



# Tongass Advisory Committee Final Meeting Summary

*Travelodge Hotel, Juneau, Alaska*

*Wednesday, September 10, 2014, 8:30am-5pm*

*Thursday, September 11, 2014, 8:30am-5:00pm*

*Friday, September 12, 2014, 8:30am-1:00pm*

The Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC) held its second meeting from September 10 through September 12, 2014 to continue developing recommendations to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on transitioning the Tongass National Forest (Forest) to primarily young growth forest management. During the meeting the TAC, with assistance from local resource experts, discussed the fundamentals of young growth management, including the overall condition and location of young growth on the Forest, the key components of the Plan Amendment process, and factors to consider with regards to operability and management of young growth harvest. The TAC used this information to begin determining the key questions and types of components to be included in their recommendations.

The meeting agenda is available online, [here](#). The following summary provides a description of each topic discussed and the resolution (where applicable). See Appendix A for a full participant list (including TAC members, staff, and members of the public).

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## Welcoming Remarks and Process Updates

Forrest Cole, Tongass National Forest Supervisor, welcomed the TAC and expressed his appreciation for their efforts, acknowledging the collective experience and capabilities that the members bring. He clarified that the Forest Plan Amendment process is being conducted concurrently with the TAC process, and the two processes will interact closely. The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) working on the Plan Amendment will make their findings and products available to the TAC, and vice versa. Ultimately it is expected that the TAC recommendations will be incorporated into an alternative for the Amendment.

In the spirit of transparency, Forrest noted three lawsuits that are currently underway on the Forest. Two are related to the Big Thorne sale, and the third is on the Forest Plan itself<sup>1</sup>. He recognized that these all have the potential to affect the timeline of the Amendment, and may ultimately result in changes to the suitable and available land base. The litigation for

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<sup>1</sup> The challenge is on the 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan, not the proposed Amendment.

the Forest Plan is based primarily on species viability. The District court has set a decision date of April 1, 2015.

### *Outstanding Business Items and Miscellaneous Updates*

**Operating Procedures:** The TAC was asked to give final approval to the Committee's Operating Procedures, which had been presented and discussed at their first meeting. Prior to deciding whether to approve the draft Procedures, the members discussed and clarified a few points relative to decision-making, media relations, public participation, and expectations for attendance:

- Consensus is often difficult to achieve, so it is important to note that the TAC charter specifies that recommendations can be approved with a 2/3 majority from each of the interest groups represented on the TAC. However, the TAC will seek full consensus wherever possible. When consensus cannot be achieved, minority opinions and dissenting views will be documented.
- At the close of each meeting, the TAC will agree upon key messages, which will serve as talking points for the press. Any member may speak to the press, but should use the talking points as guidance. Otherwise, it is important to make clear that each member speaks for his/herself, and not the TAC as a whole.
- Public notice of TAC meetings and instructions for how the public can participate in the process should be made widely available (beyond just the Federal Register Notice, which few people read, and the Forest's press releases) in order to reach a broader audience. Members suggested networking with their constituencies, e.g., by forwarding press releases and directing people to the TAC website ([www.merid.org/tongassadvisorycommittee](http://www.merid.org/tongassadvisorycommittee)). There was also a suggestion to physically post TAC meeting announcements on community bulletin boards.
- If members or alternates are not able to attend meetings regularly, it is each individual's personal responsibility to determine if he/she is capable of committing the time necessary to stay up to speed on TAC deliberations. In the case of absences or partial participation, the DFO will discuss with the individual, and if necessary with the interest group that he/she represents, whether the level of commitment is sufficient. If a member or alternate cannot sustain sufficient participation, the Forest will seek out the next name on the previously vetted selection list for that interest sector. Since alternates were selected to represent specific interest groups, they cannot cross-over between interest groups.

With the above clarifications, the TAC approved the Operating Procedures as written. The final version of the Operating Procedures is available [here](#).

**Roadless Rule Litigation:** Litigation regarding the Roadless Rule has the potential to impact young growth management on the Forest. Oral arguments are scheduled for September 18, 2014 and December 15, 2014. The State of Alaska is involved in this case.

**Forest Plan Amendment Contractor:** The IDT for the Forest Plan Amendment will select a contractor during the week of September 15, 2014.

**Sealaska Legislation:** There has not been any progress on the Sealaska Bill (S.340), and it is likely that public lands bills will not be considered priority or “must pass” for the September session. However, there is a possibility for action post-election. This bill would affect approximately 30,000 acres of young growth on the Forest, most of which are in Development LUDs.

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## Tongass Forest Plan Amendment

Susan Howle, Project Manager for the Tongass Forest Plan Amendment (Amendment), gave a presentation regarding the overall architecture of the Amendment; timeline, sideboards, and relevant plan components; the IDT; and the progress to date. Her PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#). The summary below includes a high-level overview of her presentation, and key discussion points among the TAC.

