

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/18/2025 8:07:28 AM

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Comments: My name is Marian Allen. I am writing today to share my thoughts and feedback on the 2025 Draft assessment for the Tongass Forest Revision process.

The Tongass National Forest is important to me. I moved to the Tongass to live closer to the natural world and it has taught me how I can co-exist with it by harvesting wild foods, which plants can give me beautiful dye colors, how to live in better balance with the other life forms whose home is here, and a grounding of spiritual connection with the forest and the sea. Being a part of the forest and the ocean gives me joy while also driving home the message of how insignificant my - and any human - life is in the order of the planet and universe. I have lived off the grid for 16 years and spent time in a special use permit cabin in the Wilderness, fished commercially, and depend on foods from the Tongass.

The purpose of this assessment is to tell the story of where we are now, so that we can figure out what needs to change in the new plan. The agency has heard the priorities of Southeast Alaska communities through extensive outreach and engagement processes over the past 6 years. The 2025 Draft Assessment should accurately reflect Southeast Alaskans priorities: protecting the functioning ecosystems of the Tongass National Forest, working collaboratively and towards co-stewardship with tribal governments and local communities, prioritizing subsistence harvesting, and investing in a more diversified economy that includes large and small-scale tourism, commercial and sports fishing, and recreation. Changing the designation of the rest of West Chichagof from LUD II to Wilderness nomination/recommendation would provide a foundation for the sustainability of the needs of the people and forest in my neighborhood, the priorities widely expressed by many in Southeast. I commented on this change in my initial input into this process but have not seen it in the draft.

As we continue through this assessment phase, I want to re-emphasize the the following priorities that also are especially important and which I think the current forest plan does not adequately address. They need to be updated accordingly because they are widely held by Southeast Alaskans and should be reflected in the need for change.

The new Forest Plan should recognize the Tongass as the traditional homelands of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples who have lived here since time immemorial. Subsistence, harvesting wild foods, traditional uses, and food security are the highest priorities for many people on the Tongass, and the Forest should be managed accordingly. Climate change is a top community concern across the region, and the role that the forest plays in adaptation and mitigation needs to be considered throughout the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan should seek a balance in creating opportunities for sustainable small-scale tourism, and protecting local priority areas from overuse. The Tongass should be evaluated for its benefits as a carbon sink, while still allowing for sustainable use of the forest by local peoples for recreation, subsistence, cultural use, and more. The Tongass should be managed to prioritize healthy salmon habitat and salmon-producing watersheds and have 300 stream buffers. The Forest Service should continue to support a transition to a young growth harvest timber economy. The USDA should protect old growth forests for climate mitigation, salmon and deer habitat, and also provide pathways for traditional and cultural use of forest species like red and yellow cedar. I would like to see the Forest Service focus on uplifting local workforce development, partnering with local entities and Tribes, and drive their forest management by community priorities. I want to see traditional ecological knowledge and indigenous values incorporated into the Forest Plan. The Forest Service should prioritize opportunities for outdoor recreation on the Tongass.

One thing that I believe is missing from the Draft Assessment as it is currently written is the focus on salmon as a keystone species. The Aquatic Ecosystems section in particular does not adequately document the social,

economic, and cultural importance of salmon in the region. Across rural Southeast Alaska, residents use an average of 75 pounds of salmon per person each year, and nearly 90% of rural households here use salmon. Commercial salmon fishing in Southeast Alaska supports a global economy and food chain and employs 15% of Southeast Alaskans, more than any other private sector. For myself and other Southeast Alaskans, salmon represent more than food: they represent a way of life that is tied to our ways of life and our economies. The Tongass is a salmon forest. Salmon feed the forest and the forest creates a home for young salmon. Sitka's economic health is directly related to the health of salmon. Specifically, I depend upon salmon as the primary protein source in my diet as do most of my friends. Other friends fish for salmon commercially and we all depend upon the forest for recreation. Many of us find that it grounds us spiritually. Salmon are an integral part of the culture of the Sitka Tribe, who have lived in this land since time immemorial. I cannot imagine Sitka or the Tongass without salmon.

I am grateful that the Forest Service is investing in creating a more holistic Forest Plan with community-driven feedback. I am also glad that the Forest Service is bringing in extra resources to support tribal engagement.

Thank you for considering my input and the input of Southeast Alaskan communities during this important process.