



United States Department of Agriculture

# Forest Service Timber Program Update

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Forest Service – Alaska Region

# USDA Forest Service – Alaska Region Timber Program Update



## Strategic Priorities

Fiscal Years 2019-2020

- **Active Management**

Delivering on timber commitment, ensuring a continuous and reliable supply of timber into the future.

- **Shared Stewardship**

Partnering and working across boundaries with the State of Alaska, Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, communities, and non-governmental organizations.

- **Customer Service**

Finding ways to get to “yes” by identifying new opportunities for partnerships, working with local service providers, and streamlining and improving our processes.







## Alaska Roadless Rulemaking

- **Focused on the Tongass National Forest**
  - Rulemaking in response to a petition from the State of Alaska for full-exemption.
- **An Alaska Roadless Rule will:**
  - Amend the 2001 National Roadless Area Conservation Rule.
  - Address local economic and development concerns.
  - Conserve roadless areas for generations to come.
  - Determine which currently designated roadless areas would have a different management designation that may allow for timber harvest and road construction and reconstruction in areas where it currently prohibited.
- **Committed to transparent rule-making process**
  - Cooperating Agency engagement with State of Alaska and 6 Tribal governments.
  - Government to government consultation with all federally recognized Tribes.
  - Government to Corporation consultation with Alaska Native Corporations.
  - Public engagement through NEPA processes and other outreach.
- **Timeline**
  - Ongoing: project review and decisions on activities allowed under the 2001 Roadless Rule (i.e., mining, hydropower, interties, etc.).
  - Mid-summer 2019: Draft Environmental Impact Statement released, formal public comment open.
  - June 2020: anticipated decision.

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## Tongass Transition

- **2016 Tongass Forest Plan – Timber Program**
  - Contributing to the continued viability of the timber industry, an economically and socially significant part of Southeast Alaska.
  - Implementing a transition to primarily young-growth timber program.
  - Continuing to provide old-growth “bridge” timber sale opportunities.
- **Young-growth inventory and suitability analysis**
  - Partnership with State of Alaska, includes inventory and workforce development.
  - Inventoried young-growth stands on 30,000 acres across 7 Ranger Districts.
  - Completed stream surveys on roughly half of inventoried acres.
  - In process: suitability analysis to determine amount of acres and volume of young-growth available for harvest.
  - Report expected later in 2019.
- **Thinning Treatments in previously harvested areas**
  - Promote better growth of trees for future timber harvest.
  - Improve wildlife habitat.
  - Goal: to treat 9,000 acres annually.
- **Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Exchange**
  - Phase I: January 2019, the Forest Service and the Trust closed on Phase I of the federally legislated land exchange.
  - Phase I: Approximately 2,400 federal acres near Nauyasut (POW) exchanged for approximately 2,500 acres of Trust land near Ketchikan.
  - Phase I: Federal lands exchanged include old-growth, potentially merchantable timber.
  - Phase II: In process. Will include the remainder of the approximately 18,600 federal acres and 15,500 non-federal acres to be exchanged.







## Status: Tongass Timber Program

- **66,340 MBF of timber currently under contract**
  - Approximately half of this volume is old-growth timber.
  - Nearly half of the volume is young-growth, via a Good Neighbor agreement sale through the State of Alaska.
  - Prior year (FY18) no-bid sales remain available for “off-the-shelf” purchase.
- **Industry Challenges**
  - Unique to Alaska.
  - High costs of goods and materials.
  - High transportation costs from Alaska to the contiguous 48 states.
  - Sparsely developed infrastructure facilities.
  - Variable and unpredictable market conditions.
- **Work to Support Industry Opportunity**
  - All Landowners Group: coordinate operations, find efficiencies, and share infrastructure.
  - Using the Good Neighbor Authority to work cooperatively to with the State of Alaska to implement timber projects on National Forest System lands.
  - Identifying opportunity to use expanded Good Neighbor Authority, allow for partnerships with Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.
  - Updating annual targets.

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## Landscape Level Projects

- **Comprehensive and efficient analysis**
  - Plan on a large spatial scale and increase the number of activities authorized in a single National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and decision.
  - Meet multiple resource objectives, including the timber.
  - NEPA-clear projects for a 10-15 year period.
- **Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis**
  - Approximately 1.8 million acres within the Craig and Thorne Bay Ranger Districts.
  - Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and draft Record of Decision was released in November 2018.
  - Selected alternative closely followed the recommendations made by the Prince of Wales Landscape Assessment Team (POW-LAT), an independently formed collaborative group.
  - Currently in the objection review and resolution phase.
  - First on-the-ground projects focused on timber stand improvement (thinning) and stream restoration.
- **Central Tongass Project**
  - Approximately 3.7 million acres within the Petersburg and Wrangell Ranger Districts.
  - Early Summer 2019: Draft Environmental Impact Statement anticipated to be released for public comment and public meeting.
  - Background: Public meetings and a public comment period was conducted in August-September 2018 on the project notice of intent.





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## State and Private Forestry Program

- **Technical and financial assistance**
  - FY2018: \$6.3 million assistance provided to the State of Alaska, rural communities, and other partners through S&PF programs.
  - 4 year cumulative investment of \$24 million in cooperative fire, cooperative forestry, Forest health, and all lands initiatives.
  - Investments have supported priorities including Tongass Transition young growth inventory, workforce development, Good Neighbor Authority timber projects, and coordination of an All Landowners Group.
- **Highlighted Program Investment:**
  - Cooperative Fire Assistance (FY2018 \$2.2 million\*)  
Grants to the State to supplement fire and fuels protection programs for rural communities and rural lands, and provide financial, technical assistance for State Fire and Fuels Programs.
  - Forest Health Protection (FY2018 \$1 million\*)  
Activities related to forest insects, forest diseases, forest health monitoring, pesticides and pesticide use, and invasive plants on private and public lands.
  - Forest Stewardship (FY2018 \$325,000\*)  
provides landowners with professional planning and technical assistance to keep forestland productive and healthy.
  - Woody Biomass and Wood Innovation (FY2018 \$340,000\*)  
Substantially expands and accelerates wood energy and wood products markets on National Forest System and other forest lands. Using wood fuel is home-grown, keeps money in the community, creates local jobs and bolsters the local economy.

\*approximate





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