Blueprint for Southeast Alaska: Background Document Synthesis

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Background and Context

The Tongass National Forest, at 16.7 million acres, represents the United States' largest National Forest, while also representing the world's largest intact temperate rainforest ecosystem. Located in Southeast Alaska, the Tongass spreads across an island archipelago with over 1000 islands and 18,000 acres of shoreline. While this region is home to 32 communities and 73,000 residents, 94 percent of its land is federally managed, leaving little remaining as private land. This context has resulted in a tension of global, national, state, and local interests. Local land managers have found it challenging, if not impossible, to meet all competing demands. To address this challenge, several collaborative efforts have convened over the past several years to develop joint recommendations for improved management. (For more background on collaborative efforts in the region, see www.tongasslandmgmt.org.

This document represents a synthesis of reports and recommendations from a variety of past collaborative efforts in southeast Alaska. (See the Annotated Reference List for an overview of reports utilized in this synthesis.) This synthesis offers a summary of background information, insights, and recommendations, organized into the categories of tribal consultation and stakeholder engagement; forest management and habitat restoration; young growth timber transition; economic diversification; and subsistence and cultural resources. The insights and recommendations included in this report are intended to inform a broader initiative to develop a solution oriented "Tongass Blueprint" with suggested forest management priorities and policies for the Tongass National Forest. The intention is that these identified opportunities and priorities can be used by the incoming federal administration to support the people and communities of Southeast Alaska while conserving the natural resources they depend upon.

The intent of this document is to provide a robust menu for consideration, building on previous collaborative efforts. This document does not represent any level of prioritization, analysis of the merits of the included recommendations; nor an indication of what content will be included in a final Blueprint.

Unique Considerations of Southeast Alaska

Given that forest management in southeast Alaska is set within a context unique in comparison to the contiguous United States, the following have been put forward as unique considerations for the region:

- Alaska Native people have been on this land for more than 10,000 years, and this place and its resources have cultural and spiritual significance.
- Expansive areas of high-quality intact habitat exist where ecosystems function with all of their native species and components.
- High-quality scenery and natural-appearing landscapes provide economic growth opportunities for visitor industry services, including remote-setting guided nature tours to view wildlife, hunt, fish, and hike.
- Stands of nationally and globally significant old growth forests represent the last domestic old growth timber industry in the nation, while also serving to sequester a significant volume of carbon, mitigating climate change through forest and soil processes.

- Healthy-functioning watersheds represent important sources of public drinking water and water sources for fish and aquatic resources, including hatcheries.
- Multiple species of fish are harvested for subsistence and personal use, commercial fisheries, and tourism and guided recreational fishing.
- The area contains an essential source of subsistence resources for Alaska Natives and community residents, including game, fish, and foraging resources.
- The Tongass National Forest serves as a major source of economic activity for Southeast Alaskans, including mining, visitor products, ocean products, forest products, energy production, and other economic activities.

Factors to Guide Solutions Development

Stakeholders in the region considered characteristics contributing to successful agreements and solutions. The following factors are included as considerations for recommendations development, seeking solutions that are pragmatic, flexible, durable, and balanced in perspectives and Forest uses. They also considered the importance of solutions that are not only economically beneficial, but also are economically feasible to implement, which may be best when authorized at a local level. Ultimately, the intention is to offer recommendations that provide certainty and predictability for the future.

Tribal Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

Although interests and values vary, stakeholders tend to overwhelmingly agree that community involvement and collaboration in contributing to national forest management is important. However, often agreements reached in collaborative forums are not fully upheld in implementation, leading to increasing distrust in the agency due to this lack of follow-through. In some collaborative forums, stakeholders also express concern about the range of representation and a lack of well-rounded participation. Similarly, sovereign Tribal governments in southeast Alaska have long sought to work cooperatively with the USDA in decisions that affect the traditional lands of Alaska Native people, but often feel their knowledge and expertise is not incorporated into the protection and utilization of the forest's resources.

