

# PRE-COMMERCIAL YOUNG GROWTH THINNING ON THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST:

*a priority investment for the Tongass Transition*

## WHAT IT IS

*Pre-Commercial thinning is a forest treatment that increases the growth rate of timber on the Tongass and can also improve wildlife habitat conditions in forest stands that were previously clear-cut.*



**Simon Alvarado** | Contractor and Experienced Pre-Commercial Thinner

*"I began working as Pre-Commercial Thinning contractor in February of 1984 and continued for 30 years, until 2014. My brothers and I worked together and were hired by government agencies and private companies. The work is hard physically, but it keeps you healthy. Depending upon the job, we worked in crews ranging from two to seven people. We would begin working at six or seven in the morning and work for eight hours."*



**Thomas Witherspoon** | District Silviculturist at Sitka Ranger District

*"Pre-Commercial Thinning is one of the tools we use in silviculture to open up a wide variety of management options for the future. It opens up growing space for the remaining trees, increasing their productivity, producing better quality timber and shortening the rotation period. We're also accelerating the stand towards old growth characteristics that are desirable for wildlife habitat and stream quality. My job is to prescribe thinning as part of the overall management plan and to administer the contracts with thinning companies to get the work done on the ground. We're transitioning to managing what's already been cut, aiming for sustainable, long term use."*

## WHY IT MATTERS

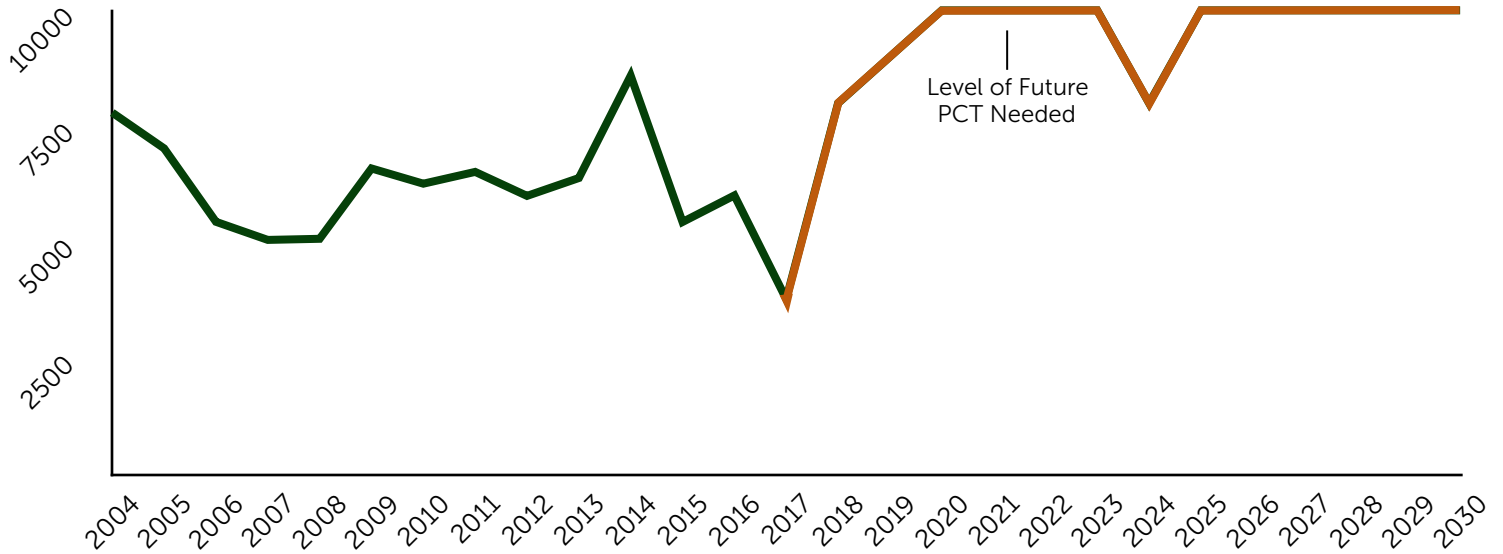
- Pre-Commercial Thinning is an important investment to make on the Tongass. The amount of Pre-Commercial thinning that was done in the past—and is being done right now—will dictate the success of a future timber sector.
- Pre-Commercial thinning projects can be paired with wildlife habitat treatments to improve habitat conditions on the Tongass—especially for accelerating understory growth for healthy deer populations.
- Pre-Commercial thinning projects create jobs in rural communities and business expenditures. Pre-Commercial thinning contracts in the future will ideally be a mixture of 8(a) certified businesses and a suite of specialized small businesses (including non-8a businesses) that are best equipped to work in remote sites around the Tongass.