The Forest Plan guides management and provides direction on how to implement projects, but does not describe how actual projects are implemented on the ground. An amendment is deemed necessary when there are changed conditions, which are evaluated on a 5-year basis by the Forest Supervisor. The 5-year review of the Forest occurred last year, and included an evaluation of the conservation strategy and monitoring. Susan clarified that when the Forest Plan was updated in 2008, it “re-set the clock” for when a revision would be needed. In contrast to a full Forest Plan revision, an amendment is focused, time-limited, and only adjusts certain aspects of the Forest Plan. The current Amendment is focused on young growth timber management and renewable energy opportunities. The addition of other issues, such as the conservation strategy, would expand the scope beyond what can be handled by an amendment. If this were to occur, the timeframe, currently scheduled to produce a proposed Amendment by July 2015, with an approved final Amendment by August 2016, would need to be extended significantly. Susan noted that the Tongass is the first in the nation to undergo an amendment under the guidance of the 2012 Planning Rule, which requires any modifications to be consistent with the Planning Rule<sup>2</sup>.

As part of the Amendment process, the IDT must develop a framework for possible alternatives. The proposed framework includes:

- No action alternative, which uses the current Forest Plan as a baseline for comparison;
- Current Forest Plan with all young growth, including areas currently in non-development LUDs;

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<sup>2</sup> The current Forest Plan, signed in 2008, is based on the 1982 Planning Rule, so any existing language in the Forest Plan will remain consistent with the 1982 Rule.

- Current Forest Plan plus young growth in the roaded base, including roaded Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs);
- Current Forest Plan plus young growth in roaded areas within the development LUDs, not including IRAs; and
- An alternative to be provided by the TAC.

As with all forest planning, there are public comment requirements. When the Notice of Intent was released for the Amendment, the Forest received over 120,000 comment letters. Approximately 250 were unique and the remainder were form letters. As soon as these comments are made publically available, the TAC will have the opportunity to review them. Further opportunity for public comment will occur as the IDT moves forward with the amendment effort. There will also be opportunities for other agencies to play a role, including possibly serving in a cooperating agency capacity. These processes allow for interested parties to be involved early and throughout the Amendment process.

Susan gave an overview of key components in the Amendment:

- Land Use Designations (LUDs): There are 19 LUDs on the Forest, ranging from more restrictive to less. Changes to existing LUDs and/or creation of new LUDs may be beyond the scope of an amendment, instead possibly triggering a full Forest Plan revision.
- Overlay LUDs: An overlay LUD would function similarly to other LUDs, and include the same Forest Plan components, as well as providing additional prescriptions in addition to those specified for underlying LUDs. It unclear whether an overlay LUD would “trump” restrictions of underlying LUDs. The IDT is currently exploring that issue. The Amendment may include overlay LUDs for young growth and renewable energy.
- Standards and Guidelines: These are mandatory constraints on project or activity decision-making, aimed at achieving desired condition(s), avoiding/mitigating undesirable effects, and/or meeting legal requirements. Guidelines differ from standards in that adherence to the constraint is more flexible, as long as the purpose of the guidelines is still met. Standards and Guidelines are applied at the Forest-level and for each LUD<sup>3</sup>.
- Forest Plan Monitoring Program: A Forest Plan monitoring program to measure progress toward meeting Plan objectives will be implemented after the Forest Plan decision. (For example, measure whether timber harvest is consistent with other Forest Plan direction.)

The IDT tasked with developing the Plan Amendment and alternatives, is comprised of over twenty subject-matter experts covering scenery, wildlife, recreation, timber, heritage,

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<sup>3</sup> Every project proposal is reviewed against these constraints to ensure that the objectives are being met.

subsistence, fisheries, soils, and air quality, among other topics. This interdisciplinary approach is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Forest is contracting with an external party to conduct an effects analysis of the proposed action and alternatives (including any alternative developed by the TAC). The TAC will have an opportunity to modify their recommendation(s) if the effects analysis shows unintended effects. Throughout the Plan Amendment process, the DFO will help keep the TAC informed about what the IDT is doing and vice versa in order to ensure a well-informed, iterative process.

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## Young Growth on the Tongass

Sheila Spores, Forest Silviculturalist, and Ben Case, Young Growth Coordinator for the Forest, presented and answered questions about young growth on the Forest. Sheila provided an overview of what is currently known about young growth (i.e., geographic location, species diversity, age-class distribution, etc.), as well as information regarding the legal, regulatory, and ecological constraints associated with young growth harvest. The presentation is available [here](#). Throughout the presentation, Sheila referred to the [Tongass Young Growth Management Strategy](#) as an important resource for more information. The following summary includes a high-level overview of the presentation, and key discussion points.

There are currently 435,000 acres of young growth on the Forest, defined as timber that was previously harvested using an even-aged system<sup>4</sup>. Of these acres, approximately 63%, or 273,000 acres, are located within the suitable base<sup>5</sup>. The next highest percentage (14%) is included in areas that restrict timber harvest within the non-development LUDs, which include areas such as semi-remote recreation, old growth habitat, and old growth reserves. It is anticipated that the TAC will also examine beach buffers and Riparian Management Area (RMA) Development LUDs.

Within each stand (or original harvest unit), there is a high amount of variability, resulting in very diverse stands. There are four main factors that affect stand variability:

1. Age: The average age of young growth on the Forest is 55 years. There are older age classes scattered throughout the Forest, but this average reflects the large patches of past management that occurred during the “pulp mill era.” Most of the young

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<sup>4</sup> The Juneau Cluster Group study identified approximately 200,000 acres of additional young growth. Sheila explained this as a GIS mistake in which a layer was replaced with the wrong information. GIS specialists on the Forest are currently working on fixing the layer.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of young growth distribution, see Exhibit 8 in the [Tongass Young Growth Management Strategy](#).

growth in the Development LUDs is in younger age-classes, whereas most of the older young growth is in areas considered not suitable for harvest.

