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Sent on behalf of the Tongass Advisory Committee

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Tongass Advisory Committee Seeks Creative Solutions to Land Management on the Tongass

JUNEAU, Alaska – The Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC) held its seventh meeting in Juneau from March 25-27, 2015. The group wishes to thank the City and Borough of Juneau for sharing their Assembly Chambers for this meeting.

During the meeting, and thanks to significant efforts by members between meetings, the Committee made substantial progress on their draft recommendations. Their deliberations continued to focus on providing mutually beneficial outcomes for fish, wildlife, timber, and other values derived from the Forest. To achieve those outcomes, the group further articulated the concept of co-intent – improving habitat conditions and long-term ecological function in young growth stands while simultaneously producing timber volume from those areas - as an important underpinning for their recommendations.

Co-chair Les Cronk reflected, “I am continually impressed by the perseverance of the TAC members toward achieving the Committee’s mission, and with how each member continues to strongly represent their constituents while still working together to achieve a new direction for timber management of the Tongass.” When discussing the difficult trade-offs associated with forest management, co-chair Lynn Jungwirth admitted, “The group was not afraid to address the exceedingly hard, emotionally difficult concerns around values, whether they be fish, old growth, or local jobs. Through our discussions, we came through it with more respect and knowledge that will ultimately lead us to a final recommendation.”

In addition to developing specific recommendations for the Tongass Land Management Plan Amendment, the Committee discussed Plan implementation, monitoring, and financial investments, as well as the necessity of strong, unified leadership for making a successful transition into young growth. Members also emphasized the critical importance of collaboration internally and with other landowners and partners. Through these suggestions, they hope to increase opportunities for local operators by encouraging local processing and domestic use of young growth products, as well as a more stream-lined process for small sales.

The members thanked the individuals who commented during this meeting, and encouraged community members and other members of the public to continue participating through the public comment process – both in writing and in person.

The next TAC meeting is scheduled for May 6-8, 2015 in Ketchikan, Alaska, during which the Committee hopes to finalize their package of recommendations. Following this meeting, the

TAC anticipates the next meeting to be scheduled in late August or early September 2015, following release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Plan Amendment. For more information about the Tongass Advisory Committee, visit <http://www.merid.org/tongassadvisorycommittee>.