of a previously recorded fish trap site.

On top of all this work, the group collected over 2,200 lbs. of marine plastic from approximately two miles of beaches. B made a perfect vessel for storing trash, and its hydraulic boom made unloading the 21 helicopter bags full of marine plastic a breeze.



Petersburg ranger district interdisciplinary team at site of a prehistoric fish trap in Totem Bay.



"Our mission is to serve our community and gain lifelong skills through the protection and conservation of our native lands and public lands, while gaining financial independence and healthy lifestyle habits."
- Mission statement created by the members of the Kake YCC & TRAYLS crew."

YCC & TRAYLS crew members.

Fishpasses improve the productivity of salmon runs by helping fish move through steep or otherwise impassable terrain to access more spawning habitat.

SITKA

RANGER DISTRICT



Reconstructed Appleton fishpass.

Fishpass Reconstruction

Sitka Ranger District reconstructed the upper Appleton fishpass because it was often blocked with woody debris. The improved fishpass gives coho salmon access to approximately seven and a half more miles of stream.

Coho salmon prefer slack water, so Forest Service staff and Student Conservation Association members built several new jump pools. They used explosives and 40,000 pounds of concrete and rebar in the process. The effectiveness of the fishpass will be monitored. Over time, coho should establish spawning grounds above the fishpass that will enhance the salmon run.



Measuring fish

Redoubt Lake Sockeye Monitoring

Redoubt Lake, located 12 miles south of Sitka, supports a productive sockeye salmon run that supports 70% of the subsistence catch for locals. The Sitka Ranger District has monitored the run for nearly 40 years to inform the State's catch limits. In 2018, approximately 9,000 sockeye were harvested at Redoubt for subsistence. In 2019, nearly 60,000 sockeye salmon returned to spawn in Redoubt Lake.

Forest Service employees, an International Forestry Fellow, and Student Conservation Association members made up the Redoubt field crew this year. They counted the fish that swam through the weir and into the lake. They also measured age and size (pictured above), which help to draw a picture of how the run changes over time.

Campground Reconstruction and Maintenance

Sawmill Creek Campground

The reconstructed Sawmill Creek Campground opened to the public this year. It had been closed since 2013 because of a modification to the nearby Blue Lake Dam.

The campground rebuild was partially funded by the City and Borough of Sitka as required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicense of the dam.

Sawmill Creek Campground is one of two campgrounds on Sitka Ranger District. An adjacent trail and creek

make it popular with locals, visitors, and outfitter-guides alike for hiking and fishing. The revitalized campground's additions and modifications will improve visitor safety and support increased tourism. There are now three single-family campsites and a group campsite, all of which are Americans with Disabilities Act accessible. Other features include new parking locations, bear-safe storage, a group shelter, a vault toilet, tables, fire rings, and grills. Staff planted vegetation and contoured a 1000 foot gravel area to improve drainage.



Starrigavan Campground

Sitka Ranger District replaced the roofs of the vault toilets at Starrigavan Campground. Combined with the re-siding done in 2017, this work enables the toilets to withstand the Southeast Alaskan climate. The original roofs allowed for water accumulation and subsequent rot. The new design includes raptor protectors and an extended roofline to prevent further water damage.

Wilderness Cleanup

In August, Sitka Ranger District staff and volunteers removed 580 pounds of trash and six contractor bags of recyclables from 12 beaches in West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness. They used kayaks to collect and consolidate the trash to three beaches before transporting it to Sitka on a landing craft.

The haul included 600 plastic bottles, some of which were Japanese and may have arrived in wake of the 2011 tsunami. This cleanup was part of a larger wilderness monitoring trip in the area that included solitude monitoring and campsite inspection.



Staff raced against the incoming tide to secure a long list of samples needed for a complete necropsy.

Gray Whale Necropsy: a Community Effort

In 2019, gray whales experienced an unusual mortality event that received nationwide media attention. At least 212 gray whales washed ashore on beaches ranging from Mexico to Alaska. In June of 2019, one of the 48 dead whales found in Alaska was seen floating in the waters near Earl West by residents of Wrangell. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requested Forest Service assistance to secure the whale and to help organize a necropsy to help find more about the cause of the mortality event.