2. Past management: The majority of past harvest occurred during the “long-term contract era” of large-scale, clear-cut/even-aged management. The 1997 Forest Plan marked the end of this era, and the beginning of different management practices, resulting in a bell curve shaped distribution of average annual harvest.
3. Site productivity: Soil drainage, particularly areas with karst soils, is the primary driver of site productivity, affecting 70% of the variability. Slope and elevation also play a role in productivity, with higher elevation units typically exhibiting lower productivity. Northern latitudes of the Forest also tend to have lower productivity.
4. Intermediate treatments:
  - a. Pre-commercial thinning: The purpose of pre-commercial thinning is to improve timber stands (i.e., make them more stable, and increase growth rates) while simultaneously improving understory conditions and reducing tree density to benefit wildlife habitat<sup>6</sup>. The effect of thinning is to redistribute growth to fewer trees per acre that are capable of growing larger, faster. Approximately 225,000 acres of young growth on the Forest have undergone pre-commercial thinning. Many of the older young growth stands have never been thinned. This practice began in the late 1970s-early 1980s, with narrow spacing applied to a young age-class (10-12 years) focusing on production of the next rotation for pulp mills. A decade later, the spacing was increased, and thinning was typically applied to a later age-class (20 years). Current pre-commercial thinning ranges between 15-39 years. Some funding for pre-commercial thinning is available through the Knutson Vandenberg Trust.
  - b. Commercial thinning: Trees reach the potential for commercial thinning between 60-90 years of age. If the stand has been pre-commercially thinned, commercial thinning can occur at age 60, otherwise the average is 70-90 years, in order to meet the minimum of 10,000 board feet/acre. One benefit of commercial thinning, as compared to even-age management, is that it can occur in areas that do not allow even-age harvest (i.e., beach fringe). Various members of the TAC commented that:
    - Commercial thinning is not an economically viable practice in Southeast Alaska;
    - Although it may be subsidized, there are commercial products as outcomes; and

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on pre-commercial thinning refer to the Tongass-Wide Young Growth Studies which examine understory response to thinning treatments. Preliminary results are available [here](#).

- Commercial thinning can have significant environmental benefits (i.e., improved wildlife habitat).

In addition to the factors that affect the quality of a young growth stand, there are also factors that affect the feasibility of harvest<sup>7</sup>:

- Downhill Cable Yarding/Lateral Yarding: Downhill cable yarding was a common practice in the past for initial old growth harvest. Roads were constructed at the bottom of a slope and cable yarding systems were used to pull the logs downhill. This involved using a cable attached to a large old growth “spar” tree to pull trees to a collection site. For harvesting young growth, this practice is less feasible, because small diameter, young trees tend to break from the pressure of the cable when lateral forces are applied, and because roads are usually located in the wrong places. It was suggested that uphill Yarding of young growth would be more feasible.
- Culmination of Mean Annual Increment (CMAI): There is a requirement in the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) that restricts harvest to when a stand has reached its peak growth, or CMAI, based on cubic feet of volume. CMAI on the Forest is usually achieved between 75-120 years<sup>8</sup>, and is determined by modeling, not through site-specific, on-the-ground evaluation. For modeling purposes, stand information is lumped, multiple covers in one designated stand. Stands are not being stratified for modeling so a stand has one site index. Forest Plan components may allow for exceptions to the CMAI requirement. However, each project would still need to be consistent with both Forest Plan direction and the exception. Currently, CMAI exceptions are only utilized on a project-specific basis (not Forest-wide), and must: a) only be applied to specified species, b) consider other uses/resources, and c) be subject to public participation requirements. Operational Considerations for Young Growth Harvest

Clarence Clark, Special Assistant to the State Forester for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry, presented an overview of operational issues associated with young growth harvest in Southeast Alaska and his perspectives about the feasibility of various management options. His PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#). The following summary includes a high-level overview of his presentation, including key discussion points among the TAC.

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<sup>7</sup> See the next section, *Operational Considerations for Young Growth Harvest*, for a more detailed overview of factors that affect the feasibility of harvest.

<sup>8</sup> CMAI restrictions are limited to commercial production of timber, through even-aged management, which currently only applies to the suitable base. It would require an act of Congress to change the requirement since it is derived from a legislative mandate in NFMA, i.e., it is an issue that goes far beyond just the Tongass National Forest. If an overlay LUD were created that allowed for commercial harvest in other areas, CMAI would then apply to those LUDs as well.

There are a variety of both natural and managed attributes that affect the feasibility and operability of timber stand harvest, outlined below:

*Natural Attributes:*

- Species composition: diversity and distribution of species within the stand
- Site index: speed of growth
- Slope: steepness of the landscape (Note: the steeper the slope, generally the smaller the trees)
- Latitude: location based on latitude will affect rotation age (i.e., southern portion of Southeast AK is usually a 100 year rotation, northern portion is 120 years)
- Aspect: cardinal direction
- Elevation: change in site index based on change in elevation
- Marine exposure: quality of the stand is affected by marine exposure (for example, hemlock stands located in the beach fringe will often flute, or warp)
- Season: winter operations are more costly and limited

*Managed Attributes:*

- Species mix: pre-commercial thinning can affect the species composition by selecting certain species over another
- Stocking: will affect how many trees per acre
- Stand size: the acreage of the original harvest unit
- Infrastructure: location (proximity to communities), road systems (unique systems or connected), workforce availability (local or migratory), etc.