Goals

1. Uphold the collaborative solutions that communities and stakeholders have identified.
2. Ensure collaborative partner input is considered in designing and implementing projects. Communicate regularly and transparently with the public.
3. Seek opportunities for meaningful collaboration and consultation with Tribes, area landowners, community members, and other interested stakeholders.
4. Incorporate Tribal knowledge and priorities into national forest management.
5. Expand collaborative projects to new areas of the Forest.

Strategies: Tribal Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

Collaboration & Partnerships	**Institutionalize and stabilize collaborative groups in the region**. Encourage and provide support for re-engagement and new participation among existing collaborative groups, including the All Landowners Group and Tongass Transition Collaborative.
	Utilize established local and regional networks to communicate with the public, including existing public forums, media, community briefings, open houses, and non-NEPA required meetings. Define entry points for collaborative input and engagement pre-and post-season and pre-NEPA. Share data in accessible formats.
Research, Monitoring, & Data	**Design and implement after-action reviews with project collaborators** for the purpose of identifying opportunities to make the projects achieve better outcomes in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Prepare public pre- and post-project reports about what was planned and what happened with the project or activity. Highlight positive results and identify areas not meeting expected outcomes.
Agency Policy & Procedures	**Create a new, more responsive, process for USDA consultation with Tribes**, based on the principle of "mutual concurrence" (i.e., consultation only occurs when the office/agency and tribal officials mutually agree that consultation is taking place). Ensure culturally competent and meaningful consultation with accessible meetings that take place in local communities on a regular schedule, and with mutually agreed upon measurable processes. Implement a process that integrates traditional knowledge into management paradigms and respects Tribal experience as traditional stewards of their ancestral homelands.
	Include metrics for partnerships, collaboration, and transparency into line officer performance evaluations. Give clear direction to staff that collaborating with stakeholders early and often is expected for all projects. Performance measures can include not only accomplishments, but also multi-party evaluations of the skillsets associated with successful internal and external collaboration.
	At the District Ranger level, fully exercise authority to implement projects that incorporate partners and achieve balanced, timely, effective, and efficient outcomes. Use the knowledge of potential contractors in initial sale design for projects with restoration intent to maximize economic feasibility and communicate desired restoration outcomes.

Forest Management and Habitat Restoration

In Tongass Forest planning, stakeholders encourage a balance between maintaining characteristics and conserving natural resources, while also ensuring economic development for communities – guiding development activities in a manner that meaningfully addresses local economic development concerns by providing access and certainty for industries in the region, while balancing conservation needs. Landscape-level community planning processes (e.g., HNFP, KKCFP), are examples of collaborative planning and land management processes piloted by regional stakeholders that aim to find such solutions.

Current Forest managers face the challenge of managing previously harvested stands in a way that ensures healthy young growth forests. For example, PCT is an essential management approach – it facilitates earlier economical timber sale opportunities and wildlife habitat benefits that provide critical subsistence resources for Southeast Alaskans. Land managers have developed thinning priorities based on ecological needs, but the USFS is currently unable to address thinning needs at scale (e.g., 85,000 acres in current need; to keep up need to treat 6,000 - 8,000 acres per year).

Nearly all resource area budgets declined on the forest from 2011-2018, and nearly all Southeast Alaska communities lost Forest Service employees. Between federal fiscal year (FY) 2011 and FY 2018, the Tongass experienced a 17 percent decline in FTEs, with a 2018 staff of 362 FTE; the Forest's budget also declined by 17 percent over the same period. Overall, at the end of the monitoring period, the Tongass employed less FTEs and had a reduced budget compared to most prior years. Due to this context, the Forest as a whole has been challenged in meeting its multiple use mandate while addressing current ecological management needs. Contractors and local businesses offer an opportunity to augment this limited capacity; however, they face their own limited resources as they face difficulty recruiting and retaining employees in rural areas. All of this is set within the context of a region-wide economic decline coupled with an increased cost of living.

Goals

1. Address current on-the-ground management needs.
2. Take an all-lands approach to planning and implementing projects.
3. Publicly share and discuss data findings and their implications.

