



Tongass Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

February 17-19, 2015

Extended Stay America, Juneau, AK

The Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC) held its sixth meeting in Juneau at the Extended Stay America hotel from February 17-19, 2015. During the three-day meeting, the TAC continued robust discussions regarding possible Forest Plan Amendment recommendations to accelerate the transition to young growth forest management on the Tongass. They discussed the need for more clarity about the old growth harvest trajectory, and considered various potential harvest volume and timing considerations. In addition to talking about recommendations for the Plan Amendment, the Committee discussed institutional systems-level changes that must occur for the transition to young growth to succeed, as well as possible economic investments and monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

The meeting agenda is available online, [here](#). The following summary provides a description of each topic discussed and the resolution (where applicable). Recordings of the TAC deliberations are available by contacting Liz Duxbury at lduxbury@merid.org. See Appendix A for a meeting participant list (including TAC members, staff, and members of the public who attended, both in-person and virtually).

Welcoming Remarks and Updates

At the beginning of the meeting, Committee Designated Federal Official (DFO) Jason Anderson provided updates related to the Plan Amendment process, and allowed an opportunity for additional Committee updates, as described below.

Forest Service Open Houses

During late January and early February, the Forest Service (FS) hosted a series of open houses to provide information to the public regarding the Amendment and proposed alternatives for the Amendment. Jason Anderson offered to provide maps and other handouts with technical information, if requested. Examples of these maps include the spatial distribution of young growth in conjunction with proposed/completed land exchanges and the Tongass 77 watersheds¹.

¹ The maps displayed at the meeting are available online on the [February meeting page](#) of the TAC website.

Sealaska Legislation Effects on Conservation Strategy

There is a potential concern that the changes associated with the Sealaska legislation may affect the conservation strategy. Jason Anderson clarified that there will be a qualitative analysis of the units within the conservation strategy and the potential impacts of both the Sealaska changes as well as any proposed alternatives. This analysis will consider the cumulative effects of all operations (i.e., FS, Sealaska, Mental Health, etc.). While the changes may affect these units, one member explained that the legislation also increased the amount of acres in LUDII designation by 150,000. In addition to the effects on the conservation strategy, these changes also result in implementation challenges – for example, the Kosciusko project has been adjusted due to the legislation changes.

USFS/USDA and Congressional Leadership

As mentioned during the January TAC meeting, Forest Supervisor Cole will be retiring in April, and Deputy Supervisor O'Connor started a new position as Forest Supervisor for Bridger-Teton National Forest. There were no updates at this time, but Jason Anderson hopes that the new Forest Supervisor will be named by mid-March, to begin in April as Forrest Cole departs, in order to avoid having to take on an Interim Supervisor. The Deputy Supervisor will then be named shortly after.

Facilitator Connie Lewis had the opportunity to meet with Under Secretary Robert Bonnie prior to the meeting. He is prepared to attend the March TAC meeting if requested. She outlined three major takeaways from their discussion:

- Under Secretary Bonnie truly understands the risks and vulnerability that the Committee members face by discussing controversial topics and offering suggestions that are not necessarily in line with their constituencies' views.
- Should the Committee come to agreement, Bonnie will do everything in his power to support the outcomes.
- Bonnie recognized the risks associated with not coming to agreement, particularly in terms of the political realities of transitions at the executive level.

Connie also met with Senator Murkowski's staff to represent the Committee's discussions and answer their questions. They expressed that the Senator cares deeply about the local communities in Southeast Alaska. Kate Troll met with Senator Murkowski as well, and she expressed great excitement in the work the TAC is doing. She believes the work could be groundbreaking, and anticipates working on forestry issues with her committee in April 2015.

Other Updates and Events

- The Alaska Forest Association will hold its spring meeting on March 4, 2015 at the Baranof Hotel in Juneau. This meeting is open to the public.

- The State legislature recently introduced a piece of legislation that allowed more flexibility on calculating a positive appraisal timber sale. This language includes a discussion of benefits beyond price alone, to include value-added processing, local jobs, etc.
- Dargon Point timber sale will be reoffered.
- The Tongass Collaborative Stewardship Group (TCSG) will hold its annual meeting on February 24-25 in Sitka, AK. The group, which began as the Restoration Subcommittee of the Tongass Futures Roundtable, is focused on implementation of the Forest Plan through partnerships and collaborative projects. The group is comprised of about 60 members, 40 of which are actively involved, including FS staff, non-profit organizations, community members, and state and private landowners. The TCSG is interested in supporting the work of the TAC through development of sideboards around implementation.²

Co-Chair Nominations

Due to other pressing commitments, co-chair Wayne Benner resigned from the Committee with deep regrets. Kate Troll, who to date has served as the alternate for the government sector, assumed his place as a full member. Current co-chair, Lynn Jungwirth, expressed the importance of nominating a co-chair from Southeast Alaska. Les Cronk was nominated and approved to fill the co-chair role. He was recognized as being enthusiastic and engaged, not only as a Committee member, but also as a resident of Southeast Alaska.

