

Central Tongass Landscape Level Analysis Questionnaire

The Forest Service is developing a comprehensive list of activities for analysis on the Petersburg and Wrangell Ranger Districts, and we want to hear from you! From this list, we will develop a proposal for implementing these activities over a 10 to 15 year period.

Q: Do you have an idea for a project on the Central Tongass?

A: In general, the most developed trail systems are on or adjacent to Wrangell and Mitkof Island. The strongest growth industry in southeast Alaska consists of small cruise tour operators, who focus on introducing clients to remote areas for unique recreational experiences. My review of the existing outfitter/guide management plan shows that many remote recreation Study Areas in the Petersburg Ranger District lack hiking trails. We do beachcomb and use logging roads for hiking, but the development of additional trails in places such as North Kuiu and along the

Q: What forest activities or resources are you interested in?

A: In terms of activities, The Boat Company provides hundreds of Americans annually with hiking, freshwater fishing, beach combing, wildlife viewing and other high quality recreational experiences. Small cruise vessel ecotour operators are the largest private sector and growth industry on Tongass National Forest lands. The resources needed by small cruise operators consist of undeveloped public lands with protected anchorages, scenic opportunities and some special feature - whether trail access, kayaking, or wildlife viewing. The Boat Company uses primarily north Kuiu

Q: How do the current Forest conditions affect your ability to use and enjoy the Tongass National Forest?

A: On the positive side, the availability of scenery, wildlife viewing, top-notch stream fishing and other recreation opportunities enable small cruise operators to provide over 600,000 Americans annually with the unique opportunity to experience and enjoy the Tongass National Forest - a forest that belongs to all Americans. But one of the most significant concerns is the past, present and future loss of prime recreation habitat to timber sale purchasers. Clearcutting and large thinning projects are incompatible with private sector economic activity such as ecotourism. The recent

Q: Are there specific places you would like to see developed, or remain undeveloped?

A: As previously noted, logging in beach buffers or anywhere near cruise travel routes is offensive to the American public who own the forest and primarily experience it through the services of outfitter/guides such as The Boat Company. The Boat Company does not perceive any legitimate need for large scale logging anywhere in the Wrangell or Petersburg Ranger Districts, but recognizes the Forest Service's priority is timber sale planning. Please keep proposed timber sales far away from the beach to minimize impacts on private sector economic growth. It



Q: Do you think there's anything the Forest Service can do to improve Forest conditions or public infrastructure in Petersburg or Wrangell Ranger Districts over the next 10 to 15 years? What are your ideas for us?

Examples:

- Convert roads to trails
- Improve or construct new boat launches
- Improve or establish dispersed campsites
- Provide timber harvest or salvage offerings
- Thin young-growth stands to benefit wildlife
- Manage and treat invasive plant populations
- Provide commercial/subsistence firewood gathering opportunities
- Build/improve trails to access known fishing spots

A: The Boat Company strongly supports converting roads to trails and as a sport fishing operation, building and improving trails to access freshwater fishing opportunities. It also surprising to see culvert replacement absent from this list - this would be the best thing the Forest Service can do to mitigate the unquantified but nonetheless significant lost commercial and sport fishing opportunities and economic outputs from those sectors.

Thinning is expensive and the benefits to wildlife are temporary. The primary

Q: What can the Forest Service do to boost the local economy and its businesses?

A: The Forest Service should refocus its management away from the economically beleaguered timber operators and toward the region's primary growth sector - public lands tourism. Additionally, there is a young skilled workforce in construction, including road work while the timber work force is graying or gone back to Oregon and Washington. The best co-intent for habitat remediation would be to employ those younger skilled workers in efforts to remediate the adverse impacts of deferred maintenance of logging roads on fish by replacing culverts and other projects

Q: What else do you want to tell us about your ideas for the Petersburg and Wrangell Ranger Districts?

A: The small cruise sector, which contributes to nearly every southeast Alaska community, is working hard to increase the number of multi-day visitors to the region, including specific efforts to encourage visitors to remain longer in communities after their remote cruise experience. The growth and stability of local small businesses that provide recreation opportunities - charter fishing, hunting, near community wildlife viewing or guided hikes on Mitkof or Wrangell Islands is essential to this effort. Please focus the analysis on market-based trends.

You may fill out this form electronically or by hand. To save the completed form, choose File > Save As and rename the file. Your completed questionnaire can be mailed to: Petersburg Ranger District, PO Box 1328, Petersburg, AK 99833, faxed 907-772-5995, or emailed comments-alaska-tongass-petersburg@fs.fed.us. Thank you for taking the time to respond!

