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Department of
Agriculture



Forest Service
Alaska Region
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State of the Tongass National Forest - FY2012



Message from the Forest Supervisor's Team 2012

The 2012 State of the Tongass National Forest focuses on two themes: "Rooted in Community" and "Adventure within Range." Not only do the wilds of the Tongass provide an opportunity for world-class adventure for millions of people who visit every year—but they also provide shelter, food, and water for many plants, animals, and people who call this place home. Our charge as land stewards is to ensure that the forest provides those services—both adventure and home—long into the future.

Our work in 2012 benefitted both long-time residents and visitors. Projects included forest highway construction that provided jobs and access to the forest for communities on Prince of Wales; restoration work that improved fish and deer habitat; and sustainable timber projects that opened up economic opportunities for future project work in the area, generating even more jobs.

Recreation managers were busy keeping the 19 Wilderness Areas on the Tongass in a wild and natural state while providing for human use and enjoyment. Also, Forest Service staff worked with local elementary school students to create art and poetry about the Tongass in the "Forest of Words" program. The Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, the first visitor center constructed by the Forest Service, commemorated its 50th anniversary with a new glacier film.



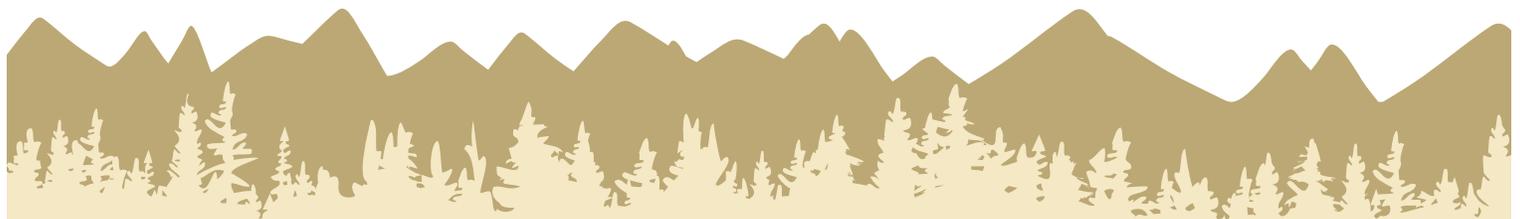
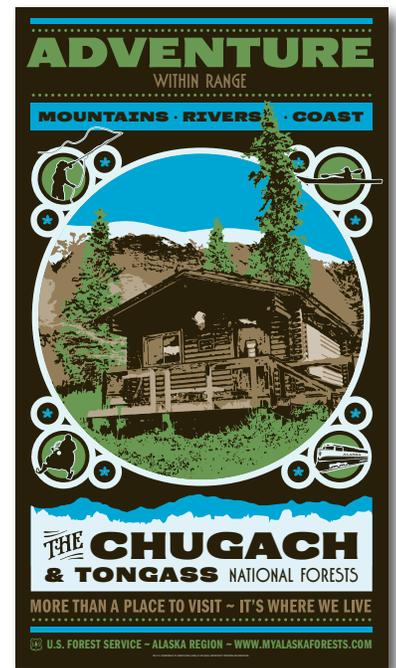
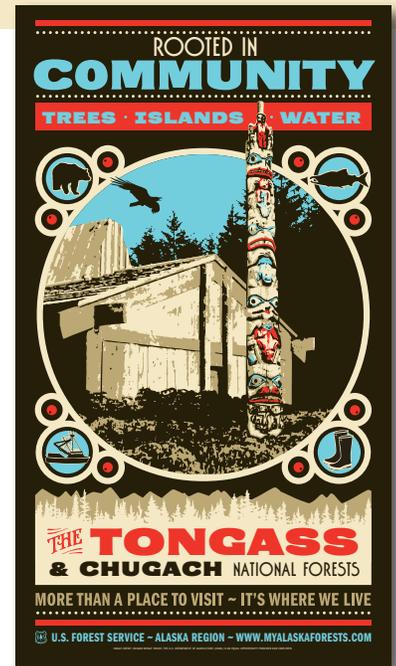
Forest Service Associate Chief Mary Wagner, Tongass Deputy Forest Supervisor Tricia O'Connor and Chief Tidwell with the native basket safety award.