Young Growth Availability Model Run Results

Keith Rush and Wade Zammit presented a series of model runs based on hybrid approaches of previous model runs. These approaches applied different prescriptions or harvest treatments to different places on the landscape. Specifically, the more aggressive treatments outlined in the original WZ model run (combination of clear-cut and variable retention harvest with 50% removal, 10 year green-up period, and 20 acre limits) were applied to the current timber base, modified and scenic viewshed land use designations (LUDs), and low vulnerability karst. In contrast, the KR model run treatments, based on the group selection or patch cut concept (25% cut per entry, 4 entries over a 100 year period, and 10 acre limits), were applied to riparian management areas (RMAs), old growth reserves (OGRs), and moderate vulnerability karst. No harvest was allowed in high vulnerability karst. The hybrid approaches result in approximately 325,000 acres of young growth, an increase from the 273,000 acres outlined in the current plan. The model runs consisted of the following four scenarios:

² Sarah Campen, coordinator for the Tongass Collaborative Stewardship Group provided this announcement on the final day of the meeting.

1. Hybrid approach (discussed above) with group selection in all beach buffer areas³;
2. Hybrid approach with group selection in beach buffer that overlaps with RMA, OGR, and/or moderate vulnerability karst, and variable retention (VR) harvest in beach buffer with no overlap;
3. Same approach as hybrid 1, but includes a 5 year delay before harvest begins.
4. Same approach as hybrid 2, but includes a 5 year delay before harvest begins.

The outputs of the model runs are outlined in the TAC Hybrid Run Data Presentation, available online, [here](#). In addition to the first two hybrid scenarios, the outputs also display the results of the most “aggressive” approach (the WZ model run) and the current plan. In all scenarios, except the current plan, sustained yield is achieved at 100 MMBF during the 16-20 year timeframe. The model outputs also included an overview of four different demand scenarios. A detailed description of the model assumptions and demand scenarios is available online in the model run summary document, [here](#).

Major Takeaways and Implications of Modeling Work

The TAC reviewed the major takeaways from the modeling work, highlighting the following themes:

- The outputs show the opportunity to *double* the young growth volume as compared to the current plan. Even with netdown, this is a significant outcome.
- The 5 year delay did not make a significant difference for deferring volume later in the transition period. The assumption was that this would help make more volume available and improve economic viability – this was not the case. However, the delay may improve operability – rather than focusing on speed, the focus can be on achieving success.
- While the 5 year delay was not particularly significant for the overall transition period of 15-20 years, it could play an important role in the first 10 years.
- The second period of 5-10 years is the critical period to make a large difference in young growth volume. Due to the Forest Service’s timber planning process, not a lot of harvest will occur in the first 5 years, whether the TAC recommends a delay or not⁴. In addition, the amount of older young growth available for the first 5 years is limited, so it will likely result in a ramp-up of young growth over time, as opposed to a sudden increase of volume. The major change during this period will be in implementation changes as opposed to volume increases. For example, this ramp-up approach will allow for experimentation in young growth harvest during the first period, so that industry and the FS are more prepared when volumes increase.

³ In all scenarios, all beach buffer areas will have a 200’ buffer with no harvest allowed.

⁴ Dargon Point was referenced as an example of a project that faced significant delay (6-7 months or more) due to the planning process.

- The outputs are gross numbers – they do not include operability or any form of net-down. It is a comparison tool for framing the discussion, but does not include absolute values.
- Commercial thinning as a prescription is an ineffective approach for increasing young growth volumes (as displayed by the difference between the current plan and other options). The current plan relies heavily on commercial thinning as a harvest treatment – as much as 40% in the first period and 27% in the second period.
- There are natural limitations to harvest in certain areas, for example, beach buffer. In order to do treatments in those areas, they may need to be subsidized by harvest in other locations.
- The acceptability of harvest in certain areas will be tied closely with actual geographic locations (for example, beach buffers in comparison to anchorage points for fishermen).
- While some members suggested that maps would be helpful to determine the specifics of harvest, others believed that would be too detailed for the task at hand. Instead, they suggested the TAC focus be on the Forest-level and mapping exercises would be more important for the project-level. There may be a middle-ground to referring to maps for certain high-level priorities, such as where harvest areas overlap with high-value fisheries, operability constraints due to physical location, etc.
- There was a strong concern regarding the importance of fisheries habitat; however, other members mentioned that there are no plans to reduce the current protections for fisheries, and they believe that the two industries can coexist.

Preferred Hybrid Approach

The Committee recognized that there is a lot of agreement in the room regarding the overall objective of successfully achieving the transition. That said, there are real social concerns that all interest sectors are facing during the discussions of proposed recommendations. For the conservation side, there is a desire for certainty or clarity regarding the definitive end to old growth timber harvest. For the industry and community side, there is a critical need to support timber infrastructure throughout the transition, and provide supply for the industry that currently exists, particularly on Prince of Wales Island (POW). In order to achieve these goals, the Committee recognized that compromises will need to be made. In order to reduce old growth harvest and give the industry the chance to survive, a more aggressive approach will be needed in other areas. However, this does not mean that other objectives will be compromised. With the right approach, the TAC believes that the overall ecological integrity of the landscape will remain, while giving the FS the tools to give industry the opportunity to survive through the transition, ultimately achieving a balance of economic, ecological, and social objectives.

When asked about preferences regarding model runs, TAC members showed an inclination toward Hybrid 2 (group selection in beach buffer that overlaps with RMA, OGR, and/or moderate vulnerability karst, and variable retention (VR) harvest in beach buffer with no overlap). Rather than a hard commitment of no harvest during the initial 5-year period, the group discussed the value of slowly introducing smaller young growth sales during that period, but not aggressively seeking out larger young growth sales until the next period. This approach would allow for experimentation with young growth at a smaller scale, while allowing time for growth in other young growth stands.