To give the TAC a sense of the economics of a timber sale, Clarence displayed a variety of actual residual value timber sale appraisals, based on actual costs in the region and known selling values. He reviewed the following cost centers (harvest costs) that will ultimately impact the overall value of a sale:

- Road construction (existing vs. new)
- Timber falling (hand vs. mechanical vs. cable systems)
- Yarding (ground-based mechanical vs. short-span/tower cable)
- Trucking (truck availability can be a huge limiting factor in Southeast)
- Marine transportation (barging/rafting)
- Manufacturing (local vs. export; young growth vs. old growth)
- Mobilization (proximity to communities vs. barging in equipment)
- Camp (local workers vs. short-term camp)
- Permitting (state and federal permits can lead to direct costs and delays)
- Scaling (volume determined by each log for larger volume sales, can be limited by access to sort yards)



He also discussed options for thinning operations:

- Thin from below: remove all smaller (co-dominant/suppressed) trees
- Thin from above: remove all larger (dominant) trees
- Gap: remove small patch clear-cuts (e.g., remove 1/10 acre per acre)
- Strip thin: remove trees in a corridor (often via cable systems)

When determining if a sale is viable, the Forest is legislatively required to offer positive value timber sales<sup>9</sup>. Most of the examples of appraisals that Clarence displayed exhibited negative stumpage values, meaning that those appraisals could not result in an actual sale. One of the reasons for a predominance of negative stumpage value appraisals on the Forest is the high cost of timber harvesting in Southeast Alaska - due to terrain, weather, limited accessibility, etc. Stumpage value can in many cases be increased by offering some portion (up to 50% is allowed) of the sale for the export market<sup>10</sup>. Another way to increase value is through reduced transportation costs, which might be achievable for example by connecting road systems (thereby shortening the distance from harvest to mills), sharing costs of road construction with private landowners, etc. Appraisal numbers are based on past timber sales, so as more positive sales are generated, the cost collection data will reflect that, and future positive value timber sale appraisals will be easier to achieve<sup>11,12</sup>.

The Tongass Timber Reform Act requires the Forest to “seek to meet market demand”, while also addressing multiple use, sustained yield, and other resource requirements<sup>13, 14</sup>. So, for example, the Forest must seek to meet industry demand within the sustained yield limit –

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<sup>9</sup> The Tongass is the only national forest on which positive value timber sales are required. Elsewhere, sales are usually designed to be positive, but this is not required. Instead, it is the responsibility of industry to evaluate whether profit outweighs risk, even with negatively appraised sales.

<sup>10</sup> Dargon Point is an example of a sale that used this approach to achieve a positive value sale.

<sup>11</sup> For more information regarding the operational implications of transitioning to young growth timber, see [Transitioning to Young Growth: Prince of Wales Island, Southeast Alaska](#), a 2009 report by The Beck Group. Also see [Old Growth Land Base and Volume Analysis on the Tongass National Forest](#), a 2014 report by The Working Forest Group, for more information on aspects that impact timber sales.

<sup>12</sup> The Forest Service is currently reviewing its appraisal system to determine if/how it can be adjusted.

<sup>13</sup> Industry demand is based on mill/manufacturing demand, not including export.

<sup>14</sup> Tongass Timber Reform Act, Section 101, *To Require Annual Appropriations for Timber Management on the Tongass National Forest*: The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (Public Law 96-487, hereinafter referred to as “ANILCA”) is hereby amended by deleting section 705(a) (16 U.S.C. 539d(a)) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following: “SEC. 705. (a) Subject to appropriations, other applicable law, and the requirements of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-588), except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, the Secretary shall, to the extent consistent with providing for the multiple use and sustained yield of all renewable forest resources, seek to provide a supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest which (1) meets the annual market demand for timber from such forest and (2) meets the market demand from such forest for each planning cycle.”.

harvest cannot exceed sustained yield no matter the industry demand. (It was noted that increasing the land base is one way to increase the sustained yield amount). Another comment was to suggest that the viability of the industry – and therefore demand – will be influenced by whether there is an “investment friendly” environment to support the transition to young growth – meaning in part moving beyond the conflicts that stop timber sales.

Regarding using young growth for biomass, Clarence noted that estimates suggest that the cost of harvesting and transporting strictly for biomass usually exceeds the value of the biomass itself, and therefore might not be economically viable. Infrastructure and energy costs also play a large role in the viability of biomass. The places in Southeast Alaska that have the highest energy costs are not usually the same places that have the infrastructure to process wood for biomass. Utilities that might finance biomass processing facilities are loath to do so without an assured long-term supply<sup>15</sup>.