Not only is the Tongass a national forest, it is fundamentally a Native place. The Forest Service and Southeast Alaskan tribes share a mutual desire to see proper stewardship of the land. On Admiralty Island, the Angoon Tribal Watershed Crew worked to maintain, improve and restore watershed conditions in critical areas. In turn, the community benefitted from local employment opportunities, job training, and career building skills.

These accomplishments only scratch the surface of what we did in 2012, but perhaps more significant was the sheer volume of work we completed safely. In recognition of Tongass employees' safety ethic and attitude, the Tongass National Forest received the 2012 Chief's Honor Award for Creating a Safety Culture. This award recognized the Tongass for outstanding contributions in creating and ensuring a safe and healthy work environment.

Forrest Cole, Forest Supervisor

Tricia O'Connor, Deputy Forest Supervisor



THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
MORE THAN A PLACE TO VISIT ~ IT'S WHERE WE LIVE

ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING, A NEW WAY TO OFFER TIMBER SALES

The Tongass National Forest is changing the way we do business in the timber program. Traditional timber sales focus strictly on timber harvest, with money returning to the U.S. Treasury upon receipt from a contractor. The Tongass has begun to employ a new tool, called a stewardship contract. With stewardship contracts, the money generated from a timber sale can be reinvested in different forest management projects in the area, thereby generating new economic opportunities for Southeast Alaska communities.

A series of collaborative meetings took place in May, June, and July. The workshops helped develop the Tonka Stewardship Proposal that included what the community saw as potential projects—what is possible on the ground as well as what is needed. From that proposal, the Tonka Integrated Resource Timber Contract (IRTC) was drafted and awarded in September 2012.



Through the use of the agency's Stewardship Contracting Authority, monies generated from timber sold in the Tonka IRTC can be retained for other projects on the Petersburg Ranger District, such as restoration and enhancement activities. This work, conducted with local business (contractors), helps the Forest Service get critical work done on the ground while meeting local and rural community needs.

“We see this decision as a milestone in the broader effort to support local community economies in Southeast Alaska. Not only will we be supplying the timber industry with wood they need to support existing jobs, but we will be working with residents to see what opportunities we might develop together.”

Based on feedback from the public workshops, forest users and stakeholders are particularly interested in resolving fish passage problems through culverts (“red pipes”) as well as enhancement of deer habitat in young growth areas.



FOREST HIGHWAY 43 ROAD PROJECT IMPROVES SAFETY AND FISH PASSAGE

Through the 2012 field season, workers were hired to upgrade and realign Tongass Forest Highway 43, converting the gravel road to a two-lane, paved highway with a 35-mph design. The road is located 68 miles northwest of Ketchikan on Prince of Wales Island. The six-day, 10-hours-per-day work week provided needed jobs for the island residents, while the road improvements increased their safety.

The goal of the project is to pave and widen 12.5 miles from the Coffman Cove Road junction north to the junction with Forest Service Road 2058 near the village of Naukati. Workers will replace old culverts with fish passage culverts, improving access for fish to travel to upstream spawning and rearing areas.



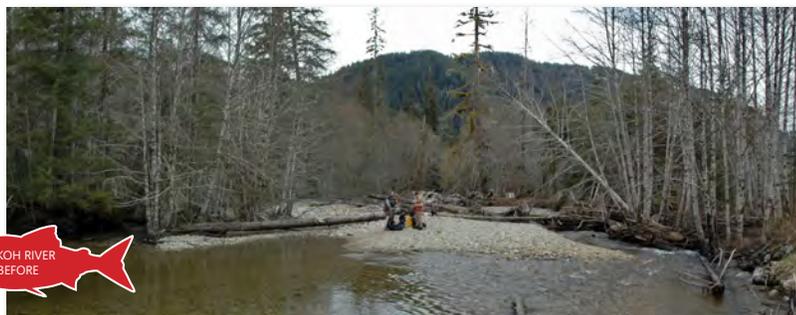
Crews moved building materials with wheel barrows to create rock steps and pools inside of a 60 inch culvert in allowing fish better access to upstream spawning and rearing areas.

ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

RESTORING SITKOH AND TWELVEMILE CREEK Restoration is part of a transition toward sustainability

The Tongass National Forest restored sections of two large-scale critical habitat watersheds in 2012. The Sitkoh River (Chichagof Island) and Twelvemile Creek (Prince of Wales Island) watersheds are productive areas for fish and wildlife. The watersheds are key salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char producers. Wildlife species include black bear, grey wolf, Sitka black-tailed deer, beavers, and a wide variety of smaller mammals and birds.

Past logging, road building, and stream cleaning activities in the watersheds occurred under the less protective timber harvest regulations of the 1960s and 1970s. Streambank logging removed future sources of “large wood” for the stream critical to fish habitat, and remaining in-stream wood was rapidly decaying, leaving unstable stream banks, fewer pools, vulnerable spawning gravels and wide, shallow stream channels. These conditions reduced habitat for young fish and decreased spawning success and survival during low stream-flow periods. Some roads also disrupted natural water flow patterns, further reducing aquatic habitat. These degraded habitats, in addition to thick areas of young growth in the upland forest, were likely limiting the production of fish and wildlife populations in the area.



SITKOH RIVER BEFORE



SITKOH RIVER AFTER



TWELVEMILE CREEK BEFORE



TWELVEMILE CREEK AFTER

The Sitkoh River project reconnected 1,800 feet of high value salmon spawning and rearing habitat that had diverted down an old logging road. Restoration efforts focused on returning the river to its original channel and restoring its natural function through pool creation and bank stabilization. Other work included stabilizing roads, removing artificial barriers to fish passage, and thinning hundreds of acres of thick young-growth trees to improve forest and watershed health and wildlife habitat.

Funding from the Forest Service, the Sustainable Salmon Fund administered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Trout Unlimited, and staffing from the Sitka Conservation Society made the Sitkoh River watershed restoration project possible.

The Twelvemile Creek project included 28 miles of fish-bearing streams and 59 miles of additional streams—covering an area just under 20 square miles. The project strengthens salmon and steelhead populations, boosts recreation opportunities, provides jobs, and bolsters the local economy.

The Twelvemile Creek story is similar to the one for Sitkoh River: impacts from outdated logging practices continue to affect the watershed today. Crews carried out the first phase of the project by thinning dense young-growth forests to improve wildlife habitat and promote larger streamside trees, placed wood in streams to stabilize banks and improve fish habitat, removed invasive vegetation, stabilized roads, and converted several stretches to off highway vehicle (OHV) trails.

The Forest Service partnered with the National Forest Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and Prince of Wales Island communities to complete the project.

“Whether we are restoring salmon habitat or building trails, these **partnerships** are critical in our efforts to restore long-term **productivity** and health to key areas on the Tongass. Twelvemile is a very **important** part of the larger restoration effort we’re committed to carrying out.”

The Tongass National Forest is a member of the Tongass Futures Roundtable subcommittee of the Haa Aaní Committee. Haa Aaní seeks to identify innovative ways to stabilize and sustain the economy of Southeast Alaska to meet the economic, social and cultural needs of our rural communities.

THE TONGASS AS A NATIVE PLACE

Alaska Natives have fished, hunted and lived on lands now established as the Tongass National Forest since time immemorial. The forest is the home of the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian people, whose cultural identities and subsistence lifestyles are linked to the forest ecosystems. The Forest Service and tribes in Southeast Alaska share a mutual interest in seeing these lands sustainably managed long into the future.

In 2012, the Tongass National Forest worked with Alaska Natives on several projects for the benefit of local communities. For example, the Forest Service collaborated with the Ketchikan Indian Community in the development of programs that will demonstrate the Tongass National Forest as a Native Place. The Ketchikan-Misty Fiords district ranger invited the Ketchikan Indian Community, the Organized Village of Saxman, and the Metlatkatla Indian Community to propose Southeast Alaska Discovery Center programs.