Recommendations Draft – Plan Amendment Alternative

The Committee reviewed the Draft Framework and Recommendations document that subgroups of the TAC worked on prior to the meeting. The draft, as circulated to the TAC prior to the meeting, is available online, [here](#). The purposes of the document are: to facilitate TAC review by populating a comprehensive framework, organized roughly around Plan Amendment components; and to help TAC members identify what still needs to be addressed to achieve agreement on Plan Amendment recommendations. An overview of the TAC's discussion is outlined below. Please see [Appendix B](#) for the draft document which includes the Committee members' edits from drafting sessions during the February meeting.

The Committee agreed that in order to reach full consensus on any of the draft recommendations, it will need to be considered as a full package, including the decisions regarding old growth harvest. In the meantime, they discussed the following proposed changes (as outlined in the draft framework and recommendations document) as potential components of a TAC alternative for the Plan Amendment.⁵

Rationale

The rationale section is intended to explain the intent of the proposed changes in the Amendment, organized beginning at a high-level with major goals, down to a more finite narrative to reinforce those points. Two of the major goals were: replacing old growth with young growth on a one-to-one volumetric basis; and a co-intent that simultaneously achieves young growth harvest and other objectives. In other words, timber is now considered a "coproduct" rather than a "byproduct." The group also proposed a definition of the transition period, defined as when young growth exceeds 50% of timber volume in a 3 year average, or within 10 years, whichever comes first. Within the draft, the group highlighted the areas that the Forest should not consider for harvest, followed by the areas with proposed changes, ordered by largest amount of return in terms of volume, and lowest sensitivity.

⁵ Some changes were not discussed in detail during the small group report-outs, but are included as changes in the draft document. Please see the document for all group edits.

Modified Landscape/Scenic Viewshed

A major goal of the proposed changes to modified landscapes and scenic viewsheds is to maintain or improve the integrity of the landscapes while simultaneously increasing young growth opportunities. On these landscapes, a major impact to harvest is the scenic integrity objectives. The TAC discussed relaxing these scenery standards to the lowest level, with a green-up period of 10 years following harvest.⁶ This change has the potential to increase young growth harvest by 80 MMBF or more over 20 years. The members also recognized the need for flexibility, monitoring, and consultation with community members and other user groups. This is based on the fact that not all modified landscapes and scenic viewsheds are created equal. These additional approaches will help to ensure that management is socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable.

Beach Buffer

The TAC reviewed the two hybrid model options for harvest in beach buffers, proposing the more aggressive of the two options – where beach buffer overlaps with OGR or RMA, harvest will occur through group selection or commercial thinning, and in areas with no overlap, variable retention harvest will be used. Keith Rush clarified that while commercial thin is an option, group selection will likely be the preferred treatment.⁷ One member expressed concern about changing harvest prescriptions due to overlap, since that overlap does not necessarily change the habitat type – in other words, prescriptions should not be changed due to arbitrary overlapping land types. Overall, the main focus of management in the beach buffer will be co-intent of harvesting young growth while maintaining habitat integrity to ensure that the beach buffer is more functional wildlife habitat. In other words, the FS should take an integrated approach to management to achieve multiple objectives.

Jason Anderson reminded the group that beach buffers are important to connecting pieces of the conservation strategy. During effects analysis, there will be an analysis of how harvest in the beach buffer affects the entire conservation strategy.

Ensuring a Successful Transition: Implementation, Monitoring, and Investment

The TAC recognized the importance of not only offering recommendations for Plan Amendment components, but also for implementation and monitoring of the Plan, and potential future investment opportunities and priorities. Please see these sections within [Appendix B](#) for the edits and drafting that occurred during the meeting.

Implementation

⁶ The green-up period in the current plan is 20 years.

⁷ In the model run, approximately 200,000 BF was harvested via commercial thinning.

The implementation section of the draft recommendations document outlines methods for how to successfully implement the recommendations. The TAC stressed that this will not only be a transition into young growth, but a full systems change, or a transformation of how the agency conducts its work. Effective implementation will necessitate flexibility, transparency, creativity, innovation, and risk on the part of the agency. Part of this will include interdisciplinary coordination and communication within the FS and external interagency collaboration and partnerships, as well as ranger accountability and leadership to implement decisions. The group provided suggestions for how to overcome barriers to implementation through changes in internal policy practices and performance actions. Some members suggested that this could be strengthened by being more explicit about the recommendations through specific case examples of not only what has *not* worked in the past, but of positive examples of what *is* working. In future drafts, the group may also consider listing the recommendations in terms of priority or urgency, to ensure that the most important actions are taken first to aid with the transition.

Monitoring

The group did not address monitoring in detail during this meeting, but did stress the importance of providing indicators to ensure effective implementation of the Plan. Including performance measures and indicators will encourage accountability within the FS to achieve the goals of the transition and the overall goals of the Plan. These indicators will provide opportunities to adjust the Plan if the intended outcomes are not being achieved. Some examples of areas to monitor include: industry baseline; amount of timber under contract; local economic impacts/benefits; outcomes of co-intent on multiple resource values; reduction of old growth harvest; etc.

Investment

This subgroup identified four categories of potential investment opportunities: inventory, research, infrastructure, and buyout. Within each category, the group attempted to provide specific details and examples of opportunities.

- **Inventory:** There is a lack of detailed inventory data for many of the young growth stands on the Forest.
- **Research:** The group identified target areas for research on how to implement specific approaches to management. Some examples include digital scaling techniques; silvicultural co-intent techniques; protocol on carbon storage; market research; etc.
- **Infrastructure:** In order to reduce the costs associated with the transition, there will be a need for infrastructure investments. This includes: road systems; establishment of utility corridors; renewable energy/biomass power systems; log transfer facilities/docks; and retooling for the industry. Other financial investments for infrastructure include technical assistance for small businesses and low interest loans tied to FS supply.

