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February 2003



# Tongass Land Management Plan Revision

# Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Roadless Area Evaluation  
for Wilderness Recommendations

## Record of Decision

***Tongass National Forest***  
***Land Management Plan Revision***

**Supplemental Environmental Impact  
Statement**

**Roadless Area Evaluation for Wilderness  
Recommendations**

***Record of Decision***

United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service–Alaska Region

**February 2003**

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## *Decision to be Made*

### Introduction

The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan Revision documents the analysis of eight alternatives, which evaluate and consider roadless areas within the Tongass National Forest for recommendation as potential wilderness. The SEIS responds to the March 30, 2001, District Court direction in *Sierra Club v. Lyons*.

In the evaluation of roadless areas, all Tongass National Forest lands were assessed to determine if they were suitable for wilderness consideration based on the Wilderness Act and procedures in the Forest Service's forest planning directives. Appendix C (SEIS Volumes II and III) includes documentation of the analysis and evaluation for each inventoried roadless area and describes the relative contribution each roadless area would make to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The Forest Service's 1982 forest planning regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 219) under which the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan Revision was developed, provide direction for evaluating roadless areas for potential wilderness recommendation. The Forest Service, therefore, elected to prepare the SEIS under 36 CFR 219.

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision and rationale on whether to recommend the designation of additional wilderness on the Tongass National Forest.

A wilderness recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States before a recommendation is forwarded to Congress. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation (Forest Service Manual 1923.11).

The ROD is discussed in eight primary sections: the decision to be made; issues and alternatives; decision and rationale; relationship to the current Forest Plan; other considerations; findings required by other laws and authorities; implementation; and appeal rights.

### Background

The original Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1979 Tongass Forest Plan) was completed in April 1979 and recommended 10 areas for wilderness totaling 5.4 million acres. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was enacted in December 1980, and made these 10 areas, with some minor boundary adjustments, part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Revision process began in 1987 and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published in June 1990. The 1990 Draft EIS had two alternatives that included wilderness recommendations.

In November 1990, the Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) was enacted. This Act designated five new wildernesses on the Tongass National Forest and one wilderness area acreage addition, for a total of 296,000 acres. In addition, it

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designated 12 legislated Land Use Designation (LUD) II areas totaling 727,000 acres to retain their roadless and wildland character. The 1979 Tongass Forest Plan was amended in February 1991 to incorporate the TTRA changes. The Revision process continued, with a Supplement to the Draft EIS published in September 1991 to incorporate all of the changes required by TTRA and to evaluate a new set of alternatives. The Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan Revision and Record of Decision were published in May of 1997.

The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan was the subject of 33 separate appeals by organizations and individuals. In 1999, the Under Secretary of Agriculture affirmed the Regional Forester's decision regarding all 33 appeals, based on the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS and planning record. The Under Secretary also issued a new Record of Decision (1999 ROD) for the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan.

Two lawsuits challenged the 1997 and 1999 RODs in the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska. The Alaska Forest Association and some Southeast Alaska communities challenged many aspects of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan and the process by which the 1999 ROD was issued. The Sierra Club and other environmental groups challenged the lack of consideration of wilderness recommendations in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS and ROD. The Court issued one opinion for both cases on March 30, 2001.

In the Alaska Forest Association case (*Alaska Forest Ass'n v. United States Dep't of Agric.* No. J99-0013 CV [JKS] [D. Alaska]), the Court upheld the 1997 ROD against all of the challenges, but it also held that the 1999 ROD was not properly adopted. The Court vacated the 1999 ROD and enjoined the Forest Service from implementing it unless an SEIS was prepared addressing the changes from the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan. Because of the extensive public involvement and scientific review that led to the 1997 ROD and its thorough policy and legal review in the administrative appeal process and by District Court, the Forest Service does not intend to propose changes to the 1997 ROD similar to those that were enjoined by the District Court related to the 1999 ROD. The Sierra Club intervened in the Alaska Forest Association case and appealed the decision vacating the 1999 ROD to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit where the case is still pending.

Therefore, the current Forest Plan is the plan selected by the 1997 ROD, as amended through non-significant amendments since 1997. This SEIS ROD incorporates the 1997 ROD by reference and is partially based on its findings.

In the Sierra Club lawsuit of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS (*Sierra Club v. Lyons*, No. J00-0009 CV [JKS] [D. Alaska]), the Court found that the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan should have considered making wilderness recommendations in the Final EIS. The Court ordered the Forest Service to prepare a SEIS evaluating roadless areas on the Tongass for wilderness recommendations and to consider the relative contribution of these areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System in its Analysis of the Management Situation as follows:

"The Court finds that the Forest Service violated NFMA [National Forest Management Act] and NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] in the revised TLMP by failing to consider any alternatives with new wilderness recommendations, and hereby enjoins the Forest Service from taking any action to change the wilderness character of any eligible roadless area until the Forest Service complies with NEPA and NFMA. To that end, the Forest Service shall prepare a SEIS that evaluates and considers roadless areas within the Tongass for recommendations as potential wilderness areas. The Forest Service shall also provide the relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System in its analysis of the management situation." (*Sierra Club, et. al. v. Lyons*, No. J00-0009 CV [JKS])

Early in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision process, 110 inventoried roadless areas were examined for potential wilderness recommendations. Each of these roadless areas was analyzed and results were recorded in Appendix C of the 1989 Analysis of the Management Situation prepared as part of the 1997 Revision process. For this Supplemental EIS, all roadless Tongass National Forest lands were assessed in order to update Appendix C of the 1989 AMS to reflect current conditions. Congressionally designated LUD II areas are included, as appropriate, in the roadless assessment. The assessment included all inventoried roadless areas, as well as unroaded lands of less than 5,000 acres. The smaller areas were evaluated to determine if they were eligible for wilderness consideration and thus should be carried forward as inventoried roadless areas in the evaluation. The Draft SEIS included 115 inventoried roadless areas. The increase in number from 110 inventoried roadless areas primarily reflected inclusion of smaller individual roadless areas that the 1997 Forest Plan considered as ineligible and/or marginally eligible for wilderness recommendation.

The Final SEIS includes 109 inventoried roadless areas (see the 2003 Roadless Area Inventory Map). Following further evaluation between the Draft and Final SEIS, six inventoried roadless areas shown in the Draft SEIS are not included in the Final SEIS as inventoried roadless areas primarily because of fragmentation and small parcel size. These unroaded areas, however, were retained in the alternatives for analysis. Descriptions of each inventoried roadless area are provided in Appendix C of the Final SEIS.

The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision is used as a baseline and serves as the No Action Alternative in the SEIS. The eight alternatives analyzed in detail in the SEIS range from the No Action Alternative to recommending all inventoried roadless areas for wilderness designation. The amount of recommended wilderness designation considered in the Action alternatives ranges from approximately 0.7 million to 9.6 million acres. Each alternative analyzed in detail in the SEIS responds to different aspects of issues related to wilderness recommendations.

Throughout this Forest Plan Supplemental EIS process, the Forest Service has been guided by the policy that a roadless area evaluated and ultimately recommended for wilderness or wilderness study is not available for any use or activity that may reduce the area's eligibility to be designated wilderness by Congress. Activities currently permitted may continue, pending designation, if the activities do not compromise wilderness values of the roadless area (FSM 1923.03). Appendix D of the SEIS contains the Management Prescription for the Recommended Wilderness LUD.

The Tongass National Forest contains approximately 16.8 million acres, of which approximately 6.6 million acres are Congressionally designated wilderness, National Monument, or LUD II lands, occurring throughout the Forest. Designated wilderness includes about 5.8 million acres. The 110 inventoried roadless areas in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS covered about 9.4 million acres, including the LUD II lands. The 115 inventoried roadless areas analyzed in the Draft SEIS covered approximately 9.7 million acres. The 109 inventoried roadless areas included in the Final SEIS cover approximately 9.6 million acres.

## ***Issues and Alternatives Considered***

The following sections describe the issues that have been used to drive the development and analysis of the alternatives used in the SEIS. A brief description of the alternatives that were analyzed in detail, as well as a brief description of alternatives that were considered but not analyzed in detail, are included. Maps of Alternatives 1 through 8 are included in the Final SEIS.

### Issues

Any alternative that proposes new wilderness recommendations would create some change in effects and/or outputs in relation to the existing 1997 Tongass Forest Plan. The specific issues considered in this analysis are grouped into two broad issue categories. These broad categories are the major issues driving the alternatives and the analysis and are articulated in the following two issue statements. In general, they represent two very different sets of strongly held values and viewpoints.

**Issue 1: Additional wilderness designations will provide greater long-term protection of roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest than is provided by the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan.**

Approximately 6.6 million acres of Congressionally designated wilderness, National Monument, or LUD II lands occur throughout the Tongass National Forest. Aside from wilderness, there are approximately 9.6 million acres of inventoried roadless areas (including legislated LUD II) on the Tongass. The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan allocated 74 percent of the roadless areas to non-development LUDs; however, because that designation is not permanent (and may be subject to future Forest Plan amendments and revisions), some segments of the public would rather have permanent protection status. There is concern by some that the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan does not provide sufficient recognition and long-term protection for Tongass roadless areas. Much of this concern is related to roadless area protection, rather than wilderness designation. Some hold the belief that many areas would be of more value to Americans as wilderness rather than as other LUDs. There is, however, no consensus on which areas should be recommended for wilderness.