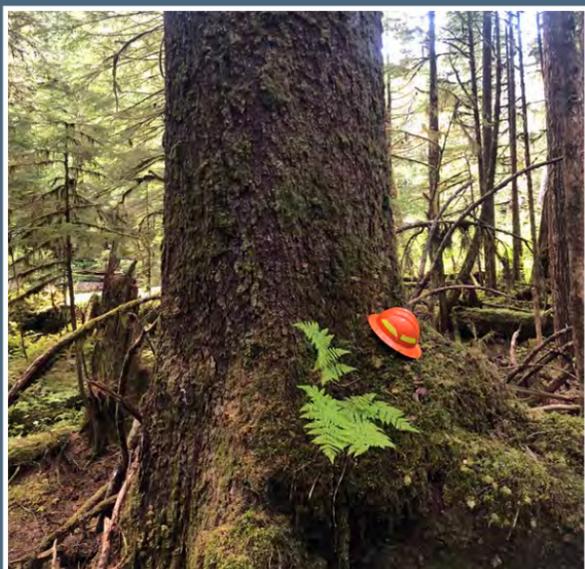
The Forest Service provided logistical support as NOAA veterinarians and a team of citizen scientists, Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Forest Service staff raced against the incoming tide to secure a long list of samples needed for a complete necropsy: baleen, blubber, blood, tissue, stomach

contents, external parasites, internal organs, and a full inventory of old and recent external injuries. The team did not find any obvious major injuries and necropsy results are not yet available. Preliminary findings in several other whales have shown evidence of emaciation but these findings are not consistent across all of the whales examined, and more research is still needed (search: "West Coast gray whale UME" for more information).

The Forest Service installed cameras to monitor the decomposition fate of the whale carcass; what animals would come to feed on this massive opportunity? After only two months, 99.9 percent of the 35' long whale was fully decomposed and

after four months, the USFS and marine science students of Wrangell High School returned to the site to collect all the bones for a possible skeleton reconstruction project at Wrangell High School (with permits from NOAA). The skull of the whale will eventually be displayed at the Nolan Center in Wrangell. Forest Service wildlife biologists and volunteers are still looking through the 50,000 images (!) that were collected during the decomposition process. We are grateful for the help and stamina of the community.

WRANGELL RANGER DISTRICT



Lending a Helping Hand

Wrangell's team of timber foresters and forestry technicians helped out across the Tongass with timber sale planning, layout and cruising. They worked on Prince of Wales, Zarembo, and Mitkof islands. Back in Wrangell, this hard-working team also shared their skills and knowledge with the recreation program, helping to build a kiosk for the ferry terminal, cabin maintenance, outhouse reconstruction, and removing hazard trees in the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness with traditional crosscut saws and axes.



Existing Anan Wildlife Observatory.



Proposed new deck design for Anan Wildlife Observatory.

On Deck at Anan

Anan Wildlife Observatory has provided visitors an extraordinary opportunity to observe wildlife in the natural environment for over 50 years. The existing deck, a jigsaw puzzle of different aged pieces, has reached the end of its useable life. The Tongass worked with Corvus Design, outfitter and guide companies and local stakeholders to generate a new design for the deck. This design provides for more high quality viewing opportunities along the railing over Anan creek, expands the lower viewing platform, adding a second level, and provides ample covered viewing. The new deck is likely to become a reality soon with the receipt of 2020 Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funds. The district hopes to break ground on the new deck in 2021.

MOOSE ARE IMPORTANT ECOLOGICALLY, ECONOMICALLY, AND CULTURALLY, AND ARE AN IMPORTANT SUBSISTENCE FOOD RESOURCE FOR YAKUTAT RESIDENTS.