- **Buyout:** This option is designed as an incentive in the system to be implemented only if all else fails. This provides the opportunity to buy out businesses that are not surviving due to lack of supply. The group recognized that this is not a preferable option, but that it would provide an option to compensate communities for economic loss.

In future documents, TAC members suggested adding specifics about where the investment is likely to come from (i.e., federal government/USDA or elsewhere), as well as clarifying language around the specific proposed investments. One member suggested it be framed as an economic adjustment plan. Others offered suggestions for additional investment opportunities such as development of a marketing institute or local building alliances to encourage use of locally harvested wood.

Old Growth Bridge Timber

The TAC recognized that while it was not their charge to define old growth, in order to achieve consensus recommendations on the young growth harvest components of the Plan Amendment, they will need to be considered as part of a “package deal” that includes the specifics regarding continued levels of old growth harvest. The TAC already achieved agreement in concept on a reduction of old growth on a 1:1 volumetric basis: the flexibilities that allow for increased young growth harvest will simultaneously reduce old growth harvest. However, some members requested certainty or clarity around the timeframe for the decline of old growth harvest, and/or a specific target for volume limitations. This clarity is important for conservation and industry alike: currently old growth timber supply has a very low level of certainty. It is equally important to other user groups, and therefore the TAC discussed the appropriate role of old growth.

Some potential ideas emerged for what the targets could look like for a proposed end to old growth logging:

- Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) as a target measure;⁸
- On-going small- and micro-sales at a level of 3.5-5MMBF/year;
- Implement the current Tongass Integrated Plan (TIP) as outlined in the Secretary’s memo;⁹
- 10 year timeframe for completing the transition, dependent on a specific start-date (i.e., fully transitioned from old growth to young growth by 2025 or 10 years after the first young growth sale);¹⁰

⁸ Jason Anderson clarified that under the 2012 Planning Rule, ASQ is no longer a term that is used in Forest planning. Also, it should not be confused with the sustainable harvest limit.

⁹ There was confusion regarding which 5 year plan the group was referring to. The TIP is different than the 5 year plan.

- 5 year timeframe for planning large-scale old growth sales (i.e., 5 years after signed ROD, or August 2021, would be the last opportunity for planning old growth sales);
- Implement the May 2013 5 year plan (totaling 456MMBF) with the specific projects laid out in the plan (specific areas that correlate with priority conservation areas have already been considered in this plan);¹¹
- Acreage identified in the May 2013 5 year plan (as opposed to specific geographic locations and timber stands because of the variability in planning vs. sales);
- Build in accountability for completing the sales in the slated timeframe – for example if predicted harvests are not actually sold within the 5 year timeframe, consider extending the timeframe further; and/or
- In addition to a limited timeframe, include a specified volume number to ensure that sales occur during that period.

The group did not achieve consensus on these proposed targets. However, based on the group's initial draft recommendations on young growth components, they believe a significant decline in old growth harvest could be achieved starting in year 11, dependent upon the level of demand. (See below for a discussion of demand scenarios.) This outcome could allow for an exit from old growth 5 years sooner than predicted; however, it will also be dependent on when the significant ramp-down begins. While there has been a lot of pressure to achieve this in 5 years or less, it is likely not possible. On the industry side, it was noted that to end within 5 years would decimate the industry, because of lack of inventory and current sales, and outcome that would significantly impact local communities. Since maintaining the industry was a charge of the TAC, the group must consider those implications. There is no specific volume number that will satisfy their requirements; rather, the importance is in the certainty of sales and supply, because business decisions can only be made based on what is in current inventory or sales, not on a hypothetical volume amount. Ideally, businesses require 3 years of inventory in order to maintain themselves at an economically viable level. In order to transition to a new type of industry, they will likely need supply through the entirety of the transition in order to provide the most opportunities for communities.

¹⁰ Small- and micro-sales of old growth would continue beyond this timeframe.

¹¹ The group clarified that the concept introduced was based on the May 2013 5 year plan, which is different than the plan from December 2014. The 2014 plan includes more young growth sales, and less old growth sales.

The TAC recognized that the ramp down will not necessarily be a smooth process, but rather will be a “stair-step” that maintains enough supply for a viable industry. Certainty can then be increased by removing the barriers to implementation that slow the process, for example through the 5 year planning process and appraisal system.

Other considerations surrounding the specificity of old growth harvest include:

- Role of adjacent landowners in providing supply;
- Outcome of Big Thorne and whether or not that volume is included in the old growth bridge timber supply target;
- Current and potential future litigation at the project-level;
- Impacts on local communities (i.e., jobs, local economies) and the contrasting interests at the national and international level (i.e., existence value; carbon sequestration);
- Balance of export and local manufacture/production;
- Impacts of vegetation management on fish and wildlife populations (for example, review high value watersheds for alternative management strategies and/or priority conservation areas);
- Importance of maintaining current infrastructure for the industry to continue;
- Incentivizing the FS to implement both old growth and young growth sales in a timely manner (with a hope that a hard end to old growth will help achieve this);
- Potential to provide flexibility on longer-term contracts so that planning and sales occur faster (i.e., within 5 years), but contracts can be implemented over a longer time period;
- 5-year planning does not provide certainty – in fact, the sales that result from a 5-year plan are often much different than what is initially proposed (as much as 90% of volume subject to change);
- Due to litigation and other Forest planning delays that have occurred over the past 3 years, the timber industry has limited volume currently under contract. While there are small sales under contract, and other volumes may be available, dependent on the outcomes of litigation, this is a real concern for the industry;
- Disagreement on whether the current 5 year plan offers enough volume for the industry to continue in an economically viable way through the transition;
- Because of the delays in sales and planning, as well as to allow businesses time to transition and young growth sales to be implemented, old growth may need to be offered for a longer timeframe; and
- On-the-ground implementation results in reduced harvest amounts than what is sold.