However, young growth for biomass can be viable in certain situations, e.g., using saw mill residues from young growth for biomass purposes and/or transporting young growth destined for biomass along with commercial logs, so that the commercial saw logs help cover the cost of the transportation, thus resulting in a positive or cost-neutral outcome. Biomass has also been shown to be a viable option for providing power for mills, and to heat an on-site kiln to dry pellets/wood chips for use by schools and municipal buildings.

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## Process and Key Components for Recommendations

The TAC discussed the topics that they will need to provide recommendations on, and agreed on the following assumptions:

1. The initial work needs to focus on what is within the purview of the TAC charter and the Amendment. With this focus, the TAC will aim to produce the first set of recommendations by January 2015.
2. Following the initial recommendations, the TAC will focus their deliberations on the larger transition framework, to include items such as renewable energy, implementation, partnerships/cooperation with adjacent landowners, etc., that are beyond the narrowly defined scope of the young growth transition portion of the Amendment.
3. The TAC will form three work groups (upon approval by the DFO) to focus on various components of the Amendment. These work groups, with facilitation and

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<sup>15</sup> Forest Service contracts have a maximum limit of 10 years. This is in comparison to 25 years for state lands, and longer options for private lands.

technical support from staff, will develop draft findings to be brought back to the full TAC for deliberation. The work groups will cover the following topics<sup>16</sup>:

- a. Land Base/Land Use Designations (LUDs) - Where
  - b. Standards and Guides - How
  - c. Purpose and Need Statement - Why
4. Community interests will be addressed by all of the work groups.
  5. Since technical aspects, modeling, and effects analyses are being conducted by the IDT and the contractor, the Committee can add the most value by focusing on what is socially acceptable.
  6. Ultimately, the work groups will utilize a triple-bottom-line approach that addresses economic, social, and environmental interests.

The DFO approved the formulation of the three working groups, and the TAC provided the direction to the work groups, described below. The groups then met separately to identify discussion topics and information needs, and to develop an initial work plan. Summaries of the separate work group discussions are available in Appendix B.

### ***Land Base and Land Use Designations – “Where”***

The direction from the TAC to this work group was to define the land base first (rather than starting with what the industry needs are), then talk about what industry can be supported by that base, and what markets exist for the supply that is available. The discussion about land base should include: 1) how the land base could be maximized, 2) what is actually acceptable to all constituencies (taking into account other resources, economic impacts, including jobs, as well as the resilience of local communities), and 3) the potential contribution of other landowners (i.e., private and State lands) in filling the gap, and the need to coordinate with those owners. The work group will also have to grapple with the fact that historically a large amount of acres were logged in a short period of time, resulting in many acres becoming available for harvest in a similarly short period of time. The availability of harvestable acres needs to be evened out over time.

### ***Standards and Guidelines – “How”***

The TAC recognized that many of the current standards and guidelines were developed to inform old growth management, so it is the role of this work group to determine if/how they are applicable to young growth, taking into account other interests, uses and resources. The

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<sup>16</sup> There was interest by some members of the TAC in exploring renewable energy as a fourth work group. Since this topic was not included in the charter, ultimately the TAC decided to pursue that topic in more detail following the initial recommendations for the Amendment.

work group should evaluate standards and guidelines specific to timber management, as well as those that apply to other resources that are potentially impacted by timber harvest, such as wildlife, old growth reserves, riparian buffers, beach fringe, exceptions to CMAI, and recreation, among others.

### ***Purpose and Need Statement – “Why”***

The purpose and need statement in the Amendment will drive the changes that will be proposed. The work group is tasked with exploring whether the purpose and needs statement is in line with the TAC’s vision statement, particularly to ensure that it addresses the importance of resilient communities. This working group is interested in broadening the vision for the transition beyond merely young growth timber harvest (focusing on forest management not just timber management) and identified the Purpose and Need statement in the plan amendment as a potential vehicle for including the broader values the committee represents.

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## **Defining Key Terms**

The TAC recognized the need for clarity about terms that will be central to their deliberations, including “young growth” and “economically viable industry”. Each TAC member was asked for definition of each of the terms (or, they had the option of “voting for” someone else’s definition). Given the limited time available there was no attempt to reach consensus on a single definition. However, the exercise was helpful in that it revealed the range of perspectives. It also demonstrated some amount of concurrence, which served as a reminder of the potential for finding common ground.

### ***Young Growth***

Young growth, as defined by the Forest, is “forest growth that has regenerated naturally or has been planted after some disturbance (e.g., clear-cut harvest, serious fire, catastrophic wind-throw, or insect attack) to the previous forest growth<sup>17</sup>.”

During the exercise, TAC members defined young growth in the following ways:

1. 150 years or less and/or previously harvested
2. Previously logged/possibly adjacent to previously logged
3. Natural stands 100 years or less with road access and/or previously logged (3 votes)
4. Managed stands
5. Based on index that looks at forest structure and function (results in continuum)

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<sup>17</sup> 2008 Tongass National Forest Management Plan, Glossary page 7-49.

