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Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose

The Forest Plan guides all natural resource management activities and establishes management standards and guidelines for the Tongass National Forest. It describes resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for different kinds of resource management.

The Forest Plan embodies the provisions of the National Forest Management Act, the implementing regulations, and other guiding documents. The multiple-use goals and objectives, and the Land Use Prescriptions and standards and guidelines, constitute a statement of the Forest Plan's management direction. However, the projected outputs and rates of implementation are dependent on the annual budget process and other factors.

This Forest Plan amends the current Tongass Land Management Plan, which was approved in 1997 and incorporates the 2003 SEIS for Roadless Area Evaluation for Wilderness Recommendations and 26 non-significant amendments. It entirely replaces the 1997 Plan, as of the effective date of this revised Plan.

Relationship to Other Documents

This Forest Plan sets forth in detail the direction for managing the land and resources of the Tongass National Forest. The Forest Plan is a result of extensive analysis, which is addressed in the accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS discusses the planning process and the analysis procedures used to amend the Forest Plan, describes and analyzes the alternatives considered in detail, and discusses how the public issues identified during the process helped shape these alternatives.

Specific activities and projects will be planned and implemented to carry out the direction in this Forest Plan. The Forest will perform environmental analyses on most of these projects and activities. This subsequent environmental analysis will use the data and analysis in the Forest Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Environmental analysis of projects will be tiered to the Forest Plan FEIS.

All future plans and administrative activities will be based on the Forest Plan (or the Plan may be amended - see Chapter 5). Most existing resource management plans for the Tongass National Forest are already a part of, and consistent with, this revised Forest Plan. Access and Travel Management Plans and other site specific plans will be used to designate appropriate roads, trails and areas for Off-Highway Vehicles in accordance with 36 CFR 212, 251, and 261 – Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use. The Forest is designated closed to OHV's except for areas specifically designated as open for OHV use.

Plan Organization

What is Forest Planning? Let's compare it to something that is familiar: land use zoning for a community. In a community, certain areas are zoned for commercial uses (stores), industrial uses (factories), and residential areas (where homes may be built). Each of these "zones" has certain uses that may occur there, and others

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- Deleted:** Public issues were an integral part of developing the revised Forest Plan.
- Deleted:** Schedules of some activities and projects are included in Appendix L. These are dynamic and may be updated frequently.
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- Deleted:** Several Wilderness Plans were developed since the 1979 Forest Plan. Direction in the existing approved Wilderness plans which is consistent with this Forest Plan is hereby incorporated. Prior approved plans include those for the Stikine-LeConte, Admiralty (Kootznoowoo), South Baranof, Endicott River, and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wildernesses. Further direction for Wilderness management is contained in the Regional Supplement to Forest Service Manual 2320.
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- Deleted:** The Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan for the Juneau Area (Juneau Ranger District, November 1985) is incorporated here by reference. The Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area Management Plan (1996) is also incorporated by reference.

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that may not. Many different uses may apply to the same zone. Some zoning requirements may apply only to specific areas of a zone.

In Forest Planning, we call the zoning process "*allocation or land allocation.*" Certain areas of the Forest are allocated (zoned) to *Land Use Designations* for different uses. The allocation of a Land Use Designation is applicable to most of the Tongass where management and the public develop these applications in a collaborative process. However, allocations that are congressionally designated, such as wilderness or LUD II areas, must be managed in accordance to the direction provided through their enabling legislation. The description of the uses to which the land may be put and the activities which may occur there is called a *management prescription*. Each management prescription gives general direction on what may occur within the area allocated to the corresponding Land Use Designation, the standards for accomplishing each activity, and the guidelines on how to go about accomplishing the standards. These are called the "*Land Use Designation Standards and Guidelines.*" Some of these standards and guidelines may be common to many areas of the Forest. These are called *Forest-wide Standards & Guidelines*.

Standards and guidelines are designed so that all activities are integrated to meet land allocation objectives. Standards and guidelines represent minimum achievement levels, but do not limit achievements: higher objectives may always be attained. For instance, if a land use prescription allows activities to visually dominate the landscape (*Scenic Integrity Objective: Low*), then activities which do not visually dominate are always acceptable (*Scenic Integrity Objectives: High and Moderate*). Standards and guidelines are also intended to be used in conjunction with National and Regional policies, and standards and guidelines contained in Forest Service manuals and handbooks.

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The locations of Land Use Designation boundaries (as indicated on the Forest Plan map) are approximate due to the map scale used, and the programmatic nature of the allocations. Some boundary adjustments may be necessary as specific projects are implemented under the Forest Plan. These adjustments will normally be made through insignificant Forest Plan amendments.

The Forest Plan is organized into several chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 1 explains the components of Forest Plan management direction, and the priority amongst this direction, gives a brief description of the Tongass, and summarizes the current management situation. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 present the major components of management direction for the Forest. These are described below.

Chapter 5 discusses Forest Plan implementation, and the process used to amend or revise a Forest Plan. Chapter 6 is the monitoring and evaluation plan. Chapter 7 is a glossary.