While the group recognized the pressures from outside constituencies, they also stressed the value of a consensus recommendation. Agreement from a diverse group, for the first time in

40 years of discussions, provides considerable political coverage for the decision-maker. However, regardless of the outcome, litigation is a real threat. Therefore, rather than trying to eliminate litigation, TAC members encouraged each other to maintain their integrity, and determine what the conditions on the ground can provide for the transition. They realized that the desire for certainty is not something that can be achieved through a Forest Plan; however, they do hope to offer clarity about what they believe is possible, articulated as desired future conditions, and then hold each other and the FS accountable for those decisions. This clarity can extend beyond the young growth components to express the impacts on old growth. The outcomes then will extend long beyond the Plan Amendment, through leadership and accountability to implement and monitor the decisions.

Forrest Cole clarified that the discussions regarding specific timeframes and timber sales are decisions that could be included in the Record of Decision (ROD), which will be drafted between the Draft and Final EIS. Jason Anderson concurred: to change the old growth LUDs would trigger a revision of the Plan, so the old growth volumes will appear as a constraint in the decision-making process, but will not appear in the Amendment. Forrest suggested that with a total volume number, the FS could produce a 5 year plan that is in line with that desired outcome. If the goal is to complete planning and sales in a specified timeframe, the 5 year plan could include larger sales and volumes. For example, Forrest stated that the Kuiu project is listed at 40-50MMBF, but there could be 4-5 times more volume available on that land. The current assumption was to offer more of the volume at a later date (years 5-10), but it could be offered sooner to satisfy the timeframe requirements.

The TAC stressed the importance of being explicit in their recommendations to give the FS the tools to achieve a successful transition. Beyond the Amendment and ROD, implementation and monitoring changes that the TAC recommends will be vital to creating a sense of certainty or clarity around the intended outcomes by creating accountability and performance measures for the FS.

Demand Options

To understand the impacts of young growth supply on old growth bridge timber, the TAC outlined two potential demand scenarios to be analyzed by the FS contractor (TetraTech) as part of the effects analysis. The analysis will produce a commensurate supply scenario based on demand, to be reviewed by the TAC. The two scenarios included 46MMBF/year vs. 70 MMBF/year. These demand numbers represent the total demand for timber produced on FS lands, but does not include supply from other lands (i.e., State of Alaska, Sealaska, etc.). The lower number represents the average annual timber sales for the past 10 years. The TAC recognized the importance of providing enough young growth supply to the industry to offer the most opportunities for communities. One member described the industry of the past 10 years as “undernourished.” If the industry must survive on its current supply levels, it may not be capable of reinvesting or taking risks. With more supply, however, there will be more opportunities for new investments. Therefore, they introduced a higher demand scenario to represent this option for flexibility.

When discussing industry demand, TAC members also discussed the following points:

- In the past 10 years, two sawmills and four logging contractors have gone out of business and/or no longer operate in the Tongass. This was stated as evidence that 46MMBF/year is not enough to sustain the industry.
- In addition to young growth, there is an assumption that old growth sales will continue through the small- and micro-sale program at a level of 5MMBF/year. This volume is included in the proposed demand scenarios.
- Additional supply will be provided by state (~10MMBF/year) and Native Corporation (~20MMBF/year) lands. These lands are also reaching their supply limits, so the more supply that is offered through the FS, the less pressure there will be on state and private lands to support the industry.
- The preferred demand numbers offered by members averaged 69MMBF/year.
- On-the-ground realities of projects always result in lower volumes than what is proposed in a sale due to netdown.
- Over the past ten years, actual timber sales have only been a third of the allowable sale quantity (ASQ). Even the higher demand scenario is less than the current ASQ of 120MMBF/year.
- The future timber industry may be very different than the current industry. For example, it could be an industry focused on local communities, spread across the entire region of Southeast Alaska. This could result in very different outcomes than an analysis that is based on the current industry. However, regardless of what the future industry entails, TAC members recognized the importance of maintaining the logging infrastructure in the region.

As part of the effects analysis of the TAC alternative, TetraTech will analyze the two demand scenarios outlined by the TAC: 46MMBF/year and 70MMBF/year. This analysis will include effects on the land base and harvest, as well as economic effects, including impacts on local jobs.

Public Comment

The Committee encourages members of the public to provide input through oral and/or written comment. Every TAC meeting includes a public comment period. Prior to the meeting, many written comments were received. All written comments are available online, [here](#). One Committee member also noted that there were many public comments submitted directly to the FS as part of the Amendment scoping process. A spreadsheet of these comments is available online, [here](#).