Staff on the Wrangell Ranger District partnered with the Wrangell Cooperative Association (WCA) in the restoration of the Chief Shakes Tribal Longhouse. The district provided timber, carving materials, and funding through the Secure Rural Schools Act. A carving shed was built to be used in making new components for the longhouse and for future carving activities. The shed can also be used as a hands-on classroom to teach Native youth and others about Native culture and traditional carving methods.

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At the Auke Village Recreation Area, the Juneau Ranger District collaborated with the Aak'w Kwaan and the Douglas Indian Association to seek grants and other opportunities for the restoration of the Auke Village totem pole and interpretive signage honoring the Aak'w Kwaan and the importance of this traditional site. They planned, as funding permits, to make much needed improvements to access, parking and recreational use areas.



Angoon - Tribal Watershed Crew Benefits Environment and Community

In 2012, the Tongass National Forest and Angoon Community Association (ACA) teamed up to form the Angoon Tribal Watershed Crew. Under a five-year agreement, the crew will accomplish work on Admiralty Island that maintains, improves, and restores watershed conditions in critical areas. In turn, the community will benefit from local employment opportunities, job training and career building skills. The agreement is funded through the Secure Rural Schools Act.

The four-person young adult crew and crew leader, all Angoon residents, worked with Forest Service personnel in the field to gain technical skills and learn safety protocols. By the end of the season, the crew had worked for 14 weeks removing invasive plants, repairing eroded trails, inventorying and monitoring resources and restoring a stream. Both the Forest Service and Angoon Community Association were happy with the success of the first year and are excited to continue this partnership.



Kasaan Whale House

Climate Change

As climatologists predict wetter weather over the long term for Southeast Alaska, Forest Service managers ask, "What should we be doing to prepare for possible changes and impacts to the forest?" One effort undertaken in 2012 started to answer this question.

In May, the Forest Service invited stakeholders from around the region to start a conversation about climate change—what it might look like in Southeast Alaska and its impacts on the Tongass National Forest. The group, which consisted of community members, tribal representatives, business owners, environmental groups, and other agency representatives, spent two days considering the importance of the Tongass to the people of Southeast Alaska and the biggest potential threats to the forest due to climate change.

After lively debate and conversation, the group voted on their recommendations for the agency's priorities concerning natural resources and the effects of climate change, with special emphasis on water and snow issues.





Adapted from a story first appearing in the *SourDough News* by Corree Delabrué, District Interpreter, Wrangell Ranger District.

Find more of what happened on the Tongass in 2012. *SourDough News* is a collection of stories from Alaska's National Forests. The 2012 archives are at: <http://go.usa.gov/2y5e>.

Wrangell Scouts Lend a Hand - "Pack it in, pack it out."

Wrangell's Boy Scout Troop 40 put into practice Leave No Trace principles on Zarembo Island. The scouts had teamed up with the Forest Service to undertake a clean-up of Roosevelt Harbor.

The Wrangell Ranger District arranged for a local charter boat operator to take seven scouts to Zarembo. The scouts were excited entering the beautiful Roosevelt Harbor, but became upset seeing the amount of trash left behind by previous recreational users.

So they got to work. After setting up camp for the two night trip, the boys collected everything from large boards and old tarps to what seemed like thousands of tiny scraps of plastic. In the end, each scout picked up about 100 pounds of garbage, and together they collected 45 gallons of aluminum cans for recycling.

The Zarembo clean-up turned out to be just the beginning of their stewardship activities. As word spread about the scouts' work on Zarembo, they were asked to join the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, the Sitka Conservation Society, and the Forest Service on a week-long project up the Stikine River. This time, the focus was on managing invasive weeds in the Twins Lakes Recreation Area. The scouts were shown how to identify different invasive plants and learned about the negative effects they have on the river's ecosystem. The group focused their efforts on one of the river's biggest offenders, reed canary grass, an exotic grass that can dominate riparian areas and outcompete the river's native plants.

In addition to helping the Forest Service and conservation groups clean and manage these public lands, these trips also gave the scouts the opportunity to explore and experience the forest in their own backyard. In between clean-ups, the scouts fished off the dock at Zarembo, swam, and searched for frogs at Twin Lakes.