Strategies: Forest Management and Habitat Restoration

Project Planning & Implementation	**Integrate outcomes of community forest partnership planning, management, and implementation processes into Forest management** (e.g., Hoonah Native Forest Partnership and Keex' Kwaan Community Forest Partnership)
	Convene a collaborative assessment process for the Central Tongass region. While this will be challenging due to the dispersed geography of the area, such an approach could build off the lessons learned from the Prince of Wales process.
Contracting & Agreements	**Expand use of existing authorities and cooperative agreements to accomplish goals** in partnership with tribal villages and corporations, and local communities of southeast Alaska. Employ cooperative agreements (e.g., Good Neighbor Authority), tribal authorities, challenge cost share agreements, partnerships, memorandums of understanding, stewardship contracting authority, and local hire amongst local tribal governments and the local community for fish, wildlife, timber, and infrastructure inventory, assessment, enhancement, and monitoring. This can help augment work that the agency cannot accomplish with its limited staff capacity.
	Develop and utilize a diverse array of creative funding and contracting mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships, agency-to-agency agreements, and village corporation shareholder hiring processes. Ensure these priorities remain as contracting authority shifts to the national level. Implementation will require a strong working relationship among US Forest Service Region 10 leadership and the office of acquisitions management (AQM).
	Utilize the 2018 Farm Bill stipulation for increased tribal self-determination in forestry management and forestry contract programs. Evaluate potential projects for utilization of these authorities (e.g., Good Neighbor Authority) to be conducted and a suite of pilot projects be developed in conjunction with tribal governments. Propose and pursue the implementation of Tribal Forest Management Demonstration Projects with all interested and engaged tribal entities throughout Southeast Alaska.
	Pursue an agreement between the USDA/USFS and Department of Labor regarding labor standards and specific guidance for worker conditions at remote field sites.

Research, Monitoring, & Data	**Complete infrastructure inventory and invest in identified gaps**. This will provide a clear understanding of existing forest infrastructure and maintenance needs, such as roads and log transfer facilities. Needs may include connection of road systems; establishment of shared docks, log transfer and storage facilities, and marine logistical service infrastructure; development of small-log manufacturing facilities and biomass facilities; and purchase of new harvesting equipment. Based on these outcomes, execute agreements for shared infrastructure among landowners.
	Identify and invest in future LiDAR needs. LiDAR can be used to improve stream inventory efforts. Near-term LiDAR data acquisition could prioritize geographic areas surrounding Shelter Cove, Revilla Island, and Ketchikan.
Training & Workforce Development	**Practice local hire and workforce development to maintain a workforce with forestry and timber management skills** to conduct restoration and other work on the forest (sustainable forest products industry). Creation and maintenance of a trained timber workforce will be important to meeting future opportunities in the industry the existing workforce "ages out" (the trend of an aging population in the region is expected to continue).
	Provide training to potential contractors, partners, and other stakeholders regarding Department of Labor standards compliance; conditions-based NEPA analysis processes and products; and other topics, as identified, for more effective engagement in environmental review processes.
Agency Policies & Procedures	**Amend the H2-B visa program** to allow migrant workers to work in Alaska and the contiguous United States. The forestry and timber sectors will be essential to provide backing for these changes.
	Develop cost estimates, budget priorities, and appraisals that reflect the true cost of forest management activities. Revise the residual-value appraisal system to establish stumpage rates that accurately reflect the profit and risk margins in young growth sales. Cost estimates for projects should also include expenses, such as temporary labor camps that meet health and safety requirements, transportation costs of accessing remote locations, and providing fair wages (including overtime) for workers.
Funding & Investment	**Establish a dedicated Fish and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Fund** within the retained receipts pool. The Fund will be used for projects sponsored by non-governmental organizations and identified and prioritized through a collaborative process.