The review of public input conducted for this SEIS indicated that concerns for additional wilderness protection primarily center around two themes. These can be generally characterized as the *symbolic, spiritual, and passive use* value of wilderness and the value of wilderness as a means for additional *ecological protection*, including protection of wildlife viability, biodiversity, and fish populations. These themes are important to segments of the public in Southeast Alaska, across the nation, and internationally.

**Issue 2: Additional wilderness designations will affect the social and economic well being of the communities of Southeast Alaska.**

The communities in Southeast Alaska depend on the Tongass National Forest in various ways, including employment in the wood products, commercial fishing and fish processing, recreation, tourism, and mining and mineral development sectors. Many residents also depend on subsistence hunting and fishing to meet their basic needs. There is very little private land throughout the region to provide these resources. Some people are concerned that wilderness recommendations could negatively affect employment and income generated by natural resource-based industries, including wood products, mining, and recreation and tourism. Others have suggested that wilderness recommendations could have positive effects on some sectors of the recreation and tourism industry. The employment and income associated with natural resource-based industries is important to the economic and social well being of many Southeast Alaskan communities. Wilderness designation could also affect transportation and utility projects that are considered by many in Alaska as essential for continued economic development and well being in the region.

This issue focuses on the social and economic effects of recommended wilderness designation on communities in Southeast Alaska. There are three central themes to this issue *natural resource-based industry, transportation and utility projects, and the regional economy and local communities*.



## Alternatives Considered in Detail

### Alternative 1

This is the No Action Alternative. It is defined by the current Tongass Forest Plan, which is based on Alternative 11 from the 1997 Forest Plan Revision Final EIS, as adjusted by the 1997 ROD and subsequent non-significant Forest Plan Amendments. All existing LUD allocations would remain unchanged, including existing wilderness and LUD II areas. This alternative does not respond to Issue 1, but responds to most aspects of Issue 2 at a high level by not recommending any additional wilderness.

No new wilderness or LUD II areas are recommended under this alternative. The 5.8 million acres of existing wilderness and the 0.8 million acres of existing LUD II and other National Monument areas, as well as all other current LUDs, would remain unchanged.

### Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would recommend approximately 721,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of all existing LUD II areas established by the Tongass Timber Reform Act to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. As such, it responds to Issue 1 at a low level by recommending some new wilderness. It responds to most aspects of Issue 2 at a high level by not affecting areas in development LUDs. There would be no change to existing wilderness and all other existing LUD allocations would remain unchanged.

This alternative would result in the conversion of 12 areas, totaling approximately 721,000 acres, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in a total of 6.5 million acres of wilderness on the Tongass. No areas of LUD II designation would remain. If designated, the 12 areas of Recommended Wilderness would result in eight new wildernesses and four wilderness additions.

### Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would recommend approximately 1,075,000 acres of new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of areas to the Recommended Wilderness LUD that have a relatively high score in the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS), along with relatively high public interest and/or high relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Areas were considered for inclusion only if they had a WARS score of at least 25 out of 28 possible points. This alternative responds to Issue 1 at a moderate level by recommending a group of high-value roadless areas for wilderness designation. It responds to Issue 2 also at a moderate level by slightly reducing the area of development LUDs. There would be no change to existing wilderness and LUD II areas.

This alternative would result in the conversion of seven areas, totaling approximately 1,075,000 acres, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in a total of 6.8 million acres of wilderness on the Tongass. The 0.7 million acres of existing LUD II areas would remain. If designated, the seven areas of Recommended Wilderness would result in two new wildernesses and five wilderness additions.

### Alternative 4

Alternative 4 would recommend approximately 736,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of non-development LUD portions of areas that have a relatively high score in the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS), along with relatively high public interest and/or high relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Areas were considered for inclusion only if they had a WARS score of at least 25 out of 28 possible points. This alternative responds to Issue 1 at a low to moderate level by recommending a small group of high-value roadless areas for wilderness designation. It responds to most aspects of Issue 2 at a high level by not reducing the area of development LUDs. There would be no change to existing wilderness and LUD II areas.

This alternative would result in the conversion of six areas, totaling approximately 736,000 acres, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in a total of 6.5 million acres of wilderness on the Tongass. The 0.7 million acres of LUD II areas would be unchanged. If designated, the six areas of Recommended Wilderness would result in three new wildernesses and three wilderness additions.

### Alternative 5

Alternative 5 would recommend approximately 2,005,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of all portions of the 23 areas proposed for wilderness by U.S. House of Representatives Bill HR987 (introduced in 1987) that are not already in wilderness, along with any additional areas identified by the 1999 Forest Plan Revision ROD as Areas of Special Interest, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. This alternative responds to Issue 1 at a moderate to high level by recommending areas of high public interest for Congressional designation. It responds to Issue 2 at a low to moderate level by moderately reducing the area of development LUDs. Under this alternative, most existing LUD II areas would be converted to wilderness.

This alternative would result in the conversion of 26 areas, totaling approximately 2,005,000 acres, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in a total of 7.8 million acres of wilderness on the Tongass. Approximately 45,000 acres of areas with LUD II designations would also remain. If designated, the 26 areas of Recommended Wilderness would result in 16 new wildernesses and 10 wilderness additions.

### Alternative 6

Alternative 6 would recommend approximately 3,203,000 acres for new wilderness designation and 5,680,000 acres for new LUD II designation. It would result in the conversion of all areas recommended for wilderness or LUD II by HR 2908 (introduced in 2001) to Recommended Wilderness and Recommended LUD II, respectively. It responds to Issue 1 at a high level by recommending most roadless areas for Congressional designation. It responds to most aspects of Issue 2 at a low level because it substantially reduces the area of development LUDs, although the majority of the conversions are to Recommended LUD II, which is less restrictive than Recommended Wilderness. Three existing LUD II areas (Berners Bay, Trap Bay and Kadashan) would be converted to wilderness.

This alternative would result in the conversion of 18 areas, totaling approximately 3,203,000 acres to the Recommended Wilderness LUD, as well as 5,680,000 acres to the Recommended LUD II land use designation. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in a total of 9.0 million acres of wildernesses and 6.4 million

acres of LUD II areas on the Tongass. If designated, the 18 areas of Recommended Wilderness would result in 5 new wildernesses and 13 wilderness additions. Virtually all other roadless areas in the Tongass would be converted to Recommended LUD II.

### Alternative 7

Alternative 7 would recommend approximately 4,638,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of all areas recommended for wilderness under Alternatives 4, 5, and 6 to Recommended Wilderness. This alternative responds to Issue 1 at a moderate to high level by recommending Congressional designation for a combination of the areas on the Tongass with the highest public interest. It responds to Issue 2 at a low to moderate level by moderately reducing the area of development LUDs. Virtually all of the existing LUD II areas would be converted to wilderness.

This alternative would result in the conversion of 32 areas, totaling approximately 4,638,000 acres, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. If designated by Congress, this would result in a total of 10.4 million acres of wilderness on the Tongass. Approximately 44,000 acres of areas with LUD II designations would also remain. If designated, the 32 areas of Recommended Wilderness would result in 18 new wildernesses and 14 wilderness additions.

### Alternative 8

Alternative 8 would recommend approximately 9,601,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of all inventoried roadless areas in the current roadless inventory to Recommended Wilderness. This alternative responds to Issue 1 at a very high level by recommending almost all roadless lands for Congressional designation. It does not respond to most aspects of Issue 2. Virtually all acres of LUD II would be included in this conversion.

This alternative would result in the creation of large tracts of land consisting of almost continuous wilderness and Recommended Wilderness across each of the islands and the mainland of the Tongass National Forest. If designated by Congress, this would result in 15.4 million acres of wilderness on the Tongass. Approximately 10,000 acres of LUD II areas (outside of current roadless areas) would remain.

## Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

Nine alternatives were considered in the Draft SEIS but not analyzed in detail and are discussed in Chapter 2 of the SEIS. Based on public input on the Draft SEIS and the availability of new analytical tools such as the ecological mapping by Nowaki et al., two additional alternative concepts were considered for the Final SEIS.

**High Qualitative Wilderness Attributes** – Between the Draft SEIS and the Final SEIS, the Interdisciplinary Team developed an additional alternative for potential consideration. This alternative was based on a qualitative assessment by staff and consisted of those roadless areas, which exhibited a combination of high public interest and high wilderness value. It considered areas that were most often identified in the public comment process on the Draft SEIS, considered ways to reduce the potential economic effects, and considered ways to strengthen the conservation strategy. It included 14 different areas, each consisting of portions of one or

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more roadless areas. These areas were considered for wilderness or LUD II recommendation. After further review it was determined that this alternative fell well within the range of the alternatives being considered in detail, and was similar in many respects to Alternatives 5 and 7. In addition, selection of any of the areas included in the potential alternative were already available to the Decision Maker from the current range of alternatives. Therefore, it was not considered in detail in the Final SEIS.

**Ecological Section Representation Alternative** – This alternative looked at how well the ecological sections and subsections (see Final SEIS), located across the Tongass National Forest, are represented in Wilderness and Natural Setting LUD Groups. It was determined that all of the major ecological sections and most of the 73 ecological subsections of the Tongass are already represented in wilderness, National Monument, or LUD II areas, and that they are well represented in Natural Setting LUDs. There were also concerns relating to the quality and manageability of Recommended Wilderness areas that were identified based on ecological representation alone. It was determined that the existing alternatives captured a range of additional representation, while addressing other issues at the same time. Therefore, basing an additional alternative on ecological sections or subsections was not warranted.

## *Decision and Rationale*

### Decision

The decision I am making is to adopt Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative, as the Selected Alternative for this SEIS. Alternative 1, in this SEIS process, is the same as the alternative selected as the Forest Plan in the 1997 ROD, with minor modifications. Management of the lands and resources on the Tongass National Forest will continue under the current Forest Plan. (See the 2003 Current Land Use Designation Map included with this ROD and the Final SEIS.)

