



# Tongass National Forest

## Land and Resource Management Plan Amendment

### PLANNING EFFORT MOVING FORWARD

The Tongass National Forest (Tongass) is amending the 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The proposed changes to the Forest Plan may create a significant environmental effect, which requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

In July 2013, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack directed the Tongass to transition its forest

management program to be more ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable. To do this, the Tongass must make changes to the Forest Plan to expedite, over the next 10 to 15 years, the transition away from old-growth timber harvesting and towards a forest products industry that uses predominantly young-growth forests.

Secretary Vilsack's memo directs that the transition be implemented in a manner that preserves a viable timber industry that provides jobs and

opportunities for Southeast Alaska residents.

The amendment also addresses information received during the Five-Year Review of the Forest Plan (2013), which concluded that conditions on the land and desires of the public necessitate changes to the Forest Plan.

The plan amendment will be developed under the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR § 219), and embody the provisions of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA).

### OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

The Tongass invited the public to comment on the Forest Plan during the Five-Year Review (2013) and during scoping in May and June 2014.

In January and February, there will be three open houses to discuss the Forest Plan amendment process (sidebar).

The 2012 Planning Rule encourages youth

involvement. The first meeting with the Youth Advisory Council for the was held at Ketchikan High School on December 11, 2014. Six students (and two alternates) are being asked to make recommendations on management issues in the Tongass. The Forest Service wants to expose young people to natural resource

management on the Tongass, as well as engaging them in the public involvement process so their voices can be heard.



Youth Advisory Council first meeting. (USDA Forest Service)

ISSUE 1—JANUARY 2015

### Public Open House Meetings

- **Juneau Forest Plan Amendment Open House**, 5 to 8 p.m., Monday, January 26, 2015, Juneau Ranger District/ Admiralty National Monument Conference Room
- **Sitka Forest Plan Amendment Open House**, 5 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, January 28, 2015, Harrigan Centennial Hall Rousseau Room
- **Ketchikan Forest Plan Amendment Open House**, 5 to 8 p.m. Monday, February 2, 2015, Southeast Alaska Discovery Center



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## ISSUES

Based on comments and agency concerns, the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) developed issue statements. This overview assigns numbers to the issues. This does not mean that Issue 1 is more important than Issue 3, it is simply a way to track them through the process.

### Issue 1-Young-growth Transition

The Secretary of Agriculture directed the Forest Service to transition to a young-growth-based timber management program on the Tongass National Forest in 10 to 15 years, which is more rapid than currently planned.

This transition is intended to support the Tongass National Forest managing its land for an ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable forest management program and reduce old-growth harvest while still providing economic timber to support the local forest products industry.

### Issue 2-Renewable Energy

The development of renewable energy projects on the Tongass would help southeast Alaska communities reduce fossil fuel dependence, stimulate economic development, and lower carbon emissions in the Region.

### Issue 3-Roadless Areas

Timber harvest that occurred in roadless areas during the Tongass Roadless Exemption Period changed the features that often characterize inventoried roadless areas.

Comments received during scoping as well as the Five-Year Review process

expressed concerns about roadless areas on the Tongass; both in favor of protections afforded under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule), as well as requesting that the forest plan be amended to address the significant changes brought about by re-instatement of the Roadless Rule on the Tongass.

### Issue 4-Wildlife Habitat and the Conservation Strategy

Old-growth timber harvest changed the composition and distribution of terrestrial wildlife habitats.

How the resulting young growth is managed may

influence the ecological integrity of the landscape at various scales.

Changes made to suitable lands designated for development, and to plan components (*e.g., standards, guidelines*) may affect old-growth habitat for wildlife and the Tongass Conservation Strategy and contributing elements to old growth reserves (*e.g., riparian, beach and estuary habitats*).

## TONGASS ADVISORY COMMITTEE



(USDA Forest Service)

Emphasizing the need for collaborative, creative and publicly-owned solutions to forest management on the Tongass National Forest, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) formally established a Federal Advisory Committee—Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC).

The Committee's mission is to advise the Secretary

of Agriculture, through the Chief of the Forest Service on developing an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable forest management strategy on the Tongass.

Committee members represent a broad and diverse range of viewpoints and expertise, geographically diverse communities in and outside of Alaska, and

people with a demonstrated commitment to working on collaborative solutions.

The TAC is working on recommendations and advice that may inform the Forest Plan Amendment. The work that the TAC is doing is concurrent, yet distinct, from the Forest Plan Amendment process.

## DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES

The Tongass Plan Amendment interdisciplinary team (IDT) has identified the issues for analysis, and has been working with the responsible official to develop a framework of alternatives to eventually provide a range of reasonable alternatives to be analyzed.

The draft alternatives discussed here are still preliminary and may be modified as the iterative planning process continues.

### Alternative 1-No Action

The No Action Alternative (2008 Forest Plan) represents current management with application of the 2001 Roadless Rule. Under this alternative, old-growth

management would follow the timber sale adaptive management strategy, and young-growth management would occur in development Land Use Designations (LUDs).

### Alternative 2

Alternative 2 is similar to Alternative 1, except that young-growth management would occur in both development and non-development LUDs (except for Congressionally designated and administratively withdrawn areas).

New young growth and renewable energy plan components (*e.g., standards, guidelines*) would also be developed under this alternative.

### Alternative 3

Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2, except that young-growth management could also occur in areas that were harvested during the Tongass Roadless Exemption Period (*i.e., roaded roadless*).

### Alternative 4

Alternative 4 is similar to Alternative 3, except that young-growth management would occur in the development LUDs only.

### Alternative 5

Alternative 5 is a place holder for a recommended Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC) Alternative to be received in March 2015.

### Alternative 6

Alternative 6 is a place holder for an alternative proposed by the State of Alaska. The IDT has been working closely with the State on this alternative.



Tuxekan Timber Sale Yarding. (USDA Forest Service)

## FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT SCHEDULE

The Forest Plan Amendment schedule includes milestones for the amendment process. In addition to the open houses listed on page 1, additional opportunities to participate will be provided through August 2016.

Although dates on the schedule are subject to change, the Forest Service is on track for meeting the next milestone—Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The required 90-day comment period for the Proposed Forest Plan Amendment and DEIS

is tentatively scheduled to begin on July 27, 2015, and the Forest Service will hold public meetings and subsistence hearings during the comment period.

The *Forest Plan Amendment Schedule Milestones* can be found under the “Quick Links” index on the Tongass Planning website (see *page 4*).

The Forest Plan Amendment is subject to the objection procedures in subpart B of the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR § 219). The objections process gives an

individual or entity an opportunity for an independent Forest Service Review and resolution of issues before the approval of a plan amendment.



Forest Plan Amendment interdisciplinary team. (IDT) (USDA Forest Service)

## **Forest Plan Amendment**

We invite you to participate now and throughout this Planning process. For more information, visit the Tongass planning website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/R10/Tongass/PlanAmend>.

Thank you for your interest. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Susan Howle, Forest Plan Amendment Project Manager, at (907) 228-6340 or [showle@fs.fed.us](mailto:showle@fs.fed.us).



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