

Forest Plan Revision Vision

This paper shares ideas for a Tongass Forest Plan Revision under the 2012 planning rule. The overarching goal is to establish a shared vision and set of standards and guidelines for Tongass Forest management that is supported by tribal, timber, conservation, recreation, tourism, hunting and fishing user groups, and with that support, provide a sustainable land stewardship approach that can provide stable economic, cultural and ecological conditions within a political environment that is seeing more and more severe pendulum swings. Some key objectives to reaching this goal include:

- Provide a permanent solution to the roadless rule debate
- Provide a reliable and sustainable supply of young growth timber for the timber industry
- Improve the conservation strategy through updated approaches to old-growth forest conservation, salmon habitat stewardship and winter deer habitat enhancement
- Institutionalize an approach to forest management that centers on rural and tribal community vitality

The document includes:

- a high-level **assessment and need for change** that emphasizes indigenous and rural stewardship, deer habitat, salmon habitat, recreation & tourism, and timber;
- a conceptual design for a **management area map**, and;
- a set of example **management directions and standards and guidelines** that address the need for change.

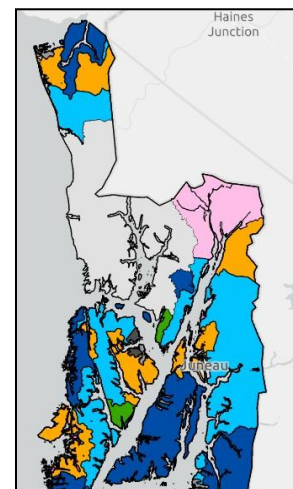
Assessment and Need for Change

This section will include a succinct assessment of the conditions of five focal areas: indigenous stewardship, salmon habitat, deer habitat, timber and recreation and tourism. The assessments will include an explanation of how the current conditions of each focal area relate to past and present forest management. These assessments will provide the foundation for a clear need for change, if warranted, for each focal area. A more specific version of something like this:

- We need to better prioritize tribal and rural communities
- We need to have no doubt that we are doing all we can to produce wild salmon
- We need more deer and other wildlife in community accessible roaded areas
- We need more and better managed recreation and tourism infrastructure
- We need more sizable and reliable timber supply

Management Area Map

This is a conceptual design for developing a management area map that would replace the current Land Use Designations or LUDs and provide the framework for incorporating the needs for change identified above in the form of management directions and standards and guidelines. It includes only four management areas:



1. Wilderness
2. Community Forest
3. Remote Roaded
4. Remote Roadless

You can explore an example of what this map might look like online [here](#).

The recipe for the map is described below and was applied to Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAA) but could also be applied to VCUs or HUCs:



Dark blue areas are designated **Wilderness** and would continue to be managed as such.



Orange areas are WAAs that are accessible by open roads and short boat rides from an *incorporated city* in southeast Alaska. These areas are mapped here as a **Community Forest**.



Green areas are WAAs with open roads but that are not easily accessible by local communities. These areas are mapped here as **Remote Roaded**.



Light blue areas are WAAs without open roads and are not easily accessible by anyone. These areas are mapped as **Remote Roadless**.

Standards and Guidelines

Forest-wide Non-Wilderness

Management direction for all non-Wilderness areas in the Tongass is to maintain or increase the productivity and resilience of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, support a diverse suite of economic opportunities for both local and non-local businesses and support indigenous cultural values and vitality through respect for sacred sites, cultivation of traditional foods and providing access to red cedar.

All S&G examples provided below would be maintained at the watershed scale (e.g. VCU).

Timber

- Thin all young-growth with a “PCT” treatment prior to canopy closure if feasible.
- Use a 75-year rotation age for young growth sustained yield calculations -no CMAI.
- No more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of young growth (within a watershed) may be harvested in a 25-year period.
- Use a 300-year rotation for old-growth harvest. Watersheds which have already been cut or overcut to this standard would be not-suitable for additional OG harvest.
- Allow for “co-intent” commercial timber projects that improve fish and wildlife habitat (max $\frac{1}{3}$ basal area) in beach and stream buffers.

Recreation & Tourism

- Something about blending recreation and tourism use of past/present timber sale areas.
- Something about legacy road systems no longer considered viable for timber.

