



ALASKA

## Tongass National Forest

# SALMON FACTSHEET



The Tongass National Forest supports sustainable fisheries, Indigenous cultures and traditional practices, and an intact ecosystem that produces more wild salmon than all other national forests combined.

## ECONOMICS

- In 2007, commercial, sport, and subsistence salmon fishing, combined with hatchery operations, in Southeast Alaska was valued at **\$986 million.**

**75%** of Southeast Alaska commercial salmon catch is produced by Tongass rivers, lakes, and streams, translating to 40 million salmon with a dockside value of over \$68 million annually (2020).

- The five species of Pacific Salmon accounted for nearly 60% of Southeast Alaska's total seafood dockside value in 2017-2018, including hatchery support.
- On average, 22% of Alaska's annual commercial salmon catch is produced by the Tongass National Forest, or "forest fish" (2007-2016).
- As the most lucrative "forest fish," wild pink salmon represent 91% of the total commercial harvest from the Tongass and averaged \$42 million in dockside value from 2007-2016. Coho salmon are the next most commercially valuable species, averaging nearly \$15 million and chums at almost \$9 million.
- In 2007, commercial salmon fishing supported roughly 4,682 jobs or **1 in 10 jobs in Southeast Alaska.**
- The Tongass National Forest supports Southeast Alaska's status as the state's leading region for commercial salmon production by volume, with commercial fishermen typically harvesting over 53 million salmon each year.

## ECOLOGICAL HEALTH

- 12,930 miles of anadromous rivers and streams and 182,483 acres of lakes and ponds that support and produce wild salmon have been recorded by Tongass fisheries biologists.

**50+** animal species depend on pink, chum, coho, Chinook, and sockeye salmon spawning in freshwater.

- Salmon-derived nitrogen has been found in trees more than 500 yards away from salmon streams, particularly in areas where bears feed on salmon.
- Prince of Wales Island is the most important island ecosystem in Southeast Alaska for commercial salmon production, on the basis of identified sockeye habitat, numbers of stream miles for coho and pink salmon, and number of "Primary Salmon Producer" watersheds, as designated by Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

## MANAGEMENT & RISK FACTORS

- About 6% of the streamside area on Tongass salmon streams has been affected by timber harvest and/or road building.
- 182 problematic road-stream crossings block 64 stream miles of anadromous fish habitat on the Tongass.
- Approximately **93% of 900+ watersheds** are in near-natural condition, per a 2015 Tongass-wide watershed condition assessment, with the remaining 68 in need of aquatic habitat restoration.
- 64 fish habitat enhancements (fishways, falls improvements) across 42 systems improve fish access to 574 stream miles (+4%) and 5,531 acres of lakes (+3%), opening fish habitat to boost salmon production on the Tongass.
- While Southeast Alaska wild salmon populations remain relatively healthy, these populations are susceptible to climate-driven impacts. Continuing to implement effective mitigation strategies will play a large role in maintaining the resilience of salmon in the future.

## ALASKAN WAY OF LIFE

- Wild salmon have fed the Indigenous peoples of Southeast Alaska for more than 9000 years.
- 89% of Alaskans approve funding salmon conservation even in tough economic times.
- For the Southeast region from 2007-2016, an estimated 55,112 salmon per year were harvested for subsistence or personal use. Sockeye, Chinook, and coho salmon are more important for subsistence, sport, and personal-use fisheries.

**96% of Alaskans** believe salmon are essential to the Alaskan way of life.

- 90% of rural households in Southeast Alaska depend on salmon, and salmon provide 29% of the total noncommercial harvest of wild foods in rural communities.

The ecological health of the Tongass National Forest is tied to the productivity of salmon populations in Southeast Alaska. Responsible stewardship of fish and habitat resources by the Forest Service on the Tongass National Forest is a top priority. Continuing to minimize stressors in times of rapidly changing climates will likely play a role in maintaining the resilience of salmon and ecosystems on the Tongass.



Forest Service  
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