The primary reason for this decision is that there is not a need for additional wilderness in the Tongass National Forest at this time. The Wilderness Act begins with “In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.” This has been accomplished on the Tongass. Unlike all other states, the designation of wilderness in Alaska had the first choice of the land because they were designated before significant settlement of the land. Congress itself concluded in ANILCA that it had provided sufficient wilderness areas in Alaska and that the need for new wilderness areas had been obviated. Moreover, Alaska has a great deal of designated wilderness—more than half the wilderness areas in the United States. The area within and around the Tongass has by some measures more designated wilderness than any other region on earth.

My decision to not recommend the designation of additional wilderness areas in the Tongass is not a decision that all the non-wilderness lands will be developed. In fact, our plan to manage the Tongass is to leave most of the Tongass undeveloped indefinitely. Rather, my decision is to manage most of the non-designated wilderness lands on the Tongass National Forest as wild and roadless, but not recommend those lands be designated as wilderness. That, to me, is the

appropriate professional decision because it leaves appropriate options for this land to future generations.

My rationale for this decision is supported by three major considerations: 1) the required criteria for recommending wilderness are not met because the need for more wilderness at this time on the Tongass is not warranted; 2) because of the current protections provided by the Forest Plan, the vast majority of the roadless lands analyzed will not be developed in the next 5 to 10 years; and 3) the economy of Southeast Alaska is currently undergoing a broad-based change. Therefore, I choose not to make any wilderness recommendations at this time. My rationale is explained in more detail below.

### Need for More Wilderness

As part of the forest planning process, including forest plan revisions, the Forest Service evaluates lands for their suitability to be designated as wilderness. This suitability analysis begins with an inventory of roadless areas. I have reviewed the process used to inventory the roadless areas of the Forest for this SEIS (see Chapter 3 and Appendix C of the SEIS). I concur with the process and agree with the findings that approximately 92 percent of the Forest is either wilderness designated by Congress (5.8 million acres or nearly 35 percent), or within inventoried roadless areas (9.6 million acres or 57 percent). (See the 2003 Roadless Area Inventory Map included with this ROD and the Final SEIS.) Previous legislation that has designated wilderness on the Tongass has also included National Monument and LUD II designations.

The Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 7, Section 7.2) requires that the potential wilderness designation of an inventoried roadless area be carefully evaluated to determine the mix of land and resource uses that best meet public need. An area recommended for wilderness must meet the tests of capability, availability, and need. These conditions are briefly described in the following paragraphs.

**Capability.** The capability of a potential wilderness is the degree to which that area contains the basic characteristics that make it suitable for wilderness designation, without regard to its availability for or need as wilderness. In determining capability, ability to manage an area as wilderness (manageability) as required by the Wilderness Act is also considered.

Almost all Tongass inventoried roadless areas meet the basic tests of being capable of management as wilderness, and have high ratings under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). Viewed in comparison to areas in national forests throughout the country, they are all wild and undeveloped, and offer high potential for solitude, challenge, and primitive and unconfined recreation.

**Availability.** All National Forest System lands determined to meet wilderness capability requirements are generally available for consideration as wilderness. However, the determination of availability is conditioned by the value of and need for the wilderness resource compared to the value of and need for other resources. To be available for wilderness, the values of the wilderness resource, both tangible and intangible, should offset the value of resources that formal wilderness designation forego. Constraints and encumbrances on lands may also govern the availability of lands for wilderness.

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Almost all Tongass inventoried roadless areas meet basic tests of availability for designation. However, many roadless areas include lands with important timber, commercial recreation, potential transportation and powerline corridors, or mineral and energy resource development potential, and designation as wilderness could forego the opportunity to develop resources.

**Need.** An area is analyzed to determine the degree to which it contributes to the local and national distribution of wilderness. This includes consideration of the locations, size, and type of other wildernesses in the general vicinity of the Tongass. There should be clear evidence of current or future public need for additional designated wilderness in the general area under consideration, including visitor pressure on other wildernesses. Consideration for the extent to which non-wilderness lands on the Tongass National Forest, other Federal lands, State lands, and private lands other than wildernesses are likely to provide opportunities for unconfined outdoor recreation experiences is included. The ability of certain biotic species to compete with increasing public use and developmental projects that affect their habitats, and the need to provide a sanctuary for them has to be considered. And finally, an area's ability to provide for preservation of identifiable landform types and ecosystems is considered.

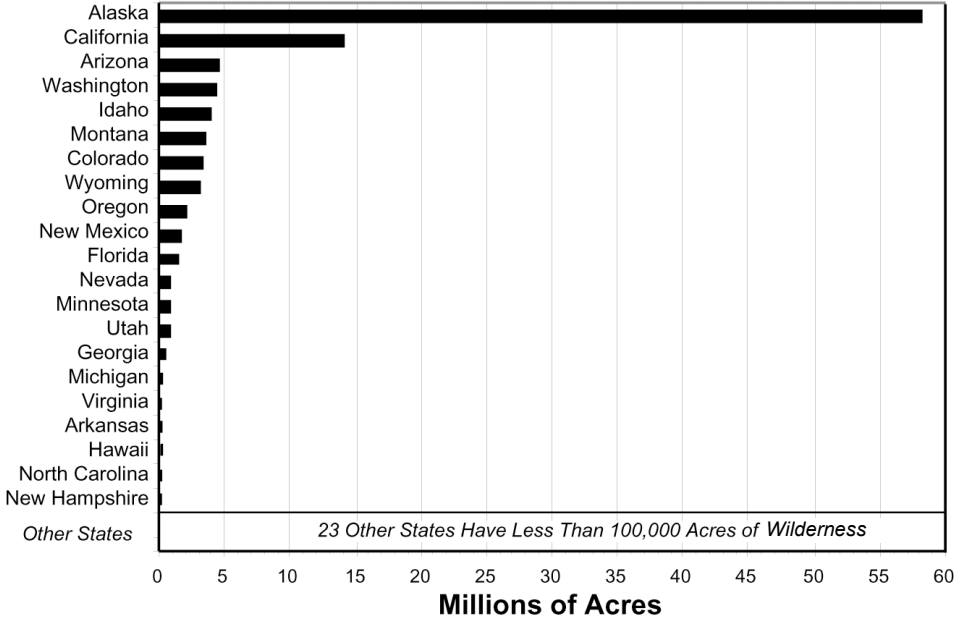
Given that almost all of the Tongass inventoried roadless areas meet the basic tests of capability and availability, need is the main test or consideration that influenced my decision. It is difficult to provide a strong rationale that additional wilderness is "needed" on the Tongass at this time based on the factors identified in the preceding paragraph. The Tongass presently includes 5.8 million acres of wilderness well distributed across the Forest. There is another 24 million acres of designated wilderness adjacent to the Tongass National Forest in Alaska and Canada. On the Tongass, the capacity for primitive recreation opportunities far exceeds demand, and such opportunities are offered on both wilderness and non-wilderness lands.

Unlike most other states, where wildlands are islands surrounded by human settlement, Alaska is almost entirely wildlands with a relatively few islands of human settlement. Currently, the Tongass has 19 congressionally designated wildernesses and National Monuments with a total of 5.9 million acres (35% of the Forest) and 12 congressionally designated LUD II areas with 0.7 million acres of roadless lands managed to maintain their wildland character (4% of the Forest). In addition, the Tongass has 6.7 million acres (40% of the Forest) in other LUDs managed to maintain their natural settings, in which timber harvest and road construction are generally not allowed.

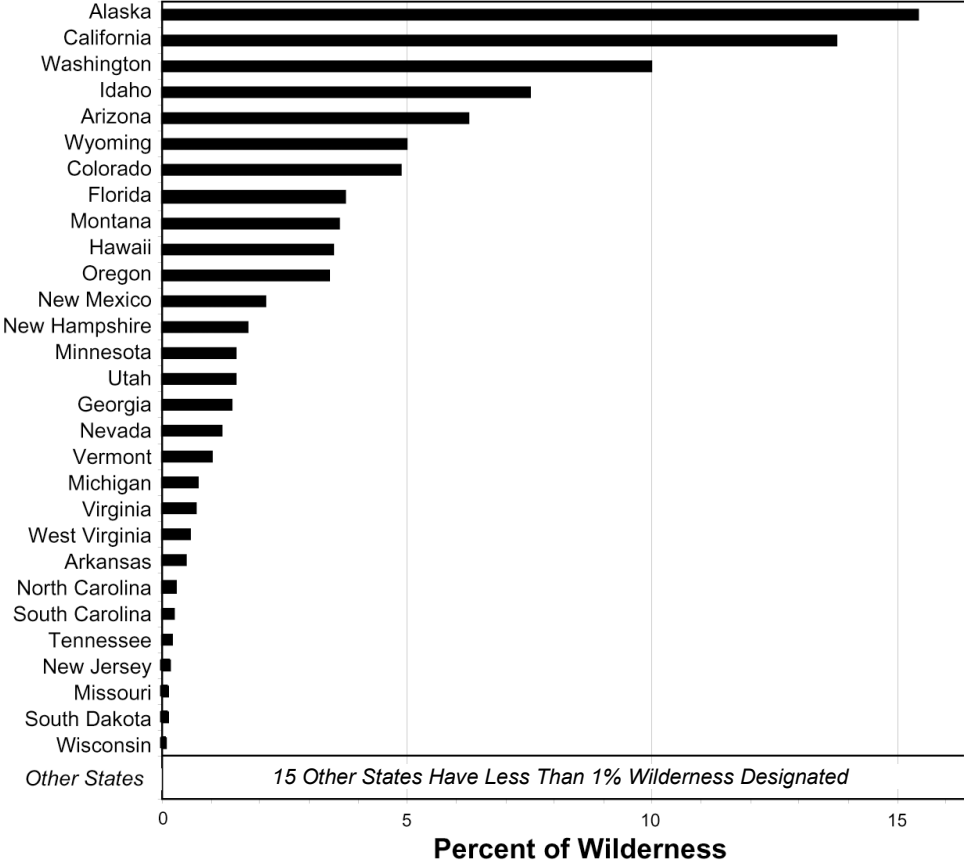
The State of Alaska is over 15 percent wilderness, the largest percentage of any state. Alaska contains 58 million acres of wilderness, or 55 percent of all designated wilderness in the United States. The Tongass National Forest has 5.8 million acres of wilderness, or 35 percent of the Forest, which is almost double the national average of 18 percent of National Forest System lands designated wilderness. Adjacent to the Tongass are wildernesses in two national parks and two Canadian parks, which together comprise the largest contiguous expanse of legislatively protected land in the world. This includes Glacier Bay National Park and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, and the Kluane and Tatshenshini National Parks in Canada, which together comprise a 24 million acre World Heritage Site.