## NEXT STEPS

- As discussed by R10 leadership and the collected stakeholders at the 2nd Young Growth Symposium, the total acreage/year of PCT and wildlife thinning on the Tongass should be increased by at least 50% and ideally doubled throughout the time period of the transition (10-15 years.) (See Graph 1 on back.)
- Create a mix of 8a contracts and non-8A contracts to ensure an ample number of contractors able to do PCT work in communities across the Tongass National Forest and ensure a competitive price/acre. (See Graph 2 on back.)
- Ensure that Pre-commercial thinning and wildlife habitat improvement is a priority on the Tongass and a critical part of the transition process by monitoring and publishing progress and results.

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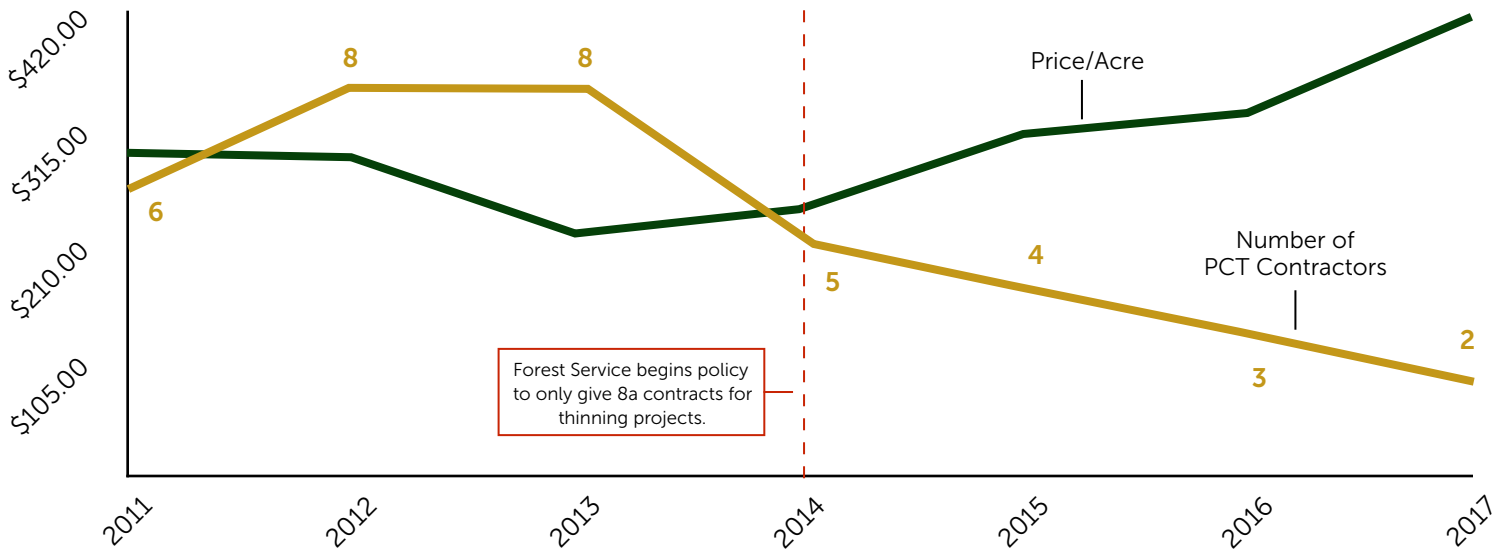
### GRAPH 1— Total Acres of Tongass Forest Pre-Commercially Thinned by Year



Pre-Commercial thinning acreage peaked in 2014 at over 8000 acres. To treat all stands where PCT and wildlife thinning is needed, **the total acreage should be increased** (ideally 33% more than 2014 peak.)

- PCT Acres
- Future PCT Needs

### GRAPH 2 — Cost of PCT/Acre Compared to Total Number of Business Under Forest Service Contracts



The recent internal Forest Service mandate that thinning contracts will only be offered to 8a certified contractors has drastically reduced the number of businesses participating in contracts and has dramatically increased the cost/acre. **If the situation remains the same, we will have to double the budget for PCT to accomplish similar acreages and will fall behind in treated acreage.**

- Price/Acre
- Number of PCT Contractors