Young Growth Timber Transition

Timber is still a culturally, socially, and economically important industry for some small communities in Southeast Alaska. Between 2010 and 2019, The Tongass NF administered around 731 timber sales to an estimated 76 unique purchasers, representing around 302,771 thousand board feet (mbf) of sold timber volume. As of November 2019, there were at least 23 active mills operating in Southeast Alaska in 11 communities. At least 16 biomass facilities have been installed across 13 communities. Some postulate that a shutdown of larger operators could have ripple effects on the overall viability of smaller operators and contractors (e.g., loggers, small mills, longshoremen). Some places continue to identify as timber communities, which makes any shift away from timber a difficult cultural change.

There are mixed opinions about and interest in developing infrastructure for young growth resources, given the limited economically viable options for young growth utilization, including tariffs of export markets, and unsuccessful attempts to sell young growth products. Many local timber mill products are defined by old growth characteristics in their raw material, and owners/operators would need to transform their businesses to transition to young growth. However, there are various opportunities to make Tongass timber more marketable, including sourcing wood for local industries, sustainability certification for lumber, strength-test studies for second growth products, improved lumber grading practices, and matching local building codes to local wood products.

Goals

1. Conduct research to understand current on-the-ground realities.
2. Develop a sustainable supply that caters to market demands.
3. Identify strategies for improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Strategies: Young Growth Timber Transition

Research, Monitoring, & Data	**Study, identify, and adopt methodology to project timber supply** based on future sustained yield from the young growth land base.
	Conduct a world market, demand, and economic impact analysis of young growth forest products – including non-timber/non-cash values of a young growth industry.
	Complete young growth stand-typing and integrate stand-typing with activity layers. This may involve modernizing the GIS system and use of new data to build more accurate maps.
	Continue old growth inventory efforts, with the goal of gaining a solid understanding of the on-the-ground reality for old growth supply and how to most strategically offer existing old growth during the young growth transition.
	Invest in research about new harvest techniques, small log manufacturing processes, site-specific use of wood biomass, and silviculture techniques (e.g., planting, thinning, stand conversion, site preparation, fertilization, and genetics). Investment in research at the Wood Products Lab could help identify products and markets for young growth timber.
Contracting & Agreements	**Diversify the range of contract sizes offered.** Land managers should design sales ranging from micro- and small- scale opportunities for smaller mills to long-term contracts for larger operations. A future sale schedule could be informed by USFS stand-typing. It will be important to continue to design, offer, and contract small-sale and micro-sale programs to small mills and others in-region. With this, provide a clear definition of small and micro-sales.
	Increase the use of local processing credits in young growth sales, regardless of size or location, to capture as much economic opportunity as possible and reduce economic leakage.
	Reduce or remove performance/bid bonds for small and medium sized sales that are predominantly young growth.

Project Planning & Implementation	**Coordinate with adjacent landowners to implement a strategic process for the scale, size, and scheduling of projects** – for both young growth and old growth – to assist businesses struggling with small profit margins so they have time and incentive to invest in new markets and products.
	Implement young growth pilot projects. This could include a pilot milling project to expand local capacity on the manufacturing side. Pilot planting projects could also encourage selective species management on high productivity sites.
	Offer sales with volumes appropriate to the scale of existing and emerging local processors. Award some long-term stewardship contracts to provide continuity of supply to reduce retooling investment risk.
	Establish one or more dedicated small-sale teams, specifically tasked with small sales, micro-sales, salvage sales, personal use, and other non-traditional timber sale opportunities, where this is its only function. The team must be provided with the requisite resources and support, able and encouraged to do NEPA and/or pre-sale work as needed, and be subject to accountability mechanisms and incentives.
	Identify a unit pool (stand or polygon within a project area) for bridge timber volume within a specified timeframe to meet the volume demand that cannot be met by young growth during the transition.
	Include biomass collection as an economic opportunity to be analyzed in NEPA documents.
Agency Policy & Procedures	**Create a policy that encourages the USFS to purchase and utilize local young growth** timber products for all USFS projects in the region. Work with USFS engineering and design personnel, as well as procurement, to set up the process. Engage the USFS Forest Products Lab in any questions regarding grade and quality.