The Wrangell-St. Elias Wilderness is one of only four wildernesses in the United States with over 5 million acres; all four are in Alaska. The Wrangell-St. Elias Wilderness itself is 9.7 million acres, and is larger than the entire original National Wilderness Preservation System of 1964.

**Figure 1. Acres of Wilderness by State**



**Figure 2. Percentage of Wilderness by State**



## Record of Decision

In enacting ANILCA in 1980, Congress had the opportunity to select land for wilderness areas from almost the entire land base of the State of Alaska. Congress selected more land in that one Act than has ever been designated before or since. Congress itself concluded that ANILCA represented the proper balance between the reservation of national conservation system units and those public lands necessary and appropriate for more intensive use, and thus Congress believed the need for future legislation designating new conservation system units had been obviated.

I realize that many people believe that there is always a need for more wilderness. But, more wilderness in Alaska does not make up for wilderness lacking in other states. Just because Congress has not designated an area as a wilderness area, particularly in Alaska, does not mean that the area does not provide wilderness-related values and opportunities.

### **Current Protections Offered by the Forest Plan**

My recommendation for these roadless areas was a difficult decision, due to the controversy surrounding wilderness designation. I listened carefully to both advocates and opponents of wilderness designation to better understand the interests they are seeking to protect. These interests are strongly held and often mutually exclusive. Yet I also heard many interests common to both groups. Communities and people within or adjacent to the Tongass National Forest desire that much of the Forest remain the way it currently is – in a wild and natural state. After 100 years of multiple-use management on the Tongass National Forest, more than 92 percent of the Tongass is still wild, unroaded and undeveloped.

The current Forest Plan provides a significant measure of protection for inventoried roadless areas; 74 percent of inventoried roadless areas (7.1 million acres) are currently zoned for non-development under the Forest Plan.

The current Forest Plan was developed based on the best scientific information available and provides for enough habitat to maintain well-distributed, viable populations of old-growth associated species. Ninety percent of existing old growth (4.5 million acres) is maintained under the current Forest Plan and would not be open to timber harvest. Timber management activities can take place on lands that are categorized as suitable and scheduled for timber management; these lands represent 4 percent of the Tongass National Forest and 3 percent of the inventoried roadless areas. Forest Plan standards and guidelines provide direction and safeguards for the maintenance of the other resources on those lands where timber management is permitted.

Currently, there are 5.8 million acres of wilderness and 9.6 million acres of other roadless lands on the Tongass National Forest. After 10 years of Forest Plan implementation there will still be 5.8 million acres of wilderness and 9.4 million acres of other roadless lands remaining on the Tongass. After 50 years, 5.8 million acres of wilderness and at least 8.8 million acres of other roadless lands will remain.

This means that 92 percent of the Tongass National Forest is currently roadless (including wilderness) and, even with full implementation of activities allowed by the Forest Plan and no further wilderness designation, 90 percent would remain roadless after 10 years, and 87 percent would remain roadless after 50 years. These estimates assume full implementation of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan, including timber harvest and road construction at the maximum level allowed under the Allowable Sale Quantity. As indicated in Chapter 3 of the Final SEIS, the annual timber harvest since 1997 has been well below the average annual Allowable Sale Quantity.



Following is a discussion of the specific areas most often included in public comment on the Draft SEIS and pertinent information on how the Forest Plan relates to these areas.

- **Port Houghton** – Public comments on this area often include the larger area encompassed by the southern portion of the Windham - Port Houghton Roadless Area, all of the Fanshaw Roadless Area, and the western tip of the Spires Roadless Area in the South Arm of Faragut Bay. The highest resource values are most often associated with Port Houghton, the salt chuck at the head of the North Arm of Port Houghton, Sanborn Canal, and Faragut Bay. The majority of the area encompassed by these highest resource values are in non-development LUDs under the Forest Plan. Because of these protections, project planning in the Windham - Port Houghton and the Fanshaw Roadless Areas are expected to continue on the development LUDs in those areas.
- **Spires** – Except for localized areas, primarily near developments at Thomas Bay, the Spires Roadless Area is in non-development LUDs. The Spires Roadless Area has very high wilderness attributes and high public interest in Congressional designation as wilderness. I do not want to adversely affect the ongoing commercial recreation activities within this area by recommending it for wilderness at this time.
- **Kuiu Island** – This relatively large island includes the Tebenkof and Kuiu Wildernesses in the southern half along with three relatively large sections of non-development LUDs that collectively cover more than half of the Island. The South Kuiu, Bay of Pillars, and Security Roadless Areas include these three sections of non-development LUDs. Intensive timber management has occurred and is ongoing in the northern portion of the Island. The East Kuiu Roadless Area located to the south of the developed areas on the east side of the Island, has very high public interest. It also has relatively large quantities of timber that could be important to the timber industry in the future. When I look at the overall mix of land use designations for Kuiu Island, including the mix within the East Kuiu Roadless Area, I feel the Forest Plan provides for a good balance of the commodity and non-commodity values and uses for Kuiu Island. I expect the Forest Supervisor to continue the planning and scheduling of Forest Plan implementation projects on Kuiu Island, including within the East Kuiu Roadless Area as appropriate.
- **Berners Bay** – This popular area located in the vicinity of Juneau includes ongoing and potential developments associated with the road system and non-National Forest System lands near Berners Bay, and the National Forest System lands which transition from the developed areas into the Congressionally designated LUD II lands east of the Bay. I am very aware of the ongoing debates and issues associated with the uses and values of this area. I am concerned about recommending wilderness in this area primarily because of the potential conflicts between wilderness management objectives and other existing uses. I believe the mix of Forest Plan LUDs is appropriate for guiding management, including appropriate uses and developments, in the Berners Bay and vicinity.
- **Mansfield Peninsula** – This area is located on the northern tip of Admiralty Island and has received relatively high public interest in recommending it for wilderness. The area has relatively high recreation use and has a high density of mineral claims, which may create management complexities if designated wilderness. The Forest Plan allocated the area primarily to non-development LUDs.
- **Upper Tenakee Inlet** – The Forest Plan has allocated most of the shoreline areas, including several inlets and bays, to either Old-growth Habitat or

Modified Landscape LUDs to address the water based uses and wildlife habitats associated with lower elevations. The uplands are allocated to development LUDs. This seems to be an appropriate mix of land use designations for this area of high public interest.

- ***Ushk Bay/Poison Cove*** – This area of very high public interest, located in the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area, is allocated to a mix of LUDs including development LUDs. Issues in this area relate to Native Allotment claims, subsistence, timber sale economics, proximity of the area to Sitka, high cultural and traditional use values, scenic, and other uses. The Forest Plan provides a good mix of LUDs for this area, including the implementing standards and guidelines. If Forest Plan implementing projects are proposed in the area, the Plan provides reasonable options and flexibility to address the high values and potentially competing uses of the area.
- ***West Duncan Canal*** – The Forest Plan allocated lands all along the west side of Duncan Canal in non-development LUDs in recognition of the high recreation and scenic resources associated with the area. This strip of non-development LUDs ranges from about 1 mile in width to several miles inland, such as up the Castle River drainage. The inland portions of the area where development is allowed would be primarily accessed from developed areas in the interior of the island. The Forest Plan provides a well-balanced mix of LUDs that fully recognize the many values associated with the lands along the west side of Duncan Canal.
- ***Woewodski Island*** – This 10,600 acre island located south of Petersburg is relatively undeveloped. However, the island is rich in mineralization as indicated by the high number of past mining activity and active mining claims found there. Approximately 90 percent of the island is covered by mining claims. Wilderness designation of the island would not be compatible with the relatively high potential for development of the mineral resources there. The development LUDs included in the Forest Plan for Woewodski Island are compatible with the minerals resource potential and project planning should continue as applicable.
- ***Dall Island*** – The western portion of Dall Island is National Forest System lands, while the eastern portion is mostly private land managed primarily for timber resources. The western portion of the island has relatively high wilderness attributes, moderate to high public interest, very high karst values, and high scenic values. All but the extreme northern part of the western portion is in non-development LUDs under the Forest Plan. The proximity to the private lands, and maintaining the flexibility to be able to explore and study the karst resources are more compatible with the Forest Plan LUDs than recommending this roadless area for wilderness designation.
- ***Honker Divide*** – The Forest Plan allocated nearly all of the area known as Honker Divide on Prince of Wales Island to non-development LUDs. Honker Divide is a key part of the old growth conservation strategy for the northern half of Prince of Wales Island. The strategy includes connections of old growth habitat in non-development LUDs from the Karta Wilderness through Honker Divide and the Sarkar Lakes area and through the Calder Holbrook LUD II area to the northern tip of Prince of Wales Island. Designation of the Honker Divide, or other key portions of the area (Sarkar or Calder Holbrook) as wilderness would create management complexities because of the amount of ongoing activities and uses within and in the vicinity of these areas. The mix of LUDs in the Forest Plan for the northern half of Prince of Wales appears to be the most appropriate at this time.
- ***Gravina*** – High interest has been expressed about the Gravina Island area, mostly associated with ongoing timber sale planning activities occurring

there. The high subsistence, cultural, traditional uses, recreation, and scenic values of the area, along with its proximity to Ketchikan, Saxman and Metlakatla, make this a very complex project opportunity. In this situation, the most likely way to adequately address these complexities is with the planning effort currently underway.