- Something about investing in infrastructure that is tailored to both private and commercial use and scaled for cottage, medium and large-scale operators.

Fish & Wildlife

- Redesign OGR system and allow for co-intent commercial timber projects that improve fish and wildlife habitat (max $\frac{1}{3}$ basal area).
- Utilize a commercial thin ($\frac{1}{3}$ basal area) at age 75 in top $\frac{1}{3}$ of deer winter habitat.
- 200-meter buffers on class 1 streams and floodplains. 100-meter buffers on class 2 streams that feed class 1 streams. 50-meter buffers on class 2 and class 3 streams.
- Maintain at least $\frac{1}{3}$ of each watershed's lower elevation area (lower $\frac{1}{3}$) in old-growth conditions for productivity, biodiversity and connectivity.
- Constrain development to maintain viable populations of endemics.

Indigenous Stewardship

- Use Tribally approved traditional territory maps to determine tribal authority for approval of all development activities and to develop sacred site management plans.
- Seek to meet tribal needs for cultural wood supply in perpetuity and prioritize access to totem and canoe quality red cedar logs for tribal governments in the region.

Wilderness

Management direction for Wilderness areas would generally remain unchanged. Specific standards and guidelines could be developed to the degree that is allowable by law to:

Timber

- Provide support for "personal use" tree harvest and cultural wood harvest in LUD 2 Wilderness areas.

Recreation & Tourism

- Prioritize small group Wilderness experience.
- Increase recreation and tourism infrastructure that supports subsistence and commercial activities but keep the commercial tourism use rate at the lowest level in the Tongass.

Fish & Wildlife

- Allow fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects to take place as long as they abide by ANILCA rules.
- Increase monitoring efforts to establish reference data on important terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Indigenous Stewardship

- Allow for greater maintenance of subsistence/traditional way of life and cultural use infrastructure, such as smoke houses, warming shelters, or any other Tribally prioritized development that promotes traditional cultural use within the area.

Community Forest

In these areas we would adhere to forest wide guidelines for fish, wildlife, timber and recreation -AND- **management direction** would prioritize local benefits from active forest management through formal collaboratives (RAC type entities?) that include tribal governments, city governments, ANCs, conservation groups, industry groups and other partners. Example standards and guidelines might include:

- Work with local communities to identify high priority locations for maintaining and adding to existing roads (logical extensions) for transportation and energy infrastructure.
- Work with local communities to identify high priority areas for maintaining roadless conditions.
- Prioritize the use of stewardship contracting and GNAs with local entities for timber, recreation and habitat projects.
- Retain receipts from timber operations to fund community priorities for subsistence, recreation and other poorly funded project types.
- Round log exports are discouraged but allowed if local mill demand has already been met and local RAC approves.
- **Most red cedar must be processed within southeast Alaska and prioritized for meeting demand for cultural uses before commercial use.**
- Appropriately scale contracts and use best value criteria to support local business participation in maintenance and development project implementation.
- Incentivize participation by NGO's whose mission is to develop local stewardship capacity.
- Support partnerships between commercial tourism operators and local organizations for appropriately scaled tourism development.

Remote Road Accessible

In these areas we would adhere to forest wide guidelines for fish, wildlife, timber and recreation -AND- **management direction** would prioritize larger scale commercial activities. Example management standards and guidelines might include:

- Exclude these areas from the Roadless Rule
- Round log export is allowed but we incentivize local processing and/or sales to local mills with management plan to assure that all large diameter red cedar are supplied as cultural use monumental trees for totems and canoes, confirming that this is the highest and best use.
- Allow mid-size cruise ship shore excursions at the highest reasonable rate in the Tongass.

Remote Not Road Accessible

In these areas we would adhere to forest wide guidelines for fish, wildlife, timber and recreation -AND- **management direction** would prioritize maintaining a more "natural setting". Example standards and guidelines might include:

- Allow road re-construction for young growth timber harvest and allow "logical extensions" of existing roads for regional transportation and energy development but otherwise maintain the roadless character of these areas.
- Increase recreation and tourism infrastructure that supports subsistence and commercial activities.
- Round log export of young growth is allowed but we incentivize local processing and/or sales to local mills.
- Allow mid-size cruise ship shore excursions at a moderate rate in the Tongass.

Working Draft - please comment and share ideas