Several appendices are also included, including the timber suitability determination (Appendix A) and a discussion of research and information needs (Appendix B).

A discussion of how the Forest Plan revision process addressed the public issues, and the management concerns ("need for change"), is included in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

Forest Plan Management Direction

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the Forest Plan present the majority of the direction for managing the Tongass National Forest. The management direction of this plan conforms with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and the Alaska Regional Guide. The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (Chapter 6), and the determination of Timber Resource Land Suitability (Appendix A), also provide important direction.

The primary management direction for the Forest consists of the following integrated components:

Forest Multiple-Use Goals (Chapter 2) - The multiple-use and other goals established during the planning process to guide Forest management.

Forest Management Objectives (Chapter 2) - These include narrative objectives for specific resources and the levels of goods and services (resource outputs) that are anticipated during the first decade of Forest Plan implementation.

Management Prescriptions (Chapter 3) - Each Land Use Designation has a management prescription. Each prescription includes goals, objectives, and a desired future condition, and management practices, standards, and guidelines by resource. The geographic areas allocated to each Land Use Designation for the Forest Plan are displayed on the Forest Plan map.

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Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines (Chapter 4) - These are the standards and guidelines that apply to all, or most, areas of the Forest. Each management prescription includes a list of those that apply to that Land Use Designation.

Together, these components of Forest direction, along with the Land Use Designation map, establish a management framework that governs the location, design, and scheduling of all Forest management activities. Within the management framework, project-level planning is undertaken to achieve Forest Plan implementation.

Priority of Direction

Every effort has been made to achieve consistency between the components of management direction just described, and between Forest Plan direction and higher-level direction (e.g., law). However, conflicting or contradictory direction is still possible. If a conflict or discrepancy between direction should occur, the following priority among direction will apply:

1. Higher-level direction.
2. Within the components of Forest Plan management direction, the management prescription standards and guidelines for each Land Use Designation take precedence over the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines applied to that same designation, should any conflicts occur. Any summaries of these standards and guidelines (such as in the map legends) are not considered direction.
3. For all projects and activities considered, the standards and guidelines for each management prescription will be used, regardless of the levels of outputs or numbers of projects achieved, and regardless of actual budget allocations. Standards, which can usually be identified by words such as

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"must" or "will," are mandatory requirements or minimums which must be met. Project-level analysis may determine that additional requirements beyond these minimum are necessary. Guidelines, the majority of the direction, are not absolute requirements, but ways of achieving the standards or meeting other needs of the resource.

One purpose of monitoring and evaluation (see Chapter 6) is to assure that management direction is being carried out, and that the outputs and schedules are being achieved. If monitoring shows continued conflicts or problems in implementing the management direction, then a Forest Plan amendment may be necessary.

Forest Location and Description

The 16.8 million acre Tongass National Forest is located in Southeast Alaska, a part of the Alexander Archipelago, and encompasses about seven percent of the State's total land area. The Tongass extends from Dixon Entrance in the south to Yakutat in the North, and is bordered on the east by Canada and on the west by the Gulf of Alaska. It extends approximately 500 miles north to south, and approximately 120 miles east to west at its widest point. Figure 1-1 is a vicinity map of the Tongass.

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The Tongass includes a narrow mainland strip of steep, rugged mountains and icefields, and over 1,000 offshore islands. Together, the islands and mainland equal nearly 11,000 miles of meandering shoreline, with numerous bays and coves. A system of seaways separate the many islands and provides a protected waterway called the Inside Passage. Federal lands comprise about 95 percent of Southeast Alaska, with about 80 percent in the Tongass National Forest (and most of the rest in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve). The remaining land is held in State, Native and local community private ownerships.

Most of the area of the Tongass is wild and undeveloped. Approximately 70,800 people live in the towns, communities, and villages of Southeast Alaska, most of which are located on islands or along the mainland coasts. Only four of Southeast Alaska's 32 communities met the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of urban (population greater than 2,500) in 2005 and only eight had populations greater than 1,000 persons. Most of these communities are surrounded by, or adjacent to, National Forest land. Just three towns are connected to other parts of the mainland by road: Haines and Skagway to the north, and Hyder to the south.

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The communities of Southeast Alaska depend on the Tongass National Forest in various ways, including employment in wood products, commercial fishing and fish processing, recreation, tourism, and mining and mineral development. Many residents also depend on subsistence hunting and fishing to meet their basic needs. In addition, natural amenities, subsistence resources, and recreation activities associated with the Tongass National Forest form an important part of the quality of life for many residents of Southeast Alaska. There is very little private land in the region to provide these resources. Appropriate management of the Tongass' natural resources is, therefore, extremely important for local communities and the overall regional economy.

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Because of its immense size, The Tongass National Forest is divided into three one Administrative Areas, each with its own Forest Supervisor: the Chatham Area with its Supervisor's Office at Sitka, the Stikine Area with its Supervisor's Office at Petersburg, and the Ketchikan Area with its Supervisor's Office in Ketchikan. There are nine Ranger Districts, with offices in Yakutat, Juneau, Hoonah, Sitka, Petersburg, Wrangell, Thorne Bay, Craig, and Ketchikan. There are also two National Monuments, Admiralty Island and Misty Fiords, with offices in Juneau and Ketchikan. Re-write.