- **Cleveland Peninsula** – The Cleveland Roadless Area has been the center of land use debates for some years. The Forest Plan allocated the entire southwestern portion, roughly one-half of the area to non-development LUDs. The remainder was allocated to a mix of development and non-development LUDs that recognize the old growth habitat, scenic, and timber values of the area. Recreation use of the Cleveland is very high, especially on the eastern side of the peninsula north of Ketchikan. Some mineral exploration is ongoing on the northern side of the peninsula. Timber sale planning for the relatively small Emerald Bay project on the north edge of the area is ongoing and expected to continue. I believe the mix of LUDs and associated standards and guidelines in place with the Forest Plan is appropriate to address the high values associated with Cleveland Peninsula. I do not feel it is the appropriate time to change the mix of LUDs here, primarily because of the amount of suitable and available timber included in the development LUDs.

## Southeast Alaska's Changing Economy

The economy of Southeast Alaska is currently undergoing a broad-based transition from a commodity resource-based economy to a more general service-oriented economy, with a particular emphasis on recreation and tourism-related service activities. This transition is in part a reflection of national trends, which have seen rapid employment growth in the services, retail trade, and government sectors over the past decade. It is also the result of economic changes that are more unique to Southeast Alaska, most notably the decline in the wood products sector along with a substantial growth in the number of visitors to the region. There have also been changes in the fishing and mining industries over this period. Average annual employment in Southeast Alaska grew over the past decade, but at a slower rate than the national average. Changes in employment varied by community, as well as economic sector. As Southeast Alaska communities respond to these ongoing transitions, the need to have transportation and power infrastructure between communities is important.

## Recreation and Tourism

Southeast Alaska has seen substantial growth in the recreation and tourism sector over the past decade. Continued growth is projected for the future, although at a slower rate. The nature of this growth is presently uncertain and it is not clear which lands and resource attributes may be most suitable to support future demands. Wilderness designation at this time could potentially restrict future recreation and tourism development that is difficult to predict at the present. Congress considered designating Spires and Juneau Icefields as wilderness during deliberations for ANILCA. Had these areas been designated wilderness, we would not have the helicopter landing tour businesses that are presently able to operate in these areas and provide world-class recreation and tourism opportunities, as well as generating local jobs and income.

The current Forest Plan provides numerous wilderness and other wildland areas with natural resource attractions and recreation opportunities to allow for expansion of the recreation and tourism economic sector. Even in the LUDs that allow development activities, such as timber harvest and road construction, the Forest Plan provides for protection of key scenic resources important to travelers and recreationists within the

Tongass National Forest. Recommending additional wilderness at this time would have little measurable effect on the supply of primitive recreation opportunities (already abundant across the Tongass), and could limit future recreation development (such as cabin, trail, and wildlife viewing site construction), or create difficult management situations where recreation and wilderness objectives conflict.

### **Timber**

Employment in the wood products industry in Southeast Alaska declined dramatically, from a peak of 3,540 jobs in 1990 to just 780 jobs in 2001. This is related to the closure of the two pulp mills and the termination of their long-term timber contracts. But it also has much to do with market conditions and the depressed lumber and pulp prices, a significant reduction in timber harvesting on private (primarily native corporation) lands, and a reduction in the harvest of timber sales offered by the Forest Service.

The Southeast Alaska wood products industry is presently in a period of transition as the industry adjusts to these changes and seeks a new level of stability. In addition to the abundant hemlock, Southeast Alaska forests have good quantities of Sitka spruce, Alaska yellow cedar and western red cedar. These woods have a variety of excellent qualities, including their high wood density, that make them good sources of raw material for a large variety of high quality specialty or niche type wood products. The small and very small family-owned businesses that presently make up the Southeast Alaska wood products industry are adjusting to take advantage of these more specialized markets. Recent investments in the regional wood products industry include the veneer plant in Ketchikan (now owned by the city of Ketchikan), dry kilns at several locations in Southeast Alaska, and the addition of a small log mill to an existing facility. Somewhat related to these investments coming on line is the fact that the vast majority of lumber products used throughout Southeast Alaska (and Alaska as a whole) is imported here, primarily from Seattle by barge, and at a premium price. If local lumber producers can compete for a share of this market, they should be able to realize more positive and stable market conditions for a larger proportion of the timber available to them, especially the hemlock. Given these ongoing changes and potential opportunities, it is unclear to me what level of demand the Southeast Alaska timber industry is going to stabilize at, and maintaining the current Forest Plan ASQ seems reasonable at this time.

### **Fishing**

Fishing industry employment has also declined somewhat, decreasing by 12 percent between 1990 and 2001, largely due to the increase in commercially farm-raised salmon elsewhere in the world and a decline in prices for wild salmon. Efforts to find new markets for Alaska salmon, and marketing the positive aspects of wild Alaska salmon to recapture portions of the world salmon market are ongoing. Another aspect of the Southeast Alaska fishing industry is the recent increased interest in mariculture. Many of the bays and coves that the State and potential mariculture participants have expressed interest in are adjacent to the many inventoried roadless areas across the Tongass. These activities appear to be totally compatible with, and would have minimal effect on, the upland management of adjacent areas. I would like more time to be able to observe how the mariculture operations and their need for upland support facilities (if any) evolve before recommending wilderness in such areas.

### Mining

I am also concerned with the potential effect that recommending additional wilderness at this time could have on the mining industry. The Tongass National Forest includes many areas that are considered to have moderate to high potential for future mineral development. Even though most of these areas are not currently planned for development, these mineralized lands may represent resources of national importance in the future. Ongoing mineral exploration operations in localized areas such as on Woewodski Island, throughout the south and east portion of Prince of Wales Island, on the north portion of Cleveland Peninsula, and other areas could be affected by wilderness recommendations. The current Forest Plan recognizes the short and long-term importance of the mineral resources and has factored this into the balance of LUDs and standards and guidelines for implementation of the Plan. Recommending additional wilderness in areas containing potential mineral resources would not affect mining claims with existing rights, but could affect development costs. Designated areas would, however, be withdrawn from future mineral exploration and development.

### Infrastructure

I am also concerned that many Southeast Alaska communities lack basic transportation and power infrastructure. Even though Southeast Alaska has abundant opportunities for hydroelectric power, many smaller communities have to rely on diesel-powered electrical generation. Larger communities often have a surplus of electrical power. A power transmission grid that connects more communities in Southeast Alaska is in the early stages of development. Similarly, several communities could be linked with improved transportation facilities and improvements of this system are ongoing. I am concerned that recommending wilderness at this time in some areas could affect the potential power and/or transportation corridors important to the communities of Southeast Alaska.

### Summary

Given the concerns and considerations described above, I do not believe it is the appropriate time for significantly changing land use designations on the Tongass National Forest. I took a hard look at the potential for additional wilderness recommendations and did not see a compelling need, based on the existing wilderness distribution, locally, regionally, and nationally; the current level of use of Tongass Wilderness; and the wide variety of ecological conditions, wildlife, and opportunities presently provided under the current Forest Plan. In addition, the areas of concern are not at risk over the next 5 to 10 years (time period for next Forest Plan Revision) and even beyond.

I also believe that many wilderness-like values and uses can continue to be accommodated on the Tongass National Forest without Congressionally designating more wilderness. In making my decision, I looked at each of the 109 inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass, and considered many factors. The factors included: their physical characteristics; current activities; effects of changing management of lands currently in the suitable and available timber base; mineral potential and potential future uses; commercial recreation values and uses; subsistence and cultural values; other amenity and ecological service values; public comments; and each area's potential contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System. I considered how designation of an area as wilderness would affect access to private lands, and how it would affect potential transportation and utility corridors needed by Southeast Alaska communities.

### ***Relationship to Current Forest Plan***

I have considered my decision on the Final SEIS in the context of the current Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan and discuss the relationships in the following 5 parts: collaboration, science and Forest Plan allocations, conservation strategy and old-growth habitat reserves, roadless area evaluations, and access and infrastructure.

#### **Collaboration**

The mix of land uses and associated activities planned for in the current Tongass Forest Plan was the result of significant collaborative efforts throughout Southeast Alaska, the State, and across the nation. The Plan was developed collaboratively with other Federal and State natural resource management agencies, including the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station. Representatives of most of these entities were full members of the Tongass Forest Plan Revision interdisciplinary planning team.

