



United States Department of Agriculture



Tongass National Forest
Forest Plan Amendment Open House – Ketchikan, AK
February 2, 2015 - 5 to 8 p.m.
Southeast Alaska Discovery Center

WELCOME!

The Tongass National Forest and its planning team members welcome you to tonight’s Open House.

What is an Open House?

An open house is an event where the public is invited to come out and review materials produced and provide feedback to the planning team.

Purpose of the Open House

The purpose of this event is to engage the public in our planning process by sharing information about the progress being made on the Forest Plan Amendment and draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The planning team will inform the public about how the 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) will be amended under the National Forest System land management planning rule (2012 Planning Rule), including modifying the existing monitoring program to transition to the Rule’s plan monitoring program requirements.

Open House Stations

Stations are arranged by the four issues that have been identified for the Forest Plan Amendment National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis – Young-growth transition; Renewable Energy; Roadless Areas; and Wildlife Habitat and the Conservation Strategy.

Four Easy Steps...

- 1 - Sign in at table.**
- 2 - Review materials presented.**
- 3 - Talk to planning team members.**
- 4 - Ask questions and provide feedback.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Tongass amending the Forest Plan now?

The reason for amending the Forest Plan comes from July 2013 direction from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack (Secretary’s Memorandum 1044-009) directing the Tongass National Forest to transition its forest management program to be more ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable, while also accommodating information generated during the Five-Year Review of the Forest Plan. An amendment is necessary to expedite the transition away from old-growth timber harvesting and towards a forest products industry that uses predominantly young-growth forests. Changes to the Forest Plan are also needed to make the development of renewable energy resources more permissible, including considering access and utility corridors to stimulate economic development in Southeast Alaska communities, and provide low-carbon energy alternatives thereby displacing the use of fossil fuel.

Where are we in the planning schedule?

See *Forest Plan Amendment Schedule Milestones* handout. The next opportunity for formal public comment on the proposed Forest Plan Amendment and DEIS is expected in late July 2015 (i.e., Notice of Availability of DEIS).

What is the most important thing I can do to help?

The most important thing you can do is to participate in the planning process. Help us network this process through emails, Twitter, Facebook, etc., with friends, family, co-workers and elected officials.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS IMPORTANT PLANNING PROCESS!
For more information, visit the Tongass planning website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/R10/Tongass/PlanAmend>

Significant Issues

Issues regarding a proposal may be raised externally and internally - by the public, other agencies, or the Forest Service - throughout the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process.

Significant issues are those related to significant or potentially significant effects. When identifying issues to be analyzed in the NEPA analysis, it is helpful to ask, “Is there disagreement about the best way to use a resource, or resolve an unwanted resource condition, or potentially significant effects of a proposed action or alternative?” If the answer is “yes,” you may benefit from subjecting the issue to analysis. This is what we call a significant issue.

Entire resources cannot be issues by themselves, but concerns over how a resource may be affected by the proposal can be issues.

“Most important, NEPA documents must concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail.” (40 CFR 1500.1(b))

Based on external and internal comments, the following issues have been identified for the Forest Plan Amendment NEPA analysis:

Issue 1: Young-growth Transition

Issue Statement: 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 planned. This transition is intended to support the Tongass managing its forest 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.

The issue concerns financial efficiency, salability, and volume of future timber sales. It also relates to the potential local employment and revenues generated for communities in the local area. Young-growth stand growth rates, sustainable harvest rates, the amount of old-growth harvest needed during transition to sustain the timber industry, and the locations where young-growth harvest would take place are some of the factors to be considered.

Issue 2: Renewable Energy

Issue Statement: 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.

This issue relates to comments received during the Five-Year Review of the Forest Plan. The Forest Service should promote the development of renewable energy projects to help Southeast Alaska communities reduce fossil energy dependence, where it is compatible with National Forest purposes and to ensure that the planning, construction, and operation of projects protect and effectively use National Forest System (NFS) lands and resources. Management of NFS lands should support the intent of the State of Alaska legislature to receive 50 percent of its electrical generation from renewable energy sources by 2025 (House Bill 306 [2010]).

Issue 3: Roadless Areas

Issue Statement: Timber harvest that occurred in roadless areas during the Tongass exemption period changed the values or features that often characterize inventoried roadless areas.

Issues and concerns received during scoping as well as during 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.

Roadless areas are considered important because they support a diversity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, species, and communities, and play an important role in helping to conserve native plant and animal communities and biological diversity. They also provide people with unique recreation opportunities.

During the Tongass exemption period, road construction, reconstruction, and the cutting, sale, and removal of timber in inventoried roadless areas occurred. As a result, road construction and timber harvesting in inventoried roadless areas may have altered the roadless characteristics to the extent that the purpose of protecting those characteristics cannot be achieved.

Issue 4: Wildlife Habitat and the Conservation Strategy

Issue Statement: Old-growth timber harvest has changed composition and distribution of terrestrial wildlife habitats. How the resulting young-growth is managed may influence the future ecological integrity of the landscape at various scales. Changes made to suitable lands designated for development, and to plan components (e.g., standards and 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).