These projects have sparked, in the scouts, a sense of ownership in their national forest lands. Their list of future projects is growing. The scouts have adopted the Twin Lakes Cabin and plan to make future visits to continue managing the area's invasive plants. They are also planning a return trip to Zarembo in the spring to remove the garbage that was hidden by this summer's foliage.



Photo credit: Sitka Conservation Society





Recreation Fees Support Sites

The recreation site fees collected by the Tongass National Forest are important to the operation of many of our facilities. Fees collected for using cabins, campgrounds, shelters, visitor centers and bear viewing sites directly support operating, maintaining and staffing these sites. The Tongass uses many of the fees paid by guides and outfitters to offset costs for the trails and facilities that they use and to create brochures, interpretive displays and programs.

The Tongass recognizes the importance of getting feedback from outfitters and guides and the general public who pay these fees. In 2012, the Tongass Fee Board opened its annual meeting to the general public and invited their questions and comments, and created a webpage to provide additional information, at <http://go.usa.gov/2y5Q>. The Forest Service will continue to incorporate public input into management of recreation sites on the Tongass.

Recreation Cabins 2012 Updates

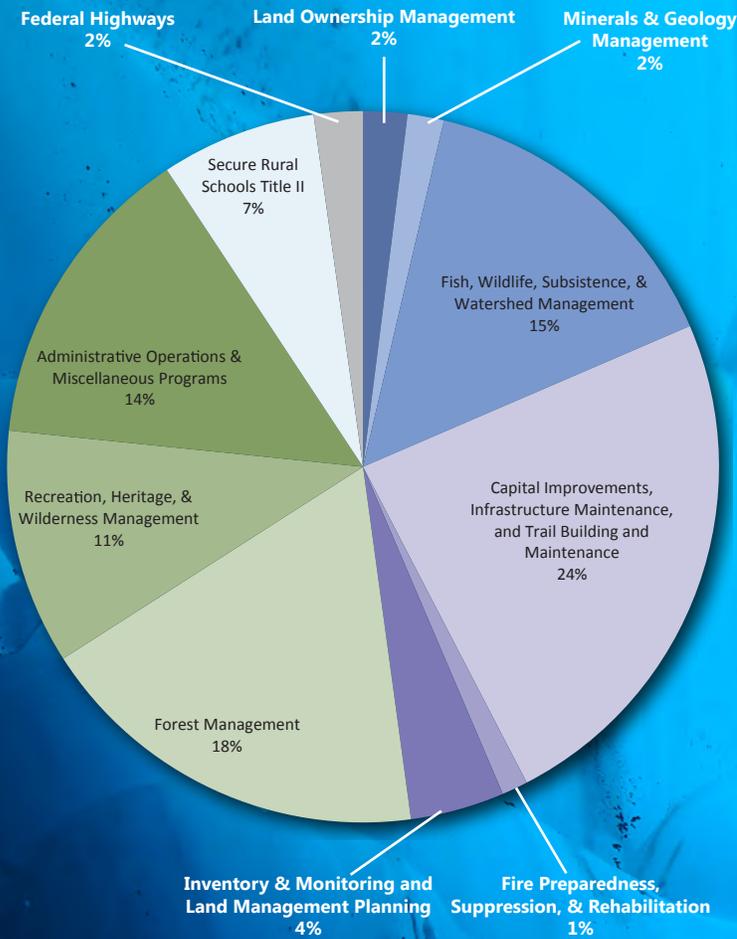
One of the most valued services provided by the Tongass is the backcountry cabin program. The forest maintains nearly 200 saltwater to alpine cabins and shelters across Southeast Alaska. The Hoonah Ranger District added a new cabin at Kennel Creek.

Occasionally, Southeast weather wears down a cabin enough that it needs to be completely replaced. The Wrangell Ranger District's Anan Bay Cabin was replaced in 2012 using yellow cedar harvested from the Buckdance Madder Timber Sale on the Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District. The cabin was constructed in a heated warehouse in Ketchikan over the winter, then moved to its permanent site. The cabin is popular with wildlife watchers, who visit nearby Anan Creek Wildlife Observatory to view bears and bald eagles fishing for salmon during spawning season.

