



Organized Village of Kake

P.O. Box 316

Kake, Alaska 99830-0316

Telephone 907-785-6471

Fax 907-785-4902/www.kake-nsn.gov

(Federally Recognized Tribal Government serving the Kake, Alaska area)



Resolution No. 2024-08: Urging the Department of Agriculture to include the Tongass National Forest in the proposed national old growth forest plan amendment rule.

WHEREAS, The Organized Village of Kake (hereinafter OVK) is a federally recognized Indian Tribe, is the organized pursuant to the authority of the Federal Indian Reorganization Acts (hereinafter IRA) of 1934 & 1936 with IRA Council as the duly elected governing body formed under its Constitution and By-laws to execute agreements and contracts with the United States of benefit its citizens; and,

WHEREAS, OVK is further defined as an Indian Tribe in the Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act, PL 93-638 and as such is entitled to contract with the Federal Government for the operation of any federal programs, services, activities or functions serving its citizens; and,

WHEREAS, OVK's highest priorities include enhancing the quality of life of tribal citizens through economic enterprises and social programs, preserving and sustaining cultural traditions, and advocating for the protection and preservation of customary and traditional areas and gathering practices important to our traditional harvesting of foods ("subsistence"), medicines, and cultural activities; and

WHEREAS, our traditional territory covers over 2,300,000 acres within what is now known as the Tongass National Forest, including lands on Kupreanof Island, Kuiu Island, Eastern Baranof Island, eastern & southern Admiralty Island, and along the mainland, as far north as the Taku River, south to Thomas Bay, and the Sanborn Canal; and

WHEREAS, the Keex Kwaan have relied upon these lands to support our ways of life for more than 10,000 years; and

WHEREAS, our traditional territory holds sacred, cultural, and spiritual significance to us because these lands provide our people with salmon, deer, wild foods, traditional medicinal plants, and trees important for traditional arts and cultural uses that define who we are and where we come from; and

WHEREAS, protecting the old-growth and mature forests and trees in our traditional territory is of critical importance to protecting and preserving our gathering practices ("subsistence"), activities, culture, and ways-of-life; and

WHEREAS, logging old-growth and mature trees has detrimentally affected our tribal citizens by decreasing subsistence hunting opportunities near Kake, damaging fish habitat, causing landslides, desecrating sacred and cultural sites, and making it more difficult to find places in the forest where we can still find the healthy habitat that sustains our people spiritually and culturally; and,

WHEREAS, OVK has long advocated for the protection of old-growth trees in our traditional areas of the Tongass by participating in the Forest Service's planning processes, government-to-government

consultation, administrative appeals, and litigation challenging timber sales, supporting measures like the Roadless Rule that protect our forests, and other advocacy; and,

WHEREAS, fighting to protect our traditional territory takes significant time and staff resources that OVK could devote to other important programs to benefit our tribal citizens if we did not need to fight logging proposals; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture (the Department) is preparing an environmental impact statement that will “propose to amend all land management plans for units of the National Forest System . . . to include consistent direction to conserve and steward existing and recruit future old-growth forest conditions,” 88 Fed. Reg. 88,042 (Dec. 20, 2023); and

WHEREAS, the preliminary proposed action the Department is considering would prohibit commercial logging of old-growth trees in all national forests except the Tongass National Forest; and

WHEREAS, instead of providing for the protection of old-growth and mature trees in the Tongass, the preliminary proposed action would allow commercial logging of old-growth on the Tongass where “necessary to allow for implementation of the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy,” 88 Fed. Reg. at 88,047; and

WHEREAS, OVK does not support this exemption and urges the Department to remove it from the preliminary proposed rule;

WHEREAS, no exemption is needed to allow for implementation of beneficial aspects of the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy that OVK supports, which include refocusing forest management on restoration, recreation, and resilience, as well as improving engagement with Tribal Nations and identifying opportunities for investment to reflect the needs and opportunities in the region; and

WHEREAS, an exemption that allows for continued commercial old-growth and mature tree logging would threaten the ways-of-life of our citizens and force OVK to continue to use its resources to fight logging proposals and advocate for durable protection of our traditional territory; and

WHEREAS, although the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy provides for an end to large-scale old-growth timber sales on the Tongass, the Forest Service has continued to offer old-growth timber sales under the strategy; and

WHEREAS, the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy has not been adopted or defined through regulations or other durable policy guidance and can easily be changed by a future federal administration; and

WHEREAS, durable protection for old-growth and mature trees in the Tongass is needed; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary proposed action also includes an exception that allows old-growth logging for culturally significant uses, 88 Fed. Reg. at 88,047; and

WHEREAS, OVK strongly supports the culturally significant uses exception, which is important for ensuring that our tribal citizens may continue the selective cutting of trees needed to practice our heritage.

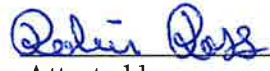
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that OVK supports protecting the remaining old-growth and mature trees in the Tongass from commercial logging and urges the Department to remove the Tongass exemption from the proposed national old-growth forest plan amendment to ensure that the old-growth trees of the Tongass are protected from commercial logging; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OVK urges the Department to retain the culturally significant uses exception.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly adopted at an IRA Council Meeting this 6TH day of MAY, 2024 by a quorum of * (includes president as non-voting chairperson except in case of tie vote) with 6 yes votes, 0 no votes, and 0 abstaining.


Joel M. Jackson, President


Attested by

* A text poll vote was done 5-6-2024
6 yes votes 0 No votes