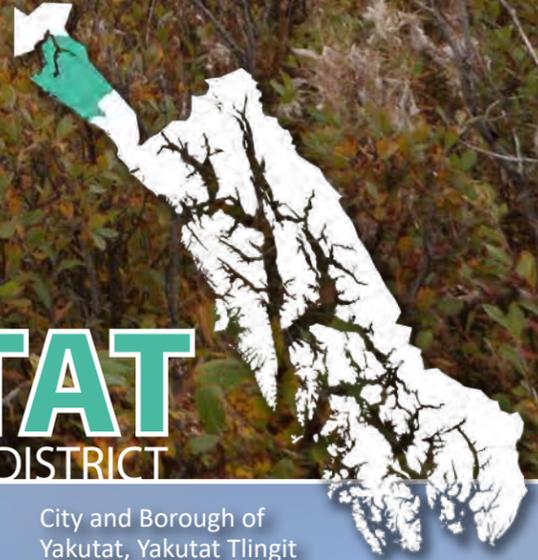
Moose Habitat Restoration

In 2019, the district, along with partners including the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, undertook a project to examine the feasibility of improving habitat for moose on the Yakutat Forelands. Moose immigrated to the forelands naturally starting in the 1930s, the population expanded rapidly, crashed during the 1970s due to a combination of hard winters, overharvesting, and natural succession, and then stabilized at a low density. Moose are important ecologically, economically, and culturally, and are an important subsistence food resource for Yakutat residents. Moose habitat is declining, however, as natural succession occurs. Clearing vegetation in targeted areas, either by heavy

machinery, hand crews, or both, is a recognized management tool to provide for new, more nutritious, and accessible willow growth. This project would thereby improve browse habitat, helping to maintain a healthy, harvestable moose population.

2019 work included initial identification of potential treatment sites using a combination of GIS mapping, local knowledge, and field site visits. Potential treatment areas reasonably accessible by roads or trails were identified. The next steps are to develop a treatment plan including cost estimates, complete a National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, and pursue funding for implementation.

Resource assistant Teresa Swanson assesses a site on the Yakutat forelands for feasibility to improve moose habitat.



YAKUTAT RANGER DISTRICT

Community Beach Clean-Ups

The community of Yakutat takes a lot of pride in the regions somewhat unique beaches. Unlike much of Southeast Alaska, most of the coast along the Yakutat Ranger District consists of long stretches of sandy beach broken only by rivers. These beaches, exposed to the open Gulf of Alaska, face a unique management challenge: marine debris. Marine debris, primarily plastics, consist of items as diverse as lost fishing gear, refuse from marine dumping, or even the careless litter from someone thousands of miles away who doesn't even know the Tongass exists. While plastic flotsam has historically been

associated with wildlife entanglement and negative impacts on tourism, there is a growing body of research indicating impacts from plastics are more pervasive. Many plastics contain anti-microbial, flame retardant, and carcinogenic chemicals which leach into the environment and cause problems throughout the ecosystem.

In 2019, the Yakutat Ranger District continued its work with community partners to clean up marine debris. On May 22, participants from the community, the Yakutat City and Borough, local students, the Forest Service, and other partners, gathered at local beach access points and dispersed in small groups and

individuals to collect trash along Cannon Beach. Elementary school students focused close to the staging area, while older participants walked along the beach and beach bluff in both directions. Forest Service staff drove ATVs with trailers to collect filled trash bags. The City and Borough took the lead on weighing and measuring volumes of trash collected and then properly disposing of it. Prizes were awarded for most trash collected and "runners up". Following the beach cleanup was a barbecue and Clean Water presentation at the Yakutat School. Partners and sponsors included: AC Company Store, ALPAR, Fat Grandma's, Yakutat Hardware, National Park Service,

City and Borough of Yakutat, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, Yakutat Chamber of Commerce, Yakutat Schools, and Yakutat Solid Waste Committee.

In addition to working close to home, the District fish and wildlife staff, along with a representative of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, traveled to the Italo River area to examine marine debris accumulation at more remote sights. Between the mouth of the Italo and Dangerous Rivers, short transects from the edge of water to the tree line consistently produced up to 20 pounds of debris each. Planning is underway to organize clean-ups at more remote sites.



Forest Service and participants from the community join to collect trash along the beach.



Cannon Beach pavilion.

"Waiting silently in the mountains, canyons, and river valleys of our national forests and grasslands are the remnants of past cultures that confront us and remind us of the centuries-old relationship between people and the land. These heritage resources hold clues to past ecosystems, add richness and depth to our landscapes, provide links to living traditions, and help transform a beautiful walk in the woods into an unforgettable encounter with history."

-National Heritage Strategy

Jane Smith excavates a shovel test on terrace above the Muddy River.



Heritage

The Forest Service is responsible for the management of over 350,000 recorded cultural resources on national forests and grasslands. That responsibility includes developing sites for the public's enjoyment and education, and protecting sites from vandalism, theft, and the effects of federally authorized activities such as timber harvest and road development.

The Tongass National Forest is rich with historic and culturally significant sites dating back to the Last Glacial Maximum and more recent eras of historical significance. These sites and historic properties tell an important story about Time, and the relationship between people and the land.