There were many divergent views on how the Tongass National Forest should be managed during the development of the Forest Plan Revision, and such is the case today. The Forest Plan was developed over a 10-year period with large amounts of public participation, including approximately 100 public meetings and hearings, held in virtually every community throughout Southeast Alaska. The Forest Plan also withstood the test of the 33 appeals.

In this SEIS process, public meetings and hearings were held in 16 communities in Southeast Alaska, one in Anchorage Alaska, and one meeting and hearing was conducted via the internet during the 90-day public comment period. Various other meetings and briefings were held with representatives of interest groups, public officials, and representatives of State and Federal agencies. Government-to-government consultation has been ongoing with Alaska Native Tribal governments. These public involvement efforts for the SEIS have been complementary to the significant efforts that led to the 1997 Forest Plan.

#### **Science and Forest Plan Allocations**

The current Forest Plan provides strong environmental protections and safeguards. It is based on the best available science and was developed using scientists to ensure the Plan was physically, biologically, economically, and socially sound. The work was panel reviewed and peer reviewed. The Forest Plan is scientifically credible and resource sustainable. The Forest Plan provides for the sustainability of the resources of the Tongass National Forest, while directing the coordination and management of multiple uses, such as outdoor recreation, timber, mining, wildlife, fish, watershed, and wilderness. To accomplish this goal, the Forest Plan includes a wide range of land allocations ranging from allocations that essentially allow no land-disturbing activities to allocations that allow intensive resource development. The Forest Plan also includes a set of standards and guidelines that ensure management objectives for these land allocations are met. Recognizing that conditions on the Tongass National Forest do not remain static and that new information is constantly being developed, the Forest Plan embraces an adaptive management approach. This approach refers to the continuous process of action-based planning, monitoring, research, evaluation, and adjustment, with the objective of improving implementation to achieve desired management goals and objectives.

In addition to the 5.8 million acres of existing wilderness, the Forest Plan provides another 7.4 million acres allocated to LUDs that will be retained in a natural condition. Therefore, a total of 13.2 million acres of the 16.8 million-acre Tongass National Forest is currently in non-development LUDs.

The Forest Plan provides a significant measure of protection for inventoried roadless areas. The Plan allocated 74 percent of inventoried roadless areas (7.1 million acres) to non-development LUDs.

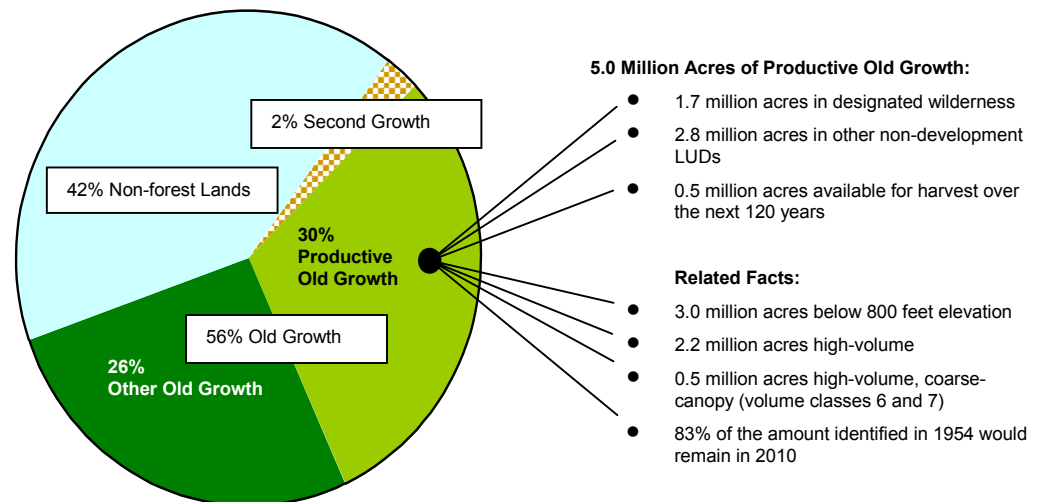
The Tongass National Forest has about 9.4 million acres of old-growth forest, about 5 million acres of which are of commercial size and considered as productive old growth (POG). The Forest Plan allows no timber harvest for nearly 90 percent of the 5 million acres of existing productive old growth. Approximately 16 percent of the high-volume old growth on the Tongass has been harvested in the past. About 1.7 million acres of the productive old growth is located in designated wilderness on the Tongass. More than 3 million acres of productive old growth is located below an elevation of 800 feet. About 2.2 million acres of the productive old growth is considered high-volume old growth. High-volume, coarse-canopy old growth (volume classes 6 and 7) found on the Tongass amounts to approximately 539,000 acres, 476,000 acres of which is not available for commercial timber harvest.

The Forest is managed to produce desired resource values, products, services, and conditions in ways that also sustain the diversity, function, and productivity of ecosystems. The Forest is managed to maintain a mix of habitats at different spatial scales capable of supporting the full range of naturally occurring flora, fauna, and ecological processes native to Southeast Alaska.

Extensive, unmodified natural environments characterize the Forest and will continue to do so. Old-growth is and will continue to be the predominant vegetative structure on the Tongass, and the abundance and distribution of habitats, especially old-growth forests, will be maintained to sustain viable populations and provide for continued commercial, sport, and subsistence use of fish and wildlife species.

The outstanding scenery of the Forest will continue to be a major attraction for visitors. The Forest is managed under the current Forest Plan to provide a full range

**Figure 3. Old Growth on the Tongass National Forest**



of recreation opportunities. Forest visitors will continue to enjoy visually appealing scenery, with management emphasis placed on protecting scenic resources viewed from the Alaska Marine Highway, cruise ship routes, State Highways, major Forest roads, and popular recreation places.

### **Conservation Strategy and Old-growth Habitat Reserves**

The Tongass Forest Plan includes a Conservation Biology Strategy that is one of the best in the world. The Strategy provides habitat to maintain well-distributed, viable populations of old growth-associated species across the Forest. The Strategy consists of two basic components.

One part consists of large, medium, and small reserves located strategically across the Tongass. The Tongass currently has approximately 5,060,000 acres of productive old-growth (POG) forest. The Forest Plan includes 70 percent of that in some form of non-development LUD, reasonably distributed across the Forest. These non-development LUDs account for the large, medium, and small reserves of the Strategy. In addition, projects since 1997, that implement the Forest Plan (primarily timber sales), have formally added about 12,440 acres of POG to the reserve system with project decisions. This has included about 2,400 acres of old growth land considered suitable and available for timber harvest under the Plan.

The second part of the Strategy provides for connectivity of the reserves, and addresses old growth structural needs within the matrix part of the strategy, which is where developments may occur through time. Within these areas, which make up about 22 percent of the Forest, components of the old-growth ecosystem are maintained by standards and guidelines designed to protect important areas and provide old-growth forest habitat connectivity. Some of the primary management prescriptions, designed to ensure protection of a significant proportion of remaining high-quality habitat within the matrix, are the 1,000-foot beach and estuary fringe and riparian buffers. Other standards and guidelines preclude or significantly limit timber harvest in areas of high hazard soils, steep slopes, high vulnerability karst terrain, visually sensitive travel routes and use areas, and timber stands technically not feasible to harvest. In addition to providing significant old-growth protection, many of these prescriptions such as beach and estuary fringe, riparian buffers, and small reserves provide important connectivity functions between the reserve portion of the Strategy. The design of the Strategy also accounts for developments on adjacent State and private lands.

Forty-four percent of the old growth in reserves is high-volume strata old growth, which is generally considered higher quality wildlife habitat, compared to a forest-wide average of 43 percent today and 47 percent in 1954.

The overall landscape design included in the Forest Plan was responsive to many of the recommendations by an independent science peer review of the initial underlying old-growth conservation strategy as designed by the Interagency Viable Population Committee (VPOP), as well as subsequent responses to these recommendations. For example, the old-growth strategy responded to recommendations to maintain the existing largest blocks of contiguous high-volume old growth from further fragmentation in a number of ways. These ways included incorporation of many existing roadless areas into reserves using non-development LUDs, increasing the total proportion of old growth reserved (including a high-volume component), and allocating at least one very large reserve (greater than 120,000 acres) in 17 of 21 biogeographic provinces (see Biodiversity section, Chapter 3 of Final SEIS). In the remaining four provinces, either large reserves (over 75,000 acres) or aggregates of "larger" reserves (over 30,000 acres) were allocated. The strategy also responded to



concerns about larger corridors by, among other things, providing a beach and estuary buffer zone of 1,000 feet and providing the multi-component strategy, as described above, which provides important landscape connectivity functions.

### Roadless Areas Evaluations

The Tongass National Forest, the largest in the National Forest System, is more than 90 percent roadless, including wilderness. Only small areas where communities are developing, or where road construction and timber harvest have occurred, are “developed” to any noticeable degree. At various times in the past, “boom and bust” development (associated with fox farming, salmon canneries, mining, and military activity) resulted in the temporary development and occupation of many small areas, mostly along the coastlines, that have since been largely reclaimed by nature. Southeast Alaska residents, who number about 73,000, are virtually surrounded by land they consider “wilderness.”

Early in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision process, 110 inventoried roadless areas were examined for potential wilderness recommendations. The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan did not include wilderness recommendations in the Final EIS. It did, however, offer for analysis and public comment a range of alternatives that would manage all or portions of the Tongass roadless areas as non-development LUDs. Roadless values were analyzed and incorporated in the mix of LUDs, and in appropriate standards and guidelines for each alternative that could be used for implementing the Revision.

For example, Alternative 1 in the 1997 Forest Plan Revision Final EIS offered for public consideration and comment, all of the inventoried roadless areas to be managed in mostly natural settings with proposed non-development LUDs. Although none of these areas were proposed for wilderness, Remote and Semi-remote Recreation land use designations, along with wildlife allocations, predominate in that alternative.

