



Introduction to the Alaska Region

Welcome to the Alaska Region of the U.S. Forest Service. Our employees manage more than 22 million acres of National Forest System lands, which equates to about 25,000 acres per employee. The Tongass National Forest, in Southeast Alaska, is the largest in the nation. It stretches the 500-mile length of the Alaska Panhandle and covers more than 80 percent of the land. Juneau, Sitka, Ketchikan, Petersburg and more than 25 other communities are closely tied to this vast temperate rainforest. The Chugach National Forest, in Southcentral Alaska, is the nation's second largest. It makes a 210-mile arch around Prince William Sound and is a vital part of the cities and towns of Anchorage, Seward, Cordova, Valdez, Whittier and others.

On a national scale, forests are seen as:

- Living classrooms or laboratories
- A national sense of place
- A place for recreation
- A source of wood and mineral products
- A resource for traditional subsistence uses
- A rich heritage where generations have lived

On the local scale, we manage Alaska's forestlands for all these purposes, while endeavoring to protect them for the long term. We recognize that the communities that are in and near the Tongass and Chugach national forests depend on the available timber, minerals, salmon, and wildlife found there. In addition, many rural residents use the forests for the fish, blueberries, deer and other forest products needed in a subsistence lifestyle.

Land management planning provides the backbone for protecting the resources,

while providing services to the public. Our work is focused in part on ecosystem management; protection for streams, wetlands, and caves; the needs of fish and wildlife; subsistence needs; resource development; and special land designations. Both of our forests have scientifically-based, amended land management plans that were developed with public input and collaboration.

While resource extraction had decreased in the Alaska Region over the years, recreation and tourism has grown. Commercial tours and cruises provide a front-row seat to the wildlife and scenery, while independent travelers make their own way to excellent fishing, kayaking and camping. We are looking for new and better ways to monitor and manage the impact of recreation and tourism on forestlands while developing new opportunities for the visitors who come here.

This 2011 Alaska Region Briefing Book provides short descriptions of our current issues, problems, and solutions. In addition, we have included forest maps and highlights of ongoing programs and partnerships which contribute to our success.



Tongass National Forest Hiker