The Tongass National Forest supports a unique and important assemblage of wildlife many of which are at least partially dependent on old-growth forest including one of the largest populations of brown bears in the world, high densities of breeding bald eagles, the Alexander Archipelago Wolf, species of high importance for subsistence (e.g., Sitka black-tailed deer), an extensive array of endemic mammals, and a large number of species that are at least partially dependent on old-growth habitats (e.g., marten and goshawk). The Tongass Old-growth Conservation Strategy is considered important for the continued health of old-growth associated wildlife populations in Southeast Alaska.

Timber harvest, minerals and renewable energy development, and road development can have important effects on the habitat and populations of many of these species and the diversity and integrity of Southeast Alaska ecosystems. Although less than 10 percent of the productive old-growth habitat on the Tongass has been converted to young growth, the percentage is much higher for certain types of old growth, such as lowland and large-tree old growth. In addition, non-NFS old growth has generally been harvested at a much higher rate. Therefore, the consideration of harvest and road building on wildlife in Southeast Alaska are greater than the effects for the Tongass by itself.

Purpose and Need

Purpose

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) 16 U.S.C. §1604(f)(4) states that plans shall be amended in any matter whatsoever after public notice, and, if such amendment would result in a significant change in a plan, the plan must be amended in accordance to the requirements of 16 U.S.C. 1604(e) and (f) and public involvement required by 16 U.S.C. 1604(d). Similarly, as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the responsible official must determine whether the significance of the proposed amendment's impact on the environment would require an environmental impact statement.

The Forest Service has determined that it is necessary to amend the *2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan* (Forest Plan). The purpose of amending the Forest Plan originates from recent (July 2013) direction from the Secretary of Agriculture directing the Tongass National Forest to transition its forest management program to be more ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable, while also accommodating information generated during the Five-Year Review of the Forest Plan. The purpose of this plan amendment includes:

- Review lands within the plan area to determine suitability for timber production, especially young growth timber stands.
- Identify the sustained yield limit (SYL) (i.e., the ecological yield of timber that can be removed annually on a sustained yield basis).
- Establish plan components (e.g., standards and guidelines) for young-growth forest management and renewable energy development to guide future project decision making.
- Disclose and assess the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the reasonably foreseeable future actions resulting from the management actions in the draft amended Forest Plan, environmental impact statement and draft alternatives pursuant to the requirements of the NEPA, its implementing regulations, and other applicable laws.
- Consolidate modifications made to the Forest Plan since its approval.

Need

An amendment is necessary for responding to recent (July 2013) direction from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack outlined in the Secretary's Memorandum 1044-009. The memorandum directs management of the Tongass National Forest to expedite the transition away from old-growth timber harvesting and towards a forest products industry that utilizes predominantly second-growth – or young-growth – forests. Secretary Vilsack's memorandum also guides that the transition should be implemented in a manner that preserves a viable timber industry that provides jobs and opportunities for Southeast Alaska residents. USDA's goal is to effectuate this transition, over the next 10 to 15 years, so that at the end of this period the vast majority of timber sold by the Tongass will be young growth. This timeframe will conserve old growth forests while allowing the forest industry time to adapt. The Forest Plan currently provides for a transition to young growth over time, but there are challenges in establishing an economically viable young-growth forest management program due to the relatively young age of the available stands, market conditions, and other factors. Secretary Vilsack's direction requires Forest Plan amendments to guide future management of NFS lands and allocation of resources on the Tongass National Forest under the multiple-use and sustained yield mandate.

The need to amend the plan is further corroborated by the Five-Year Review of the Forest Plan, completed in 2013, which concluded that conditions on the land and demands of the public necessitate the Tongass National Forest to make changes to the Forest Plan. Concerns were consistently expressed during the Five-Year Review regarding the impact of rising fossil fuel prices and increasing climate change on the quality of life in Southeast Alaska. Changes to the Forest Plan are needed to make the development of renewable energy resources more permissible, including considering access and utility corridors to stimulate economic development in Southeast Alaska communities, and provide low-carbon energy alternatives thereby displacing the use of fossil fuel.