Additional concepts to include:

- Stem exclusion
- Needs to be measurable/GIS useful

### *Economically Viable Industry*

TAC members defined economically viable industry in the following ways:

1. Profitable, sustainable, contributes to community vitality through jobs and injection of capital
2. Environment that offers opportunity for integrated forest businesses
3. #1 with addition - forest sector that is able to utilize material flowing from dedicated land base
4. Resilient, bankable, market-driven, sufficient scale, minimum no less than existing industry
5. #1 and #4 with resilient instead of sustainable (adaptability)
6. Reasonable opportunity to access supply, and have profitable, resilient operation
7. Bankable, globally competitive opportunities which attract private investment
8. Revenues exceed expenses
9. #7 and add "public investment" and experiences competition, innovative, tangible, value need and volume need (100 MMBF in SE off whole land base)

Additional concepts to include:

- Independent industry
- Job growth
- Guaranteed supply
- Ecosystem of viable businesses

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## **Public Comment**

The Committee encourages members of the public to provide input to the process through oral and/or written comment. Every TAC meeting will include a public comment period. During this meeting, the following comments were offered:

- Joel Hanson, a long-time resident of Southeast Alaska, currently based in Sitka, emphasized the importance of considering the interests of the outfitter and guide

community and the tourism sector, because Southeast Alaska attracts more than 70 percent of Alaska visitors each summer, and is increasing. He expressed concern that there is no representation on the Committee from the outfitter and guide community, yet permit receipts provide a significant share of funds to the Tongass. Recreation and nature-based tourism will be especially important to consider as the Committee seeks to achieve the triple-bottom-line directive. For example, beach fringe areas may impact the tourism sector, while roads and transportation may impact fish and wildlife, which in turn impact subsistence uses. He also suggested that outside of these specific forest uses, that the TAC recognizes the global importance of the Tongass for carbon capture and sequestration.

- Larry Edwards, a resident of Sitka, representing Greenpeace, requested the option for conference call capabilities at meetings, particularly for public comment, as well as a recording of all meetings to be available online. As a member of the conservation community, he noted that not all conservation groups are equal, and not all conservation interests are represented at the table. He wanted the group to recognize that although the Plan Amendment intends to uphold the conservation strategy, that many components of the strategy will likely be affected by the Amendment, such as old growth reserves, Standards and Guides, and Land Use Designations. There are current issues with the strategy that need to be addressed, including connectivity, road density, and carrying capacity for wildlife. In terms of process, he noted that there are significant knowledge gaps among the group, the timeframe is too short, and the scope too narrow. In order to address the viability of communities, the solution may need to come from beyond the USDA to address the entire region.
- Brian Kleinhenz, a forester for Sealaska Corporation and president elect for Alaska Society of Foresters, expressed his appreciation for the community focus. He suggested that one way to address economic development for communities is through commercial thinning, which is already occurring. These opportunities provide for “lifestyle compatible jobs” for local community residents. Rather than viewing it as an expense, he suggested it be viewed as an investment to the land to enhance not only the quality of the next timber rotation, but also wildlife habitat. Ultimately, it will be necessary for the TAC to maximize the size of the young growth land base and managed forest lands.
- Lori Blood, president of Southeast Conference, urged the TAC to consider the Alternative Management Strategy<sup>18</sup> created by the Southeast Conference. She described it as a triple-bottom-line strategy that takes all environmental, social, cultural, and economic issues into consideration, including vibrant communities. She requested to have an opportunity to present the strategy at a future meeting of the TAC.

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<sup>18</sup> A copy of the Southeast Conference Alternative Management Strategy is available online, [here](#).

## Next Steps

### *Logistics for October Meeting*

The next TAC meeting will take place October 8-10 on Prince of Wales Island (POW), and will include some field trips. The TAC suggested the following topics to possibly include on the agenda, through field trips and/or presentations:

- Site class variability (forest types and site indexes), e.g.: Dargon Point and/or Sealaska study plots or active thinning units.
- Local communities that are impacted by young growth harvest. This could be achieved by presentations by community leaders and/or by visiting the communities themselves. The POW Community Advisory Committee could be a great resource for this.
- Timber mills and mill owner/operators, specifically ones that on the cutting edge, for example with value-added manufacturing or biomass operations.
- Riparian Management Areas (RMAs) with fisheries biologist(s) and wildlife biologist(s) present to answer questions.
- Forest karst expert presentation.
- Biomass boiler at the local school.
- Tourism industry, perhaps through discussions with the lodge owners at the Fireweed.

The TAC members requested that drive time be minimized and suggested spending half-days in the field and half-days in meetings. They were open to the possibility of evening meetings or work time. The TAC also suggested meeting in different locations, e.g., Thorne Bay and Klawock, to allow more opportunities for participation by local communities. They considered dividing the members into sub-groups to visit different sites, but ultimately concluded there would be more value in keeping the group together, e.g., so more experienced members could explain concepts to other members. The Forest staff and Meridian facilitation team agreed to develop a meeting plan based on the TAC's preferences.

### *Work Group Conference Calls and Homework Assignments*

Each work group scheduled an upcoming conference call to continue work between meetings. They will also be collecting and reviewing the information and data that they requested, as it becomes available. Due to time constraints and logistics, the Committee decided that the conference calls will not be open to the public. However, to maintain transparency, detailed summaries will be provided following the calls, all background documents will be available online, and each work group will report to the full Committee at the next TAC meeting. The calls are scheduled as follows:

- "How" Work Group – Monday, September 22, 2014 at 1-3pm (AKDT)
- "Why" Work Group – Wednesday, September 24, 2014 at 9am-12pm (AKDT)

- “Where” Work Group – Wednesday, October 1, 2014 at 1-3pm (AKDT)

Information from the work groups, including call summaries and background information, will be posted online, [here](#), as it becomes available.

