

STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE

1997

Source
CSSJR 24(RES)

Legislative
Resolve No.
16



Relating to the Tongass Land Management Plan and to continued Congressional oversight of that plan.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS employment and economic prosperity in Southeast Alaska are inextricably linked to the resources of the Tongass National Forest and are dependent on the management of those resources; and

WHEREAS jobs in the forest products industry are an important element of the economic diversity of Southeast Alaska and should provide an opportunity in the region for communities to maintain healthy economies; and

WHEREAS approximately 60 percent of timber industry jobs have been lost since passage of the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990; and

WHEREAS the establishment of a value-added forest products industry in Southeast Alaska can occur only as a segment of a fully integrated forest products industry capable of the harvesting, transporting, and primary processing of raw forest products into a form usable by the value-added sector of the industry; and

WHEREAS the Alaska Congressional delegation has consistently supported the historic sustainable harvest levels from the Tongass National Forest that are of vital

importance to all Southeast Alaska communities and continues to work for the restoration of the socioeconomic vitality of communities devastated by the failure of the federal government to meet contractual and Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) commitments; and

WHEREAS the Governor's Timber Task Force has determined that an annual harvest of 300 MMBF is the minimum level necessary to sustain an integrated timber industry in Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS the draft TLMP Environmental Impact Statement indicates no viability problem for any species of wildlife or fish on the Tongass National Forest under any of the proposed plan alternatives for at least the next 10 - 15 year planning cycle; and

WHEREAS the United States Forest Service testified before oversight hearings held by Senator Murkowski last summer that the draft TLMP was based on the best science available and indicated no current viability problem for any species of fish or wildlife on the Tongass National Forest; and

WHEREAS the United States Forest Service's wildlife conservation model is based on inadequate data and science extrapolated from models developed for use with South Seas Islands species; and

WHEREAS the lack of any near-term viability crisis for any species of fish or wildlife on the Tongass National Forest provides the opportunity for maintaining a steady course while the necessary Tongass-based science on which to base a long-term conservation strategy is developed; and

WHEREAS, after 10 years of data gathering, analysis, and planning by the United States Forest Service, the people of Southeast Alaska are still burdened by the uncertainty of a stable, reliable timber supply; and

WHEREAS adoption of a final TLMP alternative incapable of providing for a minimum 300 MMBF harvest level will almost certainly cause substantial additional job loss and economic dislocation in the communities of Southeast Alaska that are dependent on a stable supply of timber for all or part of their economic well-being;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature supports the efforts of the Alaska Congressional delegation, in its oversight responsibilities, to ensure that the Tongass National Forest restores and continues to provide for the socioeconomic vitality of the communities of Southeast Alaska; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature supports, at a minimum, the recommendation of the Governor's Timber Task Force that the United States Forest Service make available an annual amount of at least 300 MMBF of timber that is economical to harvest from the Tongass National Forest with offerings uniformly released throughout each fiscal year, because any record of decision that further reduces the harvest level in the Tongass below that volume will continue the devastation of the existing timber industry infrastructure throughout Southeast Alaska and preclude the reestablishment of an integrated forest products industry in Southeast Alaska; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature strongly objects to any Tongass Land Management Plan revision that would prevent the United States Forest Service from making available an annual amount of 300 MMBF of timber that is economical to harvest from the Tongass National Forest and urges that a Tongass Land Management Plan Record of Decision allowing for such an offering level be issued without further delay; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature supports continued Congressional oversight and review of the adequacy of the science, social and economic analysis, and process employed by the United States Forest Service in order to ensure that any decisions by the United States Forest Service are not detrimental to the social and economic well-being of the communities and people of Southeast Alaska and that all decisions are scientifically credible and legally defensible.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.