The following comments were offered in-person during the meeting:

K.J. Metcalf came to the Tongass in 1962 as the first Naturalist at the Mendenhall Visitor Center. At age 80, he has significant experience in the region, including a successful business and a background in land planning. Looking back at the history of logging on the Tongass, KJ recalls an environment that focused on timber “at any cost.” This resulted in a half million acres harvested, including considerable timber theft. Some of this history is explained in the Reid Brothers suit, but in that court case, the FS was not indicted. In addition to timber theft, KJ explained that there were also issues with under-scaling and underreporting. Native Corporations harvested another half million acres, but were denied justice due to the terms of the land claims. KJ explained that all of this history is important to understand in order to consider what is possible for the future. He stressed that no more harvest should occur of karst or old growth resources, because of the severe environmental damage from past logging practices. These practices have resulted in the need to invest more money into recreation, wildlife, fisheries, and water quality. He stressed that the environment will not support the timber industry of the past, nor will the economics.

Eric Grundberg, a commercial fisherman belonging to multiple fishing organizations expressed concern that his interests, and over 900 people in Petersburg that depend on fishing for their livelihood, are not being represented on the TAC. He believes that the TAC is not considering the resources that other industries are dependent upon from the Forest. For example, the Tongass holds one of the last productive salmon runs in the world. In addition to the fishing industry, the Tongass is also home to a thriving tourist industry that relies on beach buffers, old growth, and clean water. Eric underscored that relaxing standards and guidelines on the beach buffer for an unsustainable timber industry needs to end. He suggested that an alternative would be to promote sustainable local timber as opposed to export of old growth timber.

Eric also read letters from two community members of Petersburg: Karin McCullough and Mike Stainbrook. Both of these letters are available online with the February public comments on the [public comment page](#) of the TAC website.

- *Karin McCullough* and her family rely on Southeast Alaska fisheries for their income and livelihood. She expressed disappointment that the TAC meeting was relocated from Petersburg to Juneau, and that she was not able to attend in person. Karin recommends an immediate switch from old growth to second growth so that all remaining old growth can continue to provide habitat. Because of the recent land transfer to Sealaska, it is even more imperative to take into consideration all impacts of all landowners, as well as all uses of the Forest. The National Forest is only one piece of the ecological system of the region, which includes marine mammals that are essential to the vibrant tourist industry of the region. Climate change is another important component to consider, by making management recommendations that preserve the carbon store of the Tongass. Karin concluded by stressing that no decision should be made without adequate representation and consideration of all user groups.

- **Mike Stainbrook** is a commercial fisherman from Petersburg. He emphasized the importance of intact ecosystems for fishing, community, and families. Forest and fish habitats are codependent: if forest and stream habitats are intact, sustainable economies can be provided. Mike believes that a rapid transition to young growth is long overdue. He also emphasized that the TAC needs to be balanced and include more fisheries representation.

Patricia Wherry admitted that she lacks scientific credentials and technical experience, but is an outdoorsy person that understands the importance of the Forest for all interests. She referenced KJ Metcalf's testimony, and underscored the importance of the history of the region. She also recognized Eric Grundberg's testimony and the importance of the fisheries economy. She stressed that the future of the Tongass should represent all interests, not timber alone. The jobs associated with logging are limited in number and duration, yet the effects of old growth logging create a detriment to longer duration jobs in other industries. Export of old growth logs lacks broad public support; in contrast, there could be support for a local timber economy based on smaller timber volumes. She emphasized that changes should not be made for the sake of logging at the cost of other industries. For example, tourism represents billions of dollars for the local economy, so scenery guidelines need to be considered as a key aspect to Forest management. Similarly, the rainforest is essential to the fishing cycle, as well as an important carbon sink for overall Earth health.

Mark Kaelke, Southeast Alaska Project Director for Trout Unlimited (TU), has lived in Juneau for 26 years and was an alternate for the Tongass Futures Roundtable. He reminded the TAC that part of their charge is developing key elements for Forest Plan modifications for young growth harvest while recognizing other resource values. TU believes it is essential that all watersheds in the Tongass 77 (T77) proposal, whether intact or previously harvested, are not considered for future timber harvest planning. This proposal includes 77 watersheds that total 1.9 million acres, representing 24% of all fisheries habitat on only 12% of the Tongass. 19 of these watersheds represent less than 5% of young growth. The watersheds were vetted by fishing groups, government, NGOs, and members of the general public, including 1600 individual, business, and group supporters. Because of their fish and recreation values totaling \$2 billion in revenue, TU believes these watersheds should be afforded full-scale watershed protection, and the use of these watersheds be limited to fish production, fish harvest, and recreation. While Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) buffers are important improvements, science shows that fisheries are best protected at the watershed scale. Conserving freshwater habitat by removing these watersheds from timber production will improve certainty for fish production. For more information on the T77 proposal, including maps and documentation, visit www.americansalmonforest.org.

Erin McLarnon, Executive Director of The Working Forest Group (TWFG) and graduate of Sheldon-Jackson College in Sitka, has been in Alaska for 22 years. The mission of TWFG is to educate Alaskans by promoting active forest management. Erin believes that everyone can work together for a win-win solution, but must also promote the industry. In order to do

that, she endorses the continuation of old growth timber to maintain and promote a future industry. *Strategies to maintain a viable timber industry in Southeast Alaska* is an industry-driven report that outlines the need for continued old growth timber to ensure a successful transition for the existing industry as well as future investment. To do that, Erin explained it is necessary to provide the seek-to-meet volume outlined in the TTRA. Erin referenced approximately 50 letters that were sent to the TAC in support of old growth harvest, a message that was spread by the Resource Development Council (RDC), state chamber, and Southeast Conference, among others. TWFG supports the industry, and also wants to bring together all other user groups. More information regarding TWFG and the report Erin referenced can be found at www.akworkingforest.org.