Economic Diversification

People in natural-resource-dependent economies must continually adjust to the ebb and flow of available resources, including reinventing their livelihoods to fit the current state of the land. The economies of many Southeast Alaska towns are natural resource-dependent in one way or another, which makes them all vulnerable to boom-and-bust cycles. Many communities have diversified or completely shifted their economic bases and identities to new industries like fishing, tourism, or recreation. In addition, many of the Forest's investment trends support diversification of uses on the forest (e.g., increasing budgets in road construction, subsistence management, and vegetation and watershed management).

Workforce and capacity challenges are common across the western US, as are concerns about industry transitions in rural communities facing similar timber environments. Overall employment in Southeast Alaska grew between 2011 and 2018, mainly driven by increases in the visitor industry and, to a lesser degree, private health care employment, mining, and professional services. (Between 2011 and 2018, tourism sector added over 2000 jobs and growth is projected to continue.) In contrast, employment declined in government, seafood, and smaller sectors such as construction and timber. (Between 2011 and 2018, timber industry employment declined by more than 80 jobs.) The loss of high-paying, stable jobs in year-round industries and the increase in seasonal, low-wage jobs has left residents with less disposable income, fewer medical benefits, and a general loss of economic vitality in communities. Approximately one-quarter (26.1 percent) of workers were nonresidents; this is important to note as nonresident workers often take most of their income back to their homes. Nonresident wages therefore do not have the same impact on local communities as resident wages.

Through the Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP), workforce development initiatives have increasingly gained traction throughout the region. Common themes across workforce development initiatives included the power of interconnection, collaboration, and strong partnerships. Villages are able to see the benefits when local people are integrated in the stewardship, monitoring, and management of our natural resources.

Goals

1. Increase support for and implementation of workforce development programs.
2. Consider and integrate Tribal, community, and industry resources, capacity, and workforce needs.
3. Invite and encourage innovation.

Strategies: Economic Diversification

Training & Workforce Development	**Implement vocational-technical and workforce development training programs** in rural areas in coordination with local high schools and regional universities. Utilize existing programs and facilities to provide trainings and teaching modules. Align trainings with current forest management needs to provide a transferable skillset – e.g., to address forest management, visitor industry needs, tribal cultural and heritage resources, infrastructure maintenance and construction, computer technology, and administrative management, among others. Incorporate "soft skills" training to develop critical life skills like mentoring and resume-building.
	Identify incentives for participation in workforce training. For example, develop internships for local students, including within the agency and external employment opportunities (e.g., non-profit, industries, etc.). Participation can also be encouraged with certification or college credit with existing training programs like the Fire Academy or ABC Faller program.
Contracting & Agreements	**Utilize the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) or similar hiring authorities**, and agreements or MOUs with partners, adjacent landowners, and business owners, to provide training opportunities and continuity of work for a local workforce.
Funding & Investment	**Attract investors and entrepreneurs in support of small businesses** – for example through an entrepreneur incubator program. Provide incentives and for investment, such as federal loan guarantees, federally-purchased risk insurance, economic hardship relief; and an increase in allowable profit percentage in appraisals.

Fisheries and Riparian Habitat

Riparian and coastal ecosystems such as those represented in the island archipelago of southeast Alaska, represent the most economically productive ecosystems, representing almost fifty percent of the global ecosystem service economic value. These ecosystems, located in the Tongass National Forest, represent value for fisheries production, wildlife habitat, and recreation. To Alaska's important salmon industry, these ecosystems need to remain intact across multiple areas to offset variability in watershed productivity.

However, these ecosystems and associated habitat are also vulnerable to changing environmental conditions, including those caused by direct land management as well as implications of changing climate conditions (e.g., stream temperature, water deficit, extreme precipitation events, and changing hydrologic regimes). Southeast Alaska has faced a rapid decline in anadromous fish stocks, with some of the lowest salmon harvests reported in recent seasons. This outcome directly impacts the region's economic outputs – commercial seafood harvesting and processing is one of the region's two largest private sector economies in the region, supporting fifteen percent of regional employment.

