

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/22/2024 4:00:00 AM

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Organization: Tribal - Organized Village of Kasaan

Title: Tribal Council President

Comments: Organized Village of Kasaan

## RESOLUTION OVK 24-08-002

Urging the Dept of Agriculture to Include the Tongass National Forest in the proposed national old growth forest plan amendment rule

WHEREAS the Organized Village of Kasaan is a duly constituted federally recognized Indian Tribe organized pursuant to the authority of the United States Congress by the Indian Reorganization Act, and such legislation of June 18, 1934 ( 48 Stat. 984) and May 1, 1936 ( 49 Stat. 1250); and

WHEREAS, the Corporate Charter of the Organized Village of Kasaan (OVK) (Ratified October 15, 1938) states in its Purpose and Existence, " in order to further the economic development of the Indians residing in the neighborhood of Kasaan, Alaska, by conferring upon the OVK corporate rights and powers; and to enable this Village and its members to undertake enterprises designed to secure for the members of the corporation an assured economic independence ... "; and

WHEREAS, the OVK is governed by a Council of elected representatives composed of a President and six members who act in accordance with the powers granted to it by its Constitution and By-Laws (Ratified on October 5, 1938); and

WHEREAS the OVK is committed to promoting, preserving, and protecting indigenous Haida identity and values for our elders and youth. We look to the future in unity by developing our economic opportunities, promoting education, and utilizing our cultural, natural, and social resources.

WHEREAS, our traditional territory covers the east side of what is currently known as Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska and the most southern part of the Tongass National Forest. This includes the land and sea from Cape Chacon to Thorne Bay.

WHEREAS, the Kagani Haida 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 our 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,

WHEREAS, logging old-growth and mature trees has detrimentally affected our tribal citizens by decreasing subsistence hunting opportunities near Kasaan, 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 Tribal Council does not support this exemption and demands the Department 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 on 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 for 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 crucial; 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, the OVK strongly supports the culturally significant uses exemption, which is important for ensuring that our tribal citizens may continue the selective cutting of trees needed to practice our heritage.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Organized Village of Kasaan Tribal Council 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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OVK demands the Department to retain the culturally significant uses exemption.

CERTIFICATION APPROVED, PASSED AND ADOPTED by a duly constituted quorum of the Organized Village

of Kasaan's Tribal Council on this 22nd day of August 2024:

ATTACHMENT: RESOLUTION OVK 24\_08\_002.pdf - this is the same content that is coded in text box; it was originally only included as an attachment