The SEIS documents the results of a very intensive additional roadless area evaluation for the Tongass conducted in 2002 and 2003. This included updated mapping and evaluation of all unroaded lands, which led to the 109 inventoried roadless areas analyzed in the Final SEIS. A full range of alternatives was included in the Draft SEIS and presented for public review and comment. The roadless area descriptions presented in the Final SEIS reflect input received through the public comment and other pertinent updates of information used to complete the evaluation of Tongass roadless areas.

### Access and Infrastructure

I believe that there is a need for the Tongass National Forest to retain opportunities for the communities of Southeast Alaska regarding basic access and utility infrastructure. This is primarily related to road systems, the State ferry system, electrical utility lines, and hydropower opportunities that are on the horizon. This need reflects in part the overall undeveloped nature of the Tongass National Forest and the relationship of the 32 communities that are found within Southeast Alaska. Most if not all the communities are lacking in at least some of the basic access and infrastructure necessary for reasonable services, economic stability, and growth. This includes opportunities for the communities themselves and Southeast Alaska as a whole.

The Tongass Forest Plan retains these opportunities for the communities, and several of the known corridor proposals for transportation and utilities were allocated on the Forest Plan map as Transportation Utility System corridors. These potential

corridors and others that have been considered in the past have been displayed on the individual roadless area maps found in the Final SEIS CD and on the Web site dedicated to the SEIS ([www.tongass-seis.net](http://www.tongass-seis.net)). Most of the wilderness alternatives in the SEIS would preclude some of these opportunities to varying degrees.

## ***Other Considerations***

Several other considerations are discussed in the following four sections. These include legal guidance, public input, environmentally preferred alternative, and an alternative comparison by present net value.

## **Legal Guidance**

### **Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)**

Congressionally designated wilderness in the Tongass National Forest comes from two pieces of legislation. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980 established 14 wildernesses totaling 5.5 million acres within the Tongass. Two of the areas, Admiralty Island and Misty Fiords, were also designated as National Monuments. Before ANILCA there was no designated wilderness on the Tongass. ANILCA provides some important congressional determinations, findings, and information relating to additional wilderness in Alaska, and was considered in making the decision here. ANILCA direction relating to additional wilderness includes the following.

Section 101(d). This Act provides sufficient protection for the national interest in the scenic, natural, cultural, and environmental values on the public lands in Alaska and at the same time provides adequate opportunity for satisfaction of the economic and social needs of the State of Alaska and its people; accordingly, the designation and disposition of the public lands in Alaska pursuant to this Act are found to represent a proper balance between the reservation of national conservation system units and those public lands necessary and appropriate for more intensive use and disposition, and thus Congress believes that the need for future legislation designating new conservation system units, new conservation areas, or new national recreation areas, has been obviated thereby.

Section 708(b)(3). Areas reviewed in such Final Environmental Statement and not designated as wilderness or for study by this Act or remaining in further planning upon enactment of this Act need not be managed for the purpose of protecting their suitability for wilderness designation pending revision of the initial plans; and (4). Unless expressly authorized by Congress the Department of Agriculture shall not conduct further statewide roadless area review and evaluation of National Forest System lands in the State of Alaska for the purpose of determining their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Section 1326 (b). No further studies of Federal lands in the State of Alaska for the single purpose of considering the establishment of a conservation system unit, national recreation area, national conservation area, or for related or similar purposes shall be conducted unless authorized by this Act or further Act of Congress.

DEFINITIONS: Section 102 (4). The term "conservation system unit" means any unit in Alaska of the National Park System, National Wildlife Refuge System, National Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems, National Trails System,

National Wilderness Preservation System, or a National Forest Monument including existing units, units established, designated, or expanded by or under the provisions of this Act, additions to such units, and any such unit established designated or expanded hereafter; and (13). The terms “wilderness” and “National Wilderness Preservation System” have the same meaning as when used in the Wilderness Act (78 Stat. 890).

### **Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA)**

In November 1990, TTRA amended ANILCA and designated five new wildernesses and one wilderness addition, totaling 296,080 acres. The Act also designated 12 permanent LUD II areas, totaling 727,765 acres. Congressionally designated LUD II areas are to be managed in a roadless state to retain their wildland characteristics; however, they are less restrictive on access and activities than wilderness, primarily to accommodate recreation and subsistence activities and to provide vital Forest transportation and utility system linkages, if necessary.

The 18 areas designated as wilderness or LUD II in TTRA include all or portions of 17 of the 23 areas included in the US House of Representatives Bill HR 987: 1.02 million out of 1.82 million acres.

### **Public Input**

The public submitted more than 176,000 separate pieces of input during the public comment period for the Draft SEIS. These “responses” were received in a number of formats with over 98 percent being form responses. The remaining non-form responses were received from all 50 states and several foreign countries. In addition, 18 public hearings were held to elicit public comment over this period. Much of the public comment centered on the opposition to timber harvest and road building, and more often recommended wilderness or LUD II as a means to eliminate those activities. Some comments questioned various analyses included in the Draft SEIS and suggested additional analyses. Some comments also demanded extensive additional analyses, often at a level of detail beyond that needed for this programmatic environmental analysis. Additionally, many comments received on the Draft SEIS were concerned with issues outside the scope of the SEIS. Appendix F of the Final SEIS includes a summary of the public comment process, results, and responses to substantive comments.

The public participation process for the SEIS was designed to obtain information to assist me in making the most informed decision possible. Every comment received was considered, regardless of whether it was one comment repeated by thousands of people, or a comment submitted by only one person. The process was not designed, nor has it ever been, to be a public voting process or opinion poll.

The Tongass National Forest has been considered for wilderness designation several times in the past (1979 and 1997 Forest Plans, ANILCA, TTRA). Not all of the areas considered at those times were designated, and those who wanted them designated then still want them designated. Similarly, others who do not want these additional areas designated are concerned that we are still giving them consideration for wilderness. Both sides conclude that the Forest Service is not listening to them. People do not agree on how the public lands should be managed to meet multiple-use sustained-yield mandates, which include land uses ranging from designated wilderness to areas managed with an emphasis on commodity production.

There were different views in the public comments about how overwhelmingly wild the Tongass should remain. Many comments stated they wished to preclude additional timber harvesting and additional road construction on the Tongass. They

also thought that having the land designated as wilderness was the best way to stop these activities.

### **Environmentally Preferable Alternative**

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA require that the Record of Decision specify “the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable” (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). This alternative has generally been interpreted to be the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s Section 101 (CEQ’s “Forty Most-Asked Questions”, 46 Federal Register, 18026, March 23, 1981). Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least physical change to the biological and physical environment. Alternative 8 of the Final SEIS is the environmentally preferable alternative. All alternatives meet legal and environmental standards.

### **Alternative Comparison by Present Net Value**

Present net value (PNV) is a measure of economic efficiency, which takes a national accounting approach and seeks to measure the costs and benefits to society associated with a given alternative. The PNV of a given alternative is the discounted sum of all benefits minus the discounted sum of all costs associated with that alternative. This type of analysis may be used in part to help identify planning alternatives that maximize net public benefits. PNV summarizes the costs and benefits associated with an alternative in a single dollar value, but only includes those costs and benefits that can be quantified in monetary terms. Other values that cannot be reasonably assigned monetary values are evaluated using other quantitative and qualitative criteria (36 CFR 219.12). Thus, the PNV component of the economic efficiency analysis must not be viewed as the full valuation of an alternative, but rather should be considered in a broader context when comparing alternatives.

The PNV estimates developed for this SEIS incorporate estimates of revenue for the timber program and estimated use values for recreation and tourism over a 160-year planning period. Costs include only those planning and administrative costs that could be estimated to vary across different alternatives, primarily those associated with timber. Other costs and benefits that cannot be quantified in monetary terms are not included in this summary measure. Values associated with employment and multiplier effects also are not included in the PNV calculations. This analysis is discussed in detail in the Economic Efficiency section of Chapter 3 of the SEIS.

Based on the estimation procedures used, Alternative 6 has the highest PNV of the alternatives evaluated. The selected alternative has the lowest PNV. High wilderness alternatives, such as alternatives 6 and 8, result in higher recreation use and value estimates and lower timber planning and support costs. Projected timber sale activities are more extensive under alternatives 1, 2, and 4, recreation use and value estimates are lower, and timber-related planning and support costs are higher. A more detailed comparison of the alternatives expressed in economic, environmental, physical, and other appropriate quantitative and qualitative terms is presented in the Comparison of Alternatives section in Chapter 2 of the SEIS.

Timber industry employment has fallen from a peak of 3,540 in 1990 to 780 jobs in 2001, and the industry continues to struggle with poor markets and uncertain timber supply. The economic hardship faced by these workers, their families and their communities are a consideration. In light of this, the employment and related economic activities generated by the timber harvests allowed in the selected alternative has received considerable weight in the decision. At the same time, approximately 39 percent of the National Forest System land in Southeast Alaska is

currently in wilderness, LUD II or national monument designations, and an additional 39 percent is in non-development LUDs where commercial timber harvest is not allowed. While these wild lands surely hold immense value for the American public, the marginal economic and social benefit of additional wilderness is more open to question. I believe that by maximizing or diversifying economic opportunity for Southeast Alaskan residents, the selected alternative provides the most public benefit of all the planning alternatives at this time.

## ***Findings Required by Other Laws and Authorities***

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

NEPA requires that federal agencies prepare detailed statements on proposed actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. NEPA's requirement is designed to serve two major functions:

- To provide decision-makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of proposed actions prior to adoption;
- To inform the public of, and allow comment on, such efforts.