The Tongass National Forest is managed as one Administrative Area. There are nine Ranger Districts, with offices in Yakutat, Juneau, Hoonah, Sitka, Petersburg, Wrangell, Thorne Bay, Craig and Ketchikan. There are two National Monuments on the Tongass National Forest. The Admiralty National Monument is managed through a Monument Ranger co-located at the Juneau Ranger District. The Misty Fjords National Monument is managed by the District Ranger who also oversees the ranger district in Ketchikan.

**Figure 1-1
Tongass National Forest Vicinity Map**

(Not displayed in Web version)

Introduction

Summary of the "AMS"

The supply and demand conditions for major resources of the Forest was evaluated during the "analysis of the management situation" (AMS) in 1988 and 1989, and reevaluated after passage of the Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) (November 1990). The maximum potentials for supplying selected major resources, the actual supplies available under the [1997 Forest Plan, as amended](#), and the anticipated demands for these resources, were determined. These resources are timber (first-decade timber harvest), fish (anadromous fish), recreation, wildlife (old-growth habitat), and wilderness (potential from existing unroaded areas). Chapter 3 of the [DEIS will present an in-depth evaluation of supply and demand for these and other resources](#), and also discusses opportunities for the use and development of resources. Following is a brief summary [of the preliminary numbers](#).

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Supply

Resource potential (supply) is a general indication of how much of a particular resource might be available. The maximum resource supply potentials, subject only to meeting resource protection requirements, were determined for each resource separately (since they could not all be achieved simultaneously).

- A maximum first-decade average annual timber harvest level of approximately 700 million board feet.
- A commercial fish habitat capability increased to about 115 million pounds per year during the first decade.
- A recreation capacity (including tourism) of about 4.9 million Recreation Visitor Days annually.
- A maximum of 8.7 million acres of old-growth forest retained.
- A maximum of 9.45 million acres of unroaded lands that could be designated as wilderness.

The production potentials for these same resources under the [1997 Plan](#) were:

- A maximum average annual timber harvest level of [267 million board feet](#).
- A commercial fish habitat capability of about 115 million pounds per year.
- A recreation capacity (including tourism) of 4.9 million Recreation Visitor Days annually.
- A maximum of 8.7 million acres of old-growth forest that could be retained.
- A maximum of 9.45 million acres of unroaded lands that could be designated as wilderness.

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Demand

Projections of resource demand give an indication of how much of a resource might be needed or desired. A few key points are summarized here.

- Fish - The demand for commercial fish (about 95 percent of total demand) is expected to generally exceed current potentials for all species.
- Recreation - Recreation use, including tourism, is predicted to increase over the next decade, but will remain well below the Forest's current capacity of 4.9 million Recreation Visitor Days.
- Wildlife - Hunting demand for old-growth-related game species is expected to increase over the next decade.
- Timber - Market demand is expected to [be similar to the current demand, unless an additional lumber mill and/or pulp mill are built in Southeast Alaska](#).

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- e. Wilderness - Additional Wilderness was considered during debate on the Tongass Timber Reform Act, which added 0.3 million acres of Wilderness to the Tongass (for a total of 5.8 million acres). The ROD for the SEIS for the Roadless Area Evaluation for Wilderness Recommendations (2003) determined that there was no need for additional wilderness on the Forest. The ROD also found that, because the majority of the Forest will remain undeveloped, there will continue to be opportunities to designate additional wilderness in the future if the demand increases.

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Use and Development Opportunities

- a. Fish - Opportunities to increase anadromous fish production through habitat improvement (both rehabilitation and enhancement) exist throughout the Forest.
- b. Recreation - Opportunities to increase roaded recreation and tourism use, and access to both developed and dispersed recreation areas, exist primarily in development LUDs. Opportunities to provide for unroaded recreation and tourism through non-timber designations exist in the 9.45 million acres of unroaded lands outside Wilderness. Opportunities to increase semi-primitive motorized uses are limited. Some opportunities to develop new recreation sites or facilities may come as there are improved transportation links between communities or where there are opportunities for partnerships.
- c. Wildlife - Opportunities to improve wildlife habitat associated with old-growth forests are limited to the management of second-growth timber to achieve old-growth characteristics. Opportunities to maintain existing old-growth forest exist on approximately 8.7 million acres. There are opportunities to improve wildlife habitat in previously harvested areas that now support young-growth forests by implementing silvicultural techniques, such as variable density thinning on both suitable and unsuitable lands.
- d. Timber - Opportunities for the management of the timber resource for wood production are limited to the 2.4 million acres of suitable and available timber lands outside Wilderness or other legislated areas. Opportunities to increase wood production on these lands through thinnings or related practices are limited, since most of the suitable forest land is currently in an old-growth condition. There is an opportunity to increase production on approximately 250,000 acres of older young-growth through thinnings.

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