The Kadake Bay Cabin (Petersburg Ranger District), the Lake Eva Cabin (Sitka Ranger District) and White Sulphur Springs Cabin (Sitka Ranger District) were also replaced.

Anan Bay Cabin

Forest Finances



Tongass Budget: \$63,918,294

Program	Dollars
Secure Rural Schools Title II	\$4,514,390
Land Ownership Management	\$1,281,965
Minerals & Geology Management	\$1,052,026
Fish, Wildlife, Subsistence, & Watershed Management (+ Thinning)	\$9,506,124
Capital Improvements, Infrastructure Maintenance, and Trail Building & Maintenance	\$15,256,120
Fire Preparedness, Suppression, & Rehabilitation	\$755,810
Inventory & Monitoring and Land Management Planning	\$2,730,143
Forest Management	\$11,564,503
Recreation, Heritage, & Wilderness Management	\$6,832,151
Administrative Operations and Miscellaneous Programs	\$9,005,218
Federal Highways	\$1,419,843
TONGASS BUDGET TOTAL	\$63,918,294

Tongass Revenue: \$6,706,321

Program	Dollars
Cooperative Work - Other (Roads & Other Co-op Deposits)	\$177,678
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - Outfitter/Guides & Collection Support	\$1,831,669
Timber (Salvage Sale)	\$239,064
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - Rec Sites & Collection Support	\$963,989
Timber (Knutson-Vandenburg Earnings)	\$715,740
Timber (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$905,608
Employee Quarters	\$479,778
Land Use (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$364,639
Recreation (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$111,616
Commercial Film - Local Admin Unit & Collection Support	\$14,215
Power (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$96,645
Gifts, Donations & Bequests	\$14,914
Cost Recovery Lands, Major & Minor Projects	\$22,314
Recreation Fees, Forest Service - National Pass Sales & Collection Support	\$2,197
Minerals (All Service Receipts - NFS Lands)	\$270,755
TONGASS REVENUE TOTAL	\$6,706,321

An "integrated resource project" on the Tongass often draws from several different budget areas. For example, a project might include a timber component to supply timber to local mills (forest management dollars); a pre-commercial thinning component to improve forest habitat (wildlife dollars); in-stream restoration to enhance fish habitat (fisheries dollars); and culvert replacement and road drainage improvement to restore stream flows and water clarity (infrastructure maintenance dollars). Ultimately this kind of multi-faceted approach allows managers to pool and share resources, increasing efficiency and encouraging a holistic perspective to management.

Find the complete accessible FY2012 financial report online at: <http://go.usa.gov/2yXm>.



TONGASS FACTS

The Tongass National Forest is the largest national forest in the U.S.—roughly the size of West Virginia.

More than 2.3 million people from around the world visit the Tongass each year.

The Tongass National Forest is the part of the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world. Temperate rainforests accumulate and store more organic matter than any other type of forest.

There are more brown bears on Admiralty Island than in the entire lower 48 states combined.

More wild salmon are produced on the Tongass than all other national forests combined. Each year 50 million Tongass salmon make up the majority of Southeast Alaska's commercial catch.

More than 400 species of terrestrial and marine wildlife, fish and shellfish inhabit the Tongass. Southeast Alaska has no land-based threatened or endangered species.



The sheer extent of wilderness is one of the most defining features of the Tongass National Forest: at 5,756,000 acres, 19 wilderness areas account for approximately one third of the forest.

Unlike most places in the Lower 48, it is wind, and not fire, that most disturbs the forest, sometimes toppling acres of trees at a time.

Average precipitation varies from 162 inches a year in Ketchikan to 26 inches a year in Skagway.

FOREST SUPERVISOR'S OFFICES

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907-772-4636 (TTY)

204 Siginaka Way
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907-747-4335 (TTY)

VISITOR CENTERS

Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center

8510 Mendenhall Loop Road
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Southeast Alaska Discovery Center

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RANGER DISTRICTS

Admiralty National Monument

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Juneau Ranger District

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