The Forest Service has compiled and generated an enormous amount of information relevant to the effects of each of the alternatives considered in the SEIS. Such information builds on the data, analysis, and public involvement set forth in the 1997 Forest Plan Revision documents prior to the SEIS, including the 1989 Analysis of the Management Situation and draft, supplemental, and final EISs leading to the 1997 Record of Decision for the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan Revision. The decision was informed by an array of public input, including public meetings, comments from the internet website, interest group campaigns, and a comment period that was longer than required. The public provided significant comment on the selected alternative as it is very similar to the preferred alternative identified in the Draft SEIS.

I find the environmental analysis and public involvement process the SEIS is based on complies with each of the major elements of the requirements set forth by the CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). My conclusion is supported by the following findings.

First, the SEIS considered a broad range of reasonable alternatives. The eight alternatives considered in detail in the Final SEIS represent only part of the total number of alternatives considered over the course of the analysis. The alternatives analyzed in the SEIS range from the No Action alternative to recommending all inventoried roadless areas for wilderness designation. The amount of new wilderness designation considered in the action alternatives ranges from 0.7 million to 9.6 million acres. Each alternative analyzed in detail responds to different aspects of issues related to wilderness recommendations on the Tongass National Forest.

Second, the SEIS reflects consideration of cumulative effects of the alternatives by evaluating past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the planning area.

Third, the analysis displayed in the SEIS reflects the current condition of roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest. All Tongass National Forest lands were assessed to determine if they were eligible for wilderness consideration based on The Wilderness Act and the Forest Service's forest planning directives system for

the SEIS. Volumes II and III of the SEIS reflect information from that extensive assessment and represent an update to Appendix C of the Analysis of the Management Situation and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision. In those two volumes, each of the 109 inventoried roadless areas has a roughly 12-page report summarizing the area's capability, availability, and need for wilderness designation. The section that addresses need also includes a summary of what each roadless area's relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be.

## National Forest Management Act

### Diversity and Viability Provisions for Fish and Wildlife

Under the terms of the National Forest Management Act, forest plans must provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of specific land areas to meet overall multiple use objectives. To meet the diversity provision of the Act, the 1982 forest-planning rule directs " Fish and wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area."

I conclude, based on the analysis displayed in the SEIS and Draft and Final EISs for the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, Alternative 1 of the SEIS will provide an amount and distribution of habitat adequate to maintain viable populations of vertebrate species in the planning area and therefore the diversity provisions of NFMA will be met by selecting Alternative 1. Alternative 1 is essentially the same decision as the one selected in the Record of Decision for the 1997 Forest Plan Revision and I am reaffirming the conclusion reached by the Regional Forester in 1997 in the Record of Decision for the Forest Plan Revision.

Alternative 1 reflects the extensive analysis and best available information used for the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, which considered the viability of old growth associated species, possible effects of alternatives, and the likelihood of maintaining viable well-distributed populations. The 1997 Forest Plan Revision, and similarly Alternative 1 of the SEIS, provides a combination of land allocations that protects 90 percent of the productive old growth remaining on the Tongass. Given those allocations, the scientific review of the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, and that Forest Plan monitoring indicates harvest levels have been less than predicted over the first 5 years of Plan implementation and the old growth reserve system is slightly larger than predicted, the degree of risks to viable populations are even slightly lower than anticipated in the 1997 Forest Plan Revision.

### Management Indicator Species

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to management indicator species along with ongoing Forest Plan monitoring information. Since there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that the overall level of activities under the Forest Plan (and therefore Alternative 1 of the SEIS) is not anticipated to cause a loss of viability to any populations or species, including management indicator species. Management indicator species continue to be monitored under the Forest Plan monitoring program. There is ongoing evaluation by the Forest Service and other State and Federal agencies to determine if the mix of indicator species in place for the Plan is the most appropriate. If it is determined that a better mix of indicator species is applicable, future Forest Plan planning processes will be used to address it.

## **Sensitive Species**

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to sensitive species along with ongoing Forest Plan monitoring information. Because there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that the overall level of activities under the Forest Plan (and therefore Alternative 1 of the SEIS) is not anticipated to contribute to a trend toward Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population and species.

## **Coastal Zone Management Act**

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to coastal zone management. Since there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that at least as much resource protection is provided by the Forest Plan (and therefore from Alternative 1 of the SEIS) as from the standards of the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act and its implementing regulations.

## **Endangered Species Act**

There are no terrestrial or fresh water threatened or endangered species on the Tongass National Forest. Five federally listed species occur in the saltwater within the boundary of the Tongass National Forest: Humpback whale, Snake River sockeye salmon, Stellar sea lion, Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon, and Snake River fall chinook salmon. I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to threatened and endangered species. Since there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that the Forest Plan (and therefore Alternative 1 of the SEIS) is deemed not likely to adversely affect federally listed species occurring on the Tongass.

## **Subsistence, Section 810 of ANILCA**

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to subsistence determinations. Because there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's determination included in the 1997 Record of Decision.

## **Clean Water Act**

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to water quality and beneficial uses along with ongoing Forest Plan monitoring information. Since there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that the implementation of the Forest Plan (and therefore Alternative 1 of the SEIS) is expected to maintain and improve water quality and satisfy all State water quality requirements.

## **Clean Air Act**

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to air quality. Since there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and

the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that the overall level of activities under the Forest Plan (and therefore Alternative 1 of the SEIS) is not anticipated to degrade air quality or violate state implementation plans.

### **National Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001)**

This rule established prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands. The inventoried roadless areas to which these prohibitions apply are identified in a set of maps, contained in the Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2, dated November 2000. (For the Tongass these maps correspond closely with the 1996 roadless area inventory that was done for the 1997 Forest Plan Revision.) In May 2001, the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho enjoined the Forest Service from implementing the Roadless Rule, a decision that was subsequently appealed. In December 2002, a three-justice panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the Idaho ruling. The case is currently awaiting consideration by a larger panel of Ninth Circuit judges. Several other states, including the State of Alaska, filed lawsuits similar to the State of Idaho. These lawsuits also are still pending. Meanwhile, the Forest Service initiated a review of the Roadless Rule and is evaluating public comment taken on an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for roadless conservation. This effort has been undertaken to consider making adjustments to the Roadless Rule.

### **NFMA Planning Regulations (2000)**

The Forest Service adopted new Planning Regulations for the National Forest System Land and Resource Management in November 2000. These regulations were subject to intensive review after adoption by the Forest Service under the direction of the Secretary of Agriculture. As a result, the Forest Service issued for public comment a new proposed Rule in December 2002 designed to improve the 2000 Rule by providing a planning process which is more readily understood, is within the agency's capability to implement, is within anticipated budgets and staffing levels, and recognizes the programmatic nature of forest planning. The public comment period is scheduled to end March 6, 2003. Comments received will be analyzed and used for developing the Final Planning Regulations. Both the 2000 and the 2002 proposed Rules acknowledge Forest Plans that have been revised, or are under revision, using the 1982 Planning Regulations. The Tongass Forest Plan Revision was done under the 1982 Regulations and is consistent with either of the new Planning Regulation approaches.

### **Floodplains and Wetlands (Executive Orders 11988 and 11990)**

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to floodplains and wetlands along with Forest Plan monitoring information. Since there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that the overall level of activities under the Forest Plan (and therefore Alternative 1 of the SEIS) is anticipated to avoid, to the extent possible, short and long term effects from the occupancy and modification of flood plains and the modification or destruction of wetlands.



## **Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)**

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices related to the economic and social environment, including the sub regional overview and community descriptions. Because there is little change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that the risk of disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations from the Forest Plan (and therefore Alternative 1 of the SEIS) is considered very low.

## **Civil Rights**

I examined the new information presented in the SEIS and associated appendices potentially related to civil rights. Because there is no change between Alternative 1 of the SEIS and the 1997 Forest Plan Revision, I am reaffirming the Regional Forester's conclusion in the 1997 Record of Decision that no actual or projected violation of legal rights to equal protection under the law is foreseen under the Forest Plan (and Alternative 1 of the SEIS), therefore, no civil rights impacts are reported in the SEIS.

## ***Implementation***

The U.S. District Court of Alaska proceedings related to the March 2001 decision which precipitated this SEIS has enjoined project implementation that could affect the wilderness character of Tongass roadless areas until 45 days after the publication of the Final SEIS in the Federal Register. In addition, Congress recently enacted very specific direction to implement this SEIS without delay by prohibiting review in the Forest Service administrative appeal process and prohibiting judicial review.

The lands encompassed in the inventoried roadless areas and other unroaded lands on the Tongass National Forest will continue to be managed as directed in the 1997 Forest Plan standards and guidelines for the applicable underlying Land Use Designations.

To promote consistency in the planning and implementation of Forest Plan projects, the procedures outlined in Appendix C of the Final SEIS should be followed. This includes tracking of relative information and data in the corporate GIS system.

## ***Appeal Rights***

This decision is not subject to appeal. The following specific language was included in the 2003 Appropriations Bill signed by President Bush on February 20, 2003:

Sec. 335. The Record of Decision for the 2003 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the 1997 Tongass Land Management Plan shall not be reviewed under any Forest Service administrative appeal process, and its adequacy shall not be subject to judicial review by any court of the United States.

## ***Contact Person***

If you would like more information on the Final Supplemental EIS, please contact:

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## ***Approval***



DENNIS E. BSCHOR  
Regional Forester

February 24, 2003

Date