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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.

1. The Committee spent the first half of the meeting learning about the fundamentals of young growth on the Tongass. They appreciated the opportunity to hear from resource experts on the overall condition and location of young growth; the key components of the Tongass Land Management Plan and the amendment process; and operability considerations with respect to young growth harvest. These presentations led to robust discussions on opportunities and challenges with transitioning to young growth, including discussion of key terms.
2. Members continued to work efficiently and effectively together, quickly determining some of the key questions they need to deliberate and consider in order to provide draft recommendations to the Forest Service by January.
3. The members identified the need for three working groups to begin exploring key topics prior to the October meeting - where the future young growth land base might be, how the young growth might be harvested, and the overall purpose of a young growth forest management strategy. The DFO officially established the groups, which then convened for the second half of the meeting, and will continue to work prior to the next meeting. Their reports will be shared to the plenary group in October.
4. The committee continued to emphasize the importance of community resiliency throughout their discussions.
5. Members expressed their interest in visiting communities and local businesses on Prince of Wales Island during their October meeting, emphasizing the importance of hearing from those dependent on the forest management recommendations the Committee might make.
6. Numerous members of the public attended the three days of meetings, several of whom made valuable comments during the public comment time. Interested



members of the public and local community members are encouraged to attend the next meeting October 8-10 in Klawock.

The press release with the finalized key messages is available online, [here](#).

### *Member Reflections*

At the close of the meeting, the TAC members and alternates reflected on their experiences from the meeting. Their comments reflected the following themes:

- Continued enthusiasm, commitment, energy, and flexibility for the process and task at hand.
- Respect and willingness to listen to and learn from each other.
- Appreciation for the willingness to work hard and accomplish the main task in an expedited timeframe.
- Acknowledgement that although views differ at times, there are more similarities than dissimilarities.
- Recognition of the importance of consistent attendance in order to track the information.
- Recognition of the challenge of keeping a narrow focus while also seeing the bigger picture, including the necessity to grapple with the technical aspects, while not losing sight of community interests.
- Appreciation for the opportunities that the work groups offer for dialogue and between-meeting assignments.
- Appreciation for the informational presentations, but acknowledgment that the technical aspects are very complex, and at times overwhelming.
- Willingness to challenge Forest Service assumptions and forge a new path forward.
- Value of looking “outside the box” at other modeling projects (e.g., the Southwest Conference management strategy), and not relying only on the Forest Service’s modeling program.

## Appendix A – Participant List

### *Committee Members in Attendance*

Jaeleen Araujo  
Wayne Benner  
Kirk Hardcastle  
Phil Hyatt  
Lynn Jungwirth  
Chris Maisch  
Brian McNitt  
Eric Nichols  
Richard Peterson  
Keith Rush  
Carol Rushmore  
Erin Steinkruger  
Andrew Thoms  
Woody Widmark  
Wade Zammit

### *Alternates in attendance*

Les Cronk  
Jason Custer  
Robert Mills  
Kate Troll

### *Absent alternate*

Chris Rose

### *Committee Staff (USFS/Facilitators)*

Jason Anderson  
Karen Hardigg  
Connie Lewis  
Nicole McMurren  
Diana Portner

### *USDA/USFS Employees*

Ben Case  
Mary Chisloch

### *USDA/USFS Employees (cont.)*

Forrest Cole  
Randy Coleman  
Sue Detwiler  
Mike Goldstein  
Susan Howle  
Maria Lisowski  
Wayne Owen  
Sheila Spores

### *Members of the Public*

David Albert  
Greg Albrecht  
William Andreas  
Allison Bidlack  
Lori Blood  
Peter Chaille  
Clarence Clark  
Norman Cohen  
Larry Edwards  
Owen Graham  
Kim Haller  
Joel Hanson  
Holly Harris  
Jeremy Hsieh  
Nicki Hyatt  
Dan Kirkwood  
Jim Jungwirth  
Brian Kleinhenz  
Joe Mehrkens  
Katie Moritz  
Kyle Moselle  
Mark Rorick  
Ron Wolfe

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## Appendix B – Work Group Summaries

# Land Base/Land Use Designations (LUDs) - "Where"

*Notes from initial Work Group Meeting*

*Thursday, September 11, 2014*

### Members:

- Kirk Hardcastle
- Chris Maisch
- Brian McNitt
- Richard Peterson
- Kate Troll
- Wade Zammit

**Chairperson:** Wade Zammit was selected as the Chair of the Work Group.

**Process:** The work group developed the following list as the main topics and questions that they will need to grapple with in order to provide information regarding the land base for young growth, and the appropriate land use designations.