Judy Brakel was born in Southeast Alaska and has lived there most of her life, gaining experience in the fishing industry as well as guiding kayak trips for about 20 years. She is aware of the importance of fishing and tourism in Southeast Alaska as a far bigger economic contributor than what the timber industry provides. She explained that there is a long history of misconceptions surrounding the timber industry. For example, although only 5% of the timber has been cut off the Tongass, much of the Forest extends through ice fields and mountains that are not forested. While there has been a lot of work to protect old growth, these areas are not in legislation, so are not fully protected. Judy referenced the timber industry interviews conducted by TWFG that suggested that old growth must continue for the foreseeable future since current young growth is not economical for harvest. In order for young growth to be economical, these stands must be grown 200-250 years, which would result in old growth harvest for another 150 years. This contrasts with the Secretary's memo to turn to the vast majority of logging in young growth in the next 10-15 years. Judy concluded by saying that the two options are to continue logging old growth aggressively, or to base the future on a mandate and wishful thinking that it is possible to begin young growth timber harvest.

Shelly Wright expressed disappointment that so many of the public comments have focused on an either/or approach – either timber or everything else. She recognized that the timber industry will never be what it once was, and that no one expects to harvest all of the remaining old growth. Shelly believes that the FS has done a good job of managing timber on the Forest, and the FS adapted their practices based on the outcomes of the Forest Practices Act. She believes that everyone should trust the FS to manage the Forest, but they can only do that if litigation stops. There are a lot of financial pressures that the government is facing, with declining budgets, subsidies, and jobs, both at the state and federal level. Communities can no longer depend on government jobs or subsidies, so there needs to be every opportunity to support the communities and their citizens. Timber is a renewable resource, and no opportunities should be dismissed.

Gilbert Fred, member of the Angoon Federally Recognized Tribe, has worked extensively with the municipal government of the city of Angoon, as well as positions in planning and zoning, as the Consistency Review Coordinator to review air, land, and sea regulations, and

with the EPA Region 10 through the Angoon Community Association. When considering the transition from old growth to young growth, Gilbert suggested that land use designations will need to be considered to ensure that there is enough young growth volume for the transition period. However, some of these new areas may overlap with areas that were identified as having special merits, which could result in new litigation by ignoring past efforts for protection. To help mitigate those concerns, Gilbert suggested that local districts, industries, and user groups that were involved in past decisions, should be involved in future planning to help consider the input that informed those past decisions. This process is an opportunity for partnerships with tribes and municipal government, as well as all affected industries and user groups, which could play a role in the Forest and adjacent lands. He stressed the importance of developing an integrated resource management plan for all user groups, including consultation with tribes. In addition to the issues associated with the young growth transition, Gilbert feels strongly about Congress' obligation to the native corporations. Only 10% of the land that was entitled to the tribes was actually distributed. He also stressed the importance of affordable and accessible energy in order to raise the quality of life. He views all of these issues as opportunities for collaboration.

Bart Watson, President and General Manager of Port Armstrong Hatchery, is a Juneau resident, and also a board member of the United Fishermen of Alaska. With the fishing industry as the largest private employer and industry in Southeast Alaska, he urged the Committee to recognize that timber harvest and tourism are not the only options, and instead realize the opportunities for fisheries that exist. He acknowledged the tension between old growth and young growth harvest, but stressed that the quality of habitat is crucial in its value to salmon, regardless of whether old or young growth trees. Bart suggested that an approach is needed that outlines specific numbers on how much old growth and young growth will be included in the Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP). In addition, specific habitats need to be outlined (i.e., T77 watersheds) that create an overall zoning approach for the region that separates out timber and salmon. The two resources are incompatible, especially based on overharvesting of the past. The lack of a plan has been a barrier to development of the economy, resulting in detrimental effects to communities. To move forward, there is a need for a consensus recommendation that provides a sense of certainty.

Pat O'Brien, a resident of Southeast Alaska since 1968, expressed disappointment with the FS individuals appointed to the TAC, and the direction that was given for the process. She expressed doubt about whether the group will be able to address the concerns that were voiced through other public comments. One group that has not been mentioned was the individuals that make a living based on the beauty of the Forest – for example, through wildlife photography, painting, sculpture, carvings, songs, books, greeting cards, etc. Areas that have undergone timber harvest detract from that beauty. She urged the TAC to seriously consider how hard change can be.

Next Steps

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

The next TAC meeting will take place March 25-27, 2015 at the Juneau City Assembly Chambers (155 S. Seward St., Juneau, AK), beginning at 8:30am on Wednesday, March 25, and concluding at 12:30pm Friday, March 27. The meeting was originally slated for Wrangell, but was moved to Juneau to enable participation by a more TAC members. The purposes of the meeting will be to continue discussions about Plan Amendment recommendations, implementation, investments, and monitoring/accountability. During the meeting the TAC will also review the status of Forest Service effects analyses on Plan components and finalize plans for subsequent TAC meeting(s).

After the March meeting, the TAC will meet again in late April or early May. This will allow time for analysis of the draft alternatives and production of a preliminary internal DEIS for agency review. During the April/May TAC meeting, the Committee will have the opportunity to review the results of the preliminary analysis. Some of the members suggested that this meeting be held in a community other than Juneau.

The Committee likely will not meet over the summer, but will reconvene in late August or early September after public release of the DEIS. Moving forward, there may be options for the TAC to continue meeting to discuss implementation and monitoring. These details will be discussed further at future meetings.