Ten professional archeologists, supported by summer interns, temporary employees and volunteers, protect the significant heritage resources of the Tongass in order to share their values with the American people and contribute relevant information to natural resource management. Their work ensures that future generations will have an opportunity to discover the human story etched on the landscapes of the Tongass. These dedicated specialists help bring the past to life as a vibrant part of our recreational experiences and connect people to the land in a way that will help us better understand and manage forest ecosystems.

Here is a sample of accomplishments from our Heritage Professionals on the Tongass in 2019.

- As part of the on-going effort to resolve all outstanding Native America Grave Protection and Repatriation Act cases on the forest, Tongass heritage personnel worked to enter into loan agreements with the State of Alaska, and the Claussen Museum, for the purposes of assuming responsibility for the Alaska Native human remains and/or associated items collected from public lands and housed within the museums. The forest is proceeding for repatriating remains and objects to the rightful tribes. Successful Government to Government consultation among the Petersburg Indian Association, the Organized Village of Kake and the Petersburg District Ranger occurred on August 19, 2019.
- Heritage professionals on Prince of Wales Island successfully completed the first phase of the Alaska Mental Health Land Exchange Programmatic Agreement in coordination with the Alaska Mental Health Trust, State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This included survey of the Hollis and Naukati parcels for sites of historical significance and the excavation of two archaeological sites. Dating from the excavation sites provided continued evidence of a coastal migration into the "new world" as early as 9-10,000 years ago.
- The North Zone Heritage Team completed archaeological fieldwork for a Citizen Science Project at Admiralty Cove that was planned and conducted with tribal members as part of an Enterprise Team contract. The project strengthened the District's relationship with the Douglas Indian Association and produced important archaeological insight into an area rich in cultural history, but had seen limited archaeological investigation in the past.
- The Heritage group provided necessary surveys, investigations and reporting to complete Determinations of Eligibility for the National Historic Register on 16 recreation cabins on the forest. Of the 144 cabins on the Tongass, many may be eligible for the Historic Register. The work of forest archeologists to obtain concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office will influence future management actions on these cabins.

From office work to field inspections, our heritage team members are an integral part of managing the nearly 17 million acres of public lands that people all over the world cherish.



Mike Jackson and Gina Esposito staff an activity station at the 2019 Kake Culture Camp.



Tim Marshall North Zone Archeologist, doing a shovel test.



Gene Primaky and Jane Smith record fish trap.



Linda Slaght and Gina Esposito identify a shell midden mound.



The crew takes a breather after hauling the building supplies from the beach to the cabin.

Partnerships

The Tongass National Forest relies on our numerous partners to help get work done on the ground and are grateful for their contributions. With the help from other government agencies, tribal entities, and non-profit organizations, we accomplish far more than by solely working alone. Add our volunteers and many informal partners to the mix and it's easy to see that the Tongass National Forest is stronger because of our partners. While impossible to capture all of the great work accomplished in this report, below are a few highlights from 2019.

Tongass Partnership Snapshots

Cabin Restoration Projects break ground thanks to the National Forest Foundation, Rasmuson Foundation, and Sitka Conservation Society.

The National Forest Foundation successfully secured a large grant from the Rasmuson Foundation to restore a number of public use recreation cabins across the Alaska Region over the next several years. The first two cabins on the Tongass National Forest—Allen Point Cabin and Fred's Creek Cabin, were beautifully restored this summer thanks to the hard work of Sitka Conservation Society and the volunteers they recruited to help accomplish the work.

The Keex'Kwaan Community Forest Partnership (KKCFP) is formally established and engages local youth in projects.

The KKCFP is an "all lands, all hands" approach to community-based natural resource management and includes Sealaska, Kake Tribal, The Organized Village of Kake, SE Alaska Land Trust, The Sustainable Southeast Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, Southeast Alaska Wilderness Exploration, Analysis and Discovery, The Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the US Forest Service as core partners.

In 2019, the Keex'Kwaan Community Forest Training Rural Alaskan Youth Leaders and Studentscrew along with contract specialists completed road and stream inventories on Kake and Kuiu road systems. These inventories will help calibrate the Light Detection and Ranging (a remote sensing method) information received with actual conditions on the ground. The field-gathered data will also help to prioritize stewardship needs for restoration work related to road drainage devices and hydrology. Kake Youth Conservation Corps learned about the techniques to perform road inventories and helped design community based tools to ensure that the information and resources associated with the Keex'Kwaan Community Forest stay in and benefit the Kake community.