1. How to grow (or redefine) the pie as large as possible?
  - a. Questions:
    - i. Is an overlay or a new LUD the best option?
    - ii. What actions trigger a revision as opposed to staying within the limits of an amendment?
    - iii. Do overlay LUDs trump the underlying LUDs?
    - iv. How to maximize the options available?
    - v. What should be considered for long-term mgmt.?
2. How can we modify the management constraints?
  - a. Questions:
    - i. Of the areas proposed above, what is socially acceptable to all interest

- groups?
- ii. How should guidelines differ between old growth and young growth? Can the current guidelines for old growth be altered to be applicable to young growth? Specifically, what are the conflicts within the current LUDs?
  - iii. What can be changed in non-development LUDs, RMA, and beach buffers?
3. Define the metrics and variables for prioritizing areas that will help with the transition.
- a. Questions:
    - i. Where are the priority areas?
    - ii. How do we prioritize the areas that should become available first?
    - iii. Which areas will help speed the transition?
    - iv. Of the acres described above, which ones are available within 10-15 years?

**Information Needs:** The work group identified the following questions and information needs that will need to be provided by the Forest Service in order to inform their discussions. (Note: Many of these questions will likely be answered through GIS analysis.)

- Map layers (i.e., roads, high value watersheds, geographic locations of young growth, site classes, recreation/scenery, current young-growth acres, etc.)
- Define and identify the location and total acres of natural disturbance/primary successional young growth
- Physical breakdown of total young growth acres (i.e., by age class and site class)
- Clarification of what is suitable (i.e., are any buffers included? What is actually available?)
- Breakdown of non-development LUDs (i.e., percentages of the LUDs included in that category)
- Overview of RMA's, and how they are applied to young growth
- Descriptions of all other LUDs (especially non-development LUDs, RMAs, and beach buffers)
- Define suitable, non-dev. LUDs, RMA, beach buffer
- Clarify what is currently suitable/what is constrained (management vs. operational) within these 4 LUDs

- Where does YG exist outside of suitable acres? Which would we consider for management?
- What is off-limits (congressional vs. policy)?
- How many/which suitable acres are available/not constrained?
- What are the constraints that are in legally binding/written in law?
- Where does the road system currently exist? What are the gaps?

**Definitions:** The group recognized that they will need to develop a common definition for each of the following terms.

- Young Growth (i.e., 150 years or less, previously harvested) – Note: the full TAC discussed this definition. The outcomes are included in the September 2014 TAC Meeting Summary.
- Suitability (specifically for young growth, and how that differs from old growth)

**Next Steps:**

- Conference Call – Wed., Oct. 1 at 1-3pm (AKDT)

# Standards and Guidelines Work Group Notes

*(From WG discussions during Sept 2014 meeting)*

## Members

- Jaeleen Araujo
- Erin Steinkruger
- Carol Rushmore
- Les Cronk
- Bob Mills
- Eric Nichols
- Keith Rush

## Chairperson

Erin Steinkruger was selected as the Chair of the Work Group

## Topics

The Work Group identified the following initial discussion topics:

- Wildlife
- Buffers, RMAs, fisheries
- Beach fringe
- CMAI (exemptions / flattening the bell curve)
- Impacts on communities
- Roads
- Recreation
- Integrated project development
- Subsistence
- Karst
- Cultural/archeological/historical
- Visuals
- Definitions
  - Predominately / Vast Majority YG
  - Economically viable industry

## Information Needs

The Group requested the following materials to help inform their discussions:

- Definitions for “standards” and “guides” from the current Tongass Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and under the 2012 Planning Rule

- Outline of the Standards and Guides in the current Plan, with emphasis on those highly relevant to the suitable and available YG timber base
- Briefing paper and/or presentation on issues encountered in YG management to date
- Legislative constraints
- State Forest Practices Act
- Field trip – visit to an RMA that would limit the mechanical feasibility of YG harvest (with a fishery biologist)

Work Plan:

- 1) Review background materials prior to conference call
- 2) Each member think about what they might suggest for YG standards/guides relative to each topic; consider drafting one or more high-priority standards and/or guides for discussion and group input.
- 3) Conference call September 22 1:00-3:00 AK time

# Purpose and Need Statement Work Group...Why?

*(From WG discussions during September 10-12 TAC 2014 meeting)*

## **Work Group Membership**

- Wayne Benner
- Jason Custer
- Phil Hyatt
- Lynn Jungwirth
- Chris Rose
- Andrew Thoms
- Woody Widmark

## **Chairperson**

Andrew Thoms was selected as the Chair of the Work Group

## **Key Issues**

Have language in the statement that aligns with the TAC vision statement. The purpose and needs statement in the Plan Amendment should reflect such ideas as:

- A sustained forest system
- Diversification of industry
- Resilient communities
- Growing old growth
- Interdependency of the Forest, and the communities embedded
- Maximize the benefits to local communities
- Define WHY transition?

## **Information Needs**

The Work Group identified the following information needs to help inform their discussions:

- How is a Purpose and Need Statement used? What direction is there for crafting the statements? Any requirements? What is the process used to change the statement? Review NFMA dictates
- Jobs information (what kind of work creates what kind of jobs? What is the pay associated? Direct and indirect job creation, etc.?)
- Review NOI comments
- USDA Strategic Plan and goals therein



- EDA Definition of 'Triple Bottom Line'
- Executive Order 12866

**Process:**

- Educate the Work Group based on information needs above
- Andrew – take first stab at new statement/bulleterd list, Wayne and Lynn draft and share with the rest of the group by 9/18
- Meet with full group and Forest Service personnel as needed on September 24 at 9 AM – 12 PM

**Definitions:**

Definitions of concern to this Work Group include:

- Viable timber industry
- Value added
- Triple bottom line
- Community