Homework Assignments

Prior to the next meeting the following subsets of the Committee will continue work on draft documents:

- Recommendations Draft: Andrew (chair), Wade, Keith, Erin, Kate, and Brian
- Implementation: Lynn (chair), Jaeleen, Kate, Carol, Chris, Woody, Eric, and Andrew
- Monitoring: Erin (chair), Lynn, Chris R., Les, and Carol
- Investment: Les (chair), Chris, Chris R., Eric, Jason C., and Brian

Analysis of a Draft TAC Alternative

Although the TAC did not reach consensus on a package of recommendations, the FS contractor, TetraTech, needs to begin analysis of alternatives for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Amendment in early March 2015. Jason Anderson will forward the TAC's draft option for a young growth alternative, based on the hybrid scenario outlined during the meeting, and two demand scenarios (46MMBF and 70MMBF). From this information, the FS will interpret the standards and guidelines and Plan components, and compare to the demand scenarios. If the group cannot come to consensus, or if the ultimate

recommendation is substantially different than what was analyzed, this information will *not* be included in the DEIS. If it is consistent, it will be included.

The timeline for the Amendment is as follows:

- March 2015 – Effects analysis begins
 - June 2015 – Preliminary DEIS drafted
 - August 2015 – DEIS published
 - August 2016 – Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) published
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Reflections on the Meeting

Key Messages

The TAC identified the following key messages that will serve as talking points for media, as well as the basis of a press release to be finalized by the co-chairs in cooperation with the staff. The press release with the finalized key messages is available online, [here](#).

- The Tongass Advisory Committee held its sixth meeting February 17-19 at the Extended Stay Hotel and Suites in Juneau.
- The Committee continued robust discussions regarding possible Forest Plan recommendations to accelerate the transition to young growth forest management on the Tongass.
- The Forest Service will analyze the group's draft young growth concepts for the Forest Plan Amendment, recognizing there are additional recommendations on implementation and investments required to come to consensus.
- In addition to recommendations on the Land Management Plan, the Committee spent significant energy thinking about the institutional systems-level changes needed for the transition to young growth to succeed, as well as possible economic investments.
- The group offered two options to assess timber demand, yet remain distant on the definitive end regarding old growth timber volumes and timing. They had very challenging, emotional discussions on the future, and recognize agreement on this piece will be essential to concurrence on the whole package. [Certain sectors want more security and clarity on the final trajectory.]
- In spite of the difficult nature of the timber debate, individual members appreciate the candor, integrity and respect with which they debated the options.
- Key concepts with strong support were: replacing old growth harvest with young growth harvest on a one-to-one volumetric basis; and establishing the co-intent of young growth harvest activities in sensitive areas.

- Les Cronk was named co-chair of the committee, along with standing co-chair Lynn Jungwirth.
- Also agreed on the need to establish baseline workforce, jobs analysis to determine where the economic impacts of forest management are currently (i.e., who gets the work).
- The members thank the public for their participation at the meeting, and are exploring possibilities to broaden the opportunity for the public to engage with members.
- The next meeting will be held March 25-27 in Juneau at the City Assembly Chambers.

Member Reflections

At the close of the meeting, TAC members and alternates shared individual reflections about the meeting. Their comments reflected the following themes:

- Recognition of the challenging topics and the respect and tolerance that the group demonstrated during these emotional discussions. Feeling that a lot of progress has been made, despite frustration around the pace of the meeting, repetition of topics, and need for stronger discipline.
- Hope and optimism to come to a final recommendation that everyone can support. The group is close to agreement now and the framework is really close to complete, and has a desire to have a solid deadline, and reach consensus on recommendations.
- Recognition of constituency pressures and the challenge of articulating their interests while still working toward a solution. In addition, acknowledgement of those that have a personal stake in the outcome – the industry and community members for example.
- Ownership of the process and outcomes among all Committee members. This ownership includes the ability to defend each other's interests, and not each individual's.
- Understanding of the importance of compromise and giving.
- Reiteration of the importance of providing opportunities for the industry and communities. Rather than trying to predict the future, the importance of offering opportunities.
- Recognition that the old growth discussion was necessary in order to move forward on the tradeoffs involved with young growth harvest.

Appendix A – Participant List

Committee Members in Attendance

Jaeleen Araujo
Les Cronk
Kirk Hardcastle (partial attendance)
Lynn Jungwirth
Chris Maisch
Brian McNitt
Eric Nichols
Keith Rush
Carol Rushmore
Erin Steinkruger
Andrew Thoms
Kate Troll
Woody Widmark
Wade Zammit

Committee Members in Virtual Attendance (Phone)

Kirk Hardcastle
(Partial attendance)
Richard Peterson
(Partial attendance)

Alternates in Attendance

Jason Custer
Chris Rose

Absent Alternate

Robert Mills

Committee Staff (USFS/Facilitators)

Jason Anderson
Karen Hardigg
Connie Lewis
Diana Portner

USDA/USFS Employees in Attendance

Forrest Cole

USDA/USFS Employees in Virtual Attendance

Nicole Grewe

Members of the Public in Attendance¹²

Jos Bakker
Judy Brakel
Sarah Campen
Peter Chaille
Gilbert Fred
Eric Grundberg
Holly Harris
Rick Harris
Mark Kaelke
Dan Kirkwood
Tom Lenhart
Erin McLarnon
Malena Marvin
K.J. Metcalf
Pat O'Brien
Paul Slenkamp
Bart Watson
Patricia Wherry
Shelly Wright

Members of the Public in Virtual Attendance (Phone)¹³

Larry Edwards
Larry West

¹² This list is based on members of the public that signed in at the beginning of each meeting day.

¹³ This list is based on members of the public that emailed to request access to the conference line.