The new deck of Allan Point Cabin overlooks the vista of Nakwasina Sound.



Situk Lake Trail Bridge

IT'S EASY TO SEE THAT THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST IS STRONGER BECAUSE OF OUR PARTNERS.

- 201 active partnership agreements
- 75 Partners represented in active agreements
- 46 new agreements executed this year
- 53,387 volunteer and service hours
- \$1,358,000 financial value of volunteer and service hours

Youth and young adults gain experience thanks to partners including Student Conservation Association, Mobilize Green, AmeriCorps, Angoon Youth Conservation Corps, Kake Youth Conservation Corps, and TRAYLS (Training Rural Alaskan Youth Leaders and Students).



Angoon YCC Crew sitting on Shaka Rock in Mitchell Bay, Admiralty National Monument.

The Tongass National Forest continues to support opportunities for youth and young adults to gain experience and skills working on public lands. Over the past year, the Tongass hosted 39 Student Conservation Association (SCA) Interns on almost every district assisting in an array of projects and programs. We also grew our Resource Assistant program and had 9 Mobilize Green Interns working in conservation education, Wilderness, and the landscape architect programs. In addition

to our intern programs, Yakutat and Petersburg Ranger Districts hosted an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps team, made up of 9 young adults from around the country and over 12 Southeast Alaskan youth participated in one of our Youth Conservation Corps such as Angoon Youth Conservation Corps and Kake Youth Conservation Corps or through the Training Rural Alaskan Youth Leaders and Students program gaining experience working in Natural Resources in their backyard.

Tlingit carver
Kenneth White.

The cooperative relationship established this year between the Cape Fox Cultural Foundation and the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center serves to enhance visitors understanding of the natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources of the Tongass National Forest.

Within the Forest Service facility, the Cape Fox Cultural Foundation gift shop's proceeds help to preserve and support the heritage, culture and future of the Cape Fox community. The funds raised through the space also provide focused programs and services to help disadvantaged members of the Cape Fox community become thriving members of their families, communities and society as a whole.

Through our combined interpretive, educational and informational materials and programs, visitors are delighted to learn how the forest has shaped the everyday lives of the people who live here for thousands of years, and it continues to do so even today.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA DISCOVERY CENTER



Southeast Alaska Discovery Center



Cape Fox Cultural Foundation Gift Shop



Cape Fox Cultural Foundation employees in front of the center's Alaska's Public Lands map from left to right, Meta Mulder, Percy White, Jaat Hanna Timmerman, Christa Thomas, Kenneth White and Briona White.

Visitor Centers

Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center (MGVC) opened in 1962, with the observatory designed to be like an eye looking out over the glacier. Although the view has since changed, the glacier consistently draws people from down the road and across the globe. Whether it's on a daily dog walk or a first-time adventure to Alaska, approximately 700,000 people visit Mendenhall Glacier annually.

Many who come are drawn by the allure of blue ice, or the possibility of seeing wild black bears (or by the insistence of their travel companions!). Others come to hike trails or photograph nature.

Mendenhall Glacier can be viewed from the comfort of the visitor center, or by hiking to the end of either the Photo Point Trail (1/3 mile) or the Nugget Falls Trail (1 mile).



MENDENHALL GLACIER VISITOR CENTER

Steep Creek Trail (1/4 mile) is popular with wildlife viewers seeking black bears, sockeye and coho salmon, American dippers, and the occasional bald eagle.

East Glacier Trail (3.5 miles) is a favorite among people looking to stretch their legs and gain elevation.

The MGVC is more than a summertime attraction. During the winter, we host over 1600 elementary and middle-school students for educational field trips, and the wintertime Fireside Lecture series attracts over 1400 people. We also host special events such as Fall Fun Fest and an Ice Safety Demonstration.

If you can't visit in person, you can get a virtual experience by visiting our Facebook page - (U.S. Forest Service – Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center). Last year we shared Mendenhall virtually with over 103,000 people.



Black bear grazing along Steep Creek.



Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center

Paul A. Robbins, Jr.

Griffin Pelala

Griffin Pelala

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