

26. Timber Resources: Allowable Sale Quantity

Goals: Provide for the continuation of timber uses and resources by the timber industry and Alaska residents. Manage the timber resources for timber production of saw timber and wood products from suitable forest lands made available for timber harvest on an even-flow, long-term, sustained-yield basis and in an economically efficient manner.

Objectives: Pre-commercially thin previously harvested suitable forestland. Evaluate non-clearcutting silvicultural systems. Seek to provide an economic timber supply sufficient to meet the annual market demand¹ for Tongass National Forest timber and the market demand for the planning cycle, up to a ceiling of the Forest Plan's allowable sale quantity, which is 2.67 billion board feet in the first decade. Manage young-growth to improve habitat for wildlife and commercial timber products. Review standards and guidelines for applicability to young-growth stands. Provide 2 to 3 years supply of volume under contract to local mills and then establish shelf volume² to maintain flexibility and stability in the sale program. Review the timber sale program and work with the state and other partners to implement changes that will keep an "economic timber" perspective throughout the process and monitor the implementation of these reforms to ensure they are consistently employed across the Forest.

Background: The allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the Tongass National Forest as specified in the 2008 Forest Plan is 2.67 billion board feet for the first decade following implementation of the plan. The ASQ consists of two separate non-interchangeable components (NIC), also referred to as an operability inventory, and is based on land type and difficulty of harvest. NIC I (set at 2.38 billion board feet of timber per decade) and NIC II (set at 0.29 billion board feet per decade) and a proportional mix set at approximately 89 percent NIC I and 11 percent NIC II (Forest Plan ROD, page 7).

Timber Resources Question: *Is the ASQ land base consistent with resources information and programmed harvest?*

Evaluation Criteria

New information leading to changes in timber utilization standards; timber inventory results; timber dispersion requirements; tentatively suitable land base; yield tables; operability inventory projections on area managed for riparian, beach fringe and estuary resources; implementation factors; spatial limitations of analysis; and natural condition.

Sampling/Reporting Period

Analysis of Forest Plan ASQ compared with the actual sale and harvest can be produced annually.

Monitoring Results

Table 1 displays the sale volume for FY2004 through FY2014. For FY2004 through FY2014, the average annual volume sold was 53.88 million board feet (MMBF) or 20.05 percent of the annual ASQ. This information is presented to illustrate the trend in recent allotment of timber sale ASQ. The decline in timber sale volume is based on a variety of factors including economic conditions, harvest costs, and litigation.

¹ The annual market demand forecast is a methodology used to set the short-term goals for the Tongass Timber Program – volume the Forest plans to offer in the current year, pending sufficient funding and sufficient National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)-cleared volume. NEPA-cleared volume is defined as NEPA documents with a signed decision.

² Shelf volume is volume that has been NEPA-cleared and is available for offer.

Timber Resources Table 1. Timber volume sold for fiscal years 2004-2014

Fiscal Year	Timber Volume Sold (MMBF)	Percent of ASQ Sold	Annual ASQ (MMBF)
2004	87	32.5	267
2005	65	24.3	267
2006	85	31.8	267
2007	30	11.2	267
2008	5	1.8	267
2009	10	3.7	267
2010	49	18.3	267
2011	37.5	14.04	267
2012	52.5	19.6	267
2013*	15.79	5.9	267
2014	100	37.45	267
Ten Year Average	53.88	20.05	267

*The Big Thorne Timber Sale (102 MMBF) was offered in FY 2013 and pulled back for further NEPA review. The 2013 offer was 117.8 MMBF or 44 percent of ASQ.

Action Plan

No action is necessary at this time because the annual volume sold has been, and is expected to continue to remain, well below the ASQ. Recommendations are to continue to monitor the trend of annual ASQ sold.