DRAFT

ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK

1- 2008 Forest Plan (No Action)

- Young Growth in Development LUDs
- Current Standards & Guidelines
- Flexibility with regard to Culmination of Mean Annual Increment (CMAI)¹
- Adaptive Management Strategy for Old Growth
- 2001 Roadless Rule applies²
- Current Transportation and Utility System Overlay LUD

2- 2008 Forest Plan plus

- Young Growth in Development and Non-development LUDs (except Cong. Design. & Withdrawn Areas)
- New Young Growth Plan Components (in all Development and Non-development LUDs)
- Flexibility with regard to CMAI¹
- Adaptive Management Strategy for Old Growth
- 2001 Roadless Rule applies²
- New Renewable Energy Plan Components

3- Young Growth in Development and Non-development LUDs as in 2 above; transition Old Growth in roaded portion of Phase I

- New Young Growth Plan Components (in all Development and Non-development LUDs)
- Flexibility with regard to CMAI¹
- Tongass Roadless Exemption Period Timber Harvest (Young Growth)
- New Renewable Energy Plan Components

4- Young Growth in Development LUDs ONLY; transition Old Growth in roaded portion of Phase I

- New Young Growth Plan Components (in Development LUDs only)
- Flexibility with regard to CMAI¹
- Tongass Roadless Exemption Period Timber Harvest (Young Growth)
- New Renewable Energy Plan Components

5- Tongass Advisory Committee (may incorporate into 1 or more Alternatives above)

6- State of Alaska (submitted Alternative to incorporate into DEIS)

Tracked in an Appendix
State of Alaska Statehood Act (Land Conveyance)
Alaska Mental Health Trust (Land Exchange)
Cube Cove (Land Acquisition)

¹ The Forest Service will look at CMAI flexibility and 2 logs.

² There will be no immediate change in the application of the 2001 the Roadless Rule to the Tongass National Forest because there remain several steps before a final decision from the en banc court.

Overall Comparison of Alternatives

Alternative	Young Growth Harvest (ranked by amount with 1 being most)	Young Growth in Suitable Base	Includes Tongass Roadless Exemption Period Timber Harvest	Includes New Plan Components for Young Growth and Renewable Energy	Old Growth Harvest	CMAI Flexibility
1 (No Action)	4	Development LUDs Only	NO	NO	Adaptive Management Strategy	YES ¹
2	2	Development and Non-Development LUDs including Beach Fringe and RMA	NO	YES	Adaptive Management Strategy; 5mmbf by 2034	YES ¹
3	1	Development and Non-Development LUDs including Beach Fringe and RMA	YES	YES	Uses some of Phase I OG only; 5mmbf by 2034	YES ¹
4	3	Development LUDs including Beach Fringe and RMA	YES	YES	Uses some of Phase I OG only; 5mmbf by 2034	YES ¹

^{1/} The Forest Service will look at CMAI flexibility and 2 logs.

NOTES: Focal species are not part of Forest Plan amendment. Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) may be included in the amendment, but would be the same for all action alternatives.

Comparison of Land Base in Each Alternative

Alternative	YOUNG GROWTH						OLD GROWTH					
	Development LUDs			Non-development LUDs			Phase I Development LUDs			Phases II and III Development LUDs		
	Non-roadless	Roadless Area Harvested during Exemption Period	Roadless Area	Non-roadless	Roadless Area Harvested during Exemption Period	Roadless Area	Non-roadless	Roadless Area Harvested during Exemption Period	Roadless Area	Non-roadless	Roadless Area Harvested during Exemption Period	Roadless Area
1 (No Action)	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
2	Yes, including Beach Fringe and RMA ¹	No	No	Yes, including Beach Fringe and RMA ¹	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
3	Yes, including Beach Fringe and RMA ¹	Yes, including Beach Fringe and RMA ¹	No	Yes, including Beach Fringe and RMA ¹	Yes, including Beach Fringe and RMA ¹	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
4	Yes, including Beach Fringe and RMA ¹	Yes, including Beach Fringe and RMA ¹	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

^{1/} RMA excludes TTRA buffer.

Comparison of Mapped Suitable Acres¹ in Each Alternative (PRELIMINARY NUMBERS)

Alternative	YOUNG GROWTH						OLD GROWTH					
	Development LUDs			Non-development LUDs			Phase I Development LUDs			Phases II and III Development LUDs		
	Non-roadless	Roadless Area Harvested during Exemption Period	Roadless Area	Non-roadless	Roadless Area Harvested during Exemption Period	Roadless Area	Non-roadless	Roadless Area Harvested during Exemption Period	Roadless Area	Non-roadless	Roadless Area Harvested during Exemption Period	Roadless Area
1 (No Action)	237,000	0	0	0	0	0	262,000	0	0	55,000	0	0
2	291,000	0	0	46,000	0	0	262,000	0	0	55,000	0	0
3	291,000	9,000	0	46,000	1,000	0	262,000	19,000	0	0	0	0
4	291,000	9,000	0	0	0	0	262,000	19,000	0	0	0	0

^{1/} Mapped suitable acres are based on GIS and have not been reduced for MIRF or falldown.

Summary of Total Young Growth and Old Growth Mapped Suitable¹ Acres (PRELIMINARY NUMBERS)

Alternative	Total Young Growth	Total Old Growth	Total
Alternative 1	237,000	317,000	554,000
Alternative 2	337,000	317,000	654,000
Alternative 3	347,000	281,000	628,000
Alternative 4	300,000	281,000	581,000
2008 Forest Plan (with Roadless Exemption)	242,000	850,000	1,092,000

^{1/} Mapped Suitable acres are based on GIS and have not been reduced for MIRF or falldown.