



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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September 16, 2019

Carey Case
U.S. Forest Service
P.O. Box 1328
12 N. Nordic Drive
Petersburg, AK 99833

Subject: Central Tongass Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Tongass National Forest, Alaska

Dear Ms. Case:

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) has reviewed the U.S. Forest Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central Tongass Project. While not all bureaus within DOI were able to review the Draft EIS, we offer the following comments, which are based on authorities found in the National Environmental Protection Act of 1970.

Comments

The Draft EIS includes an ambiguous citation from the DOI's U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and we recommend replacing the reference with available data to improve the Final EIS and project. The topic of water temperature begins on page 165 within Chapter 3, Environment and Effects. In the second paragraph of this section, the authors present a general statement made in 2009 by a USGS employee about water temperatures in the streams of Southeast Alaska. There is a reference on page 412 within Chapter 4, References and Lists, noting this as personal communication. We request that the sentence and reference be removed as they are unsupported by USGS data or publications.

We recommend the U.S. Forest Service utilize and reference stream temperature data from the USGS that is approved and publicly available for the Final EIS and project. There are 14 USGS streamflow information stations within the Tongass National Forest that collect water temperature at 15-minute intervals. Most of these stations have been collecting water temperature data for approximately five years. The data indicates that the 20-degree standard for growth and propagation of fish is exceeded most years at four monitoring stations throughout Southeast Alaska. This information can be found at: <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis>.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft EIS. If you have any questions concerning our comments, please contact J. Michael Norris, USGS Coordinator for Environmental Assessment Reviews, at (603) 226-7847 or mnorris@usgs.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Philip C. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Philip" being the most prominent.

Philip Johnson
Regional Environmental Officer - Alaska