Goals

1. Conserve and restore coastal, riparian, and aquatic anadromous fish habitat
2. Diversify the salmon "portfolio" by ensuring diverse populations from many watersheds

Strategies: Fisheries and Riparian Habitat

Project Planning & Implementation	**Undergo a Salmon Conservation Rulemaking** that re-evaluates whether to re-allocate areas designated for timber production for salmon conservation.
	Prepare detailed watershed analyses prior to implementing timber projects that consider watershed condition, status of salmon stocks, and potential impacts
	Improve fish passage by identifying, removing, and replacing failed/failing culverts and addressing sediment sources
Research, Monitoring, & Data	**Develop comprehensive science-based standards to protect salmon** in areas zoned for timber uses, including consideration of road density impacts
	Undergo an updated forest-wide watershed inventory and assessment that identified risks to salmon stocks
Agency Policy & Procedures	**Expand riparian buffers and protections for headwaters streams** to 300 feet for fish-bearing streams and 150 feet for non-fish bearing streams and other waterbodies, to prevent or reduce upslope impacts

Subsistence and Cultural Resources

The forests of the Tongass represent the areas that, for Alaska Natives and communities in southeast Alaska, produce their food, sustain their culture, build their homes, and provide for their people. The use of places, sites, waters, structures, resources, and objects are historically significant in the beliefs, customs, practices, and perpetuation of the culture(s) of communities and indigenous peoples of the area. These include cultural and historic sites, such as ancient villages, fish camps, burial sites, sacred sites, and historic travel and trade routes. Old growth red and yellow cedar trees offer an example of resources that are essential in cultural use by Alaska Natives, including carvers, weavers, and artisans, as well as for utilization in cultural buildings and restoration purposes.

While the Alaska Native people now share this place with other residents, it is critical that they continue to have the ability to sustain their cultures and their communities through economic, social, and cultural opportunities. Alaska Native people and Tribes are keenly interested in the stewardship of our traditional homelands. However, over time access to these resources has become more challenging and time intensive. This reduced access to cultural resources has proven to be challenging during a time of Tribal revitalization.

Goals

1. Respect and minimize impacts to Tribal traditional use boundaries and culturally significant areas.
2. Identify existing subsistence resources and needs.
3. Streamline access to cultural and subsistence resources.

Strategies: Subsistence and Cultural Resources

Research & Data	**Conduct a subsistence use/resource inventory.** Tribes have already identified the most important subsistence priority locations that are directly within their Community Use Areas and have proceeded to identify other critical locations as transportation capacity has expanded.
	Conduct an inventory and economic assessment of the availability, value, and local demand for red and yellow cedar as cultural use trees by carvers, artists, and local business owners working in Pacific Northwest Art traditions.
Project Planning & Implementation	**Create a "Traditional Homelands Conservation Rule" to protect traditional and customary uses and areas of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples in the Tongass** -- Identify the areas that contain critical traditional and customary use values, and design a management scheme that adequately protects customary and traditional uses of natural resources for the current generation and future ones. Will need to include: develop a methodology to identify sites of critical importance to customary use (subsistence and cultural); complete an inventory of watersheds and road systems in the traditional use area, then analyzed with community input; implement forest-wide conservation measures and mgmt to protect customary uses as identified by the ranking of community input**.**
	Identify and preserve red cedar stands with characteristics needed for cultural use trees within traditional Tribal territories for use in future carving and weaving activities. Work jointly with Tribes and USFS silviculturalists to develop a long-term management paradigm for this resource that provides for an adequate supply of cultural use wood over the next seven generations. Include this demand in the TTRA "seek to meet" calculation -- local artisan market has traditionally been left out of this calculation -- yet the art sector is a huge economic driver for southeast Alaska that supports rural communities.
Agency Policy & Procedures	**Streamline subsistence community use permits** for smaller communities to access all traditional use areas so that Tribes are able to provide food for the entire community while practicing and exercising their traditional and customary cultural rights.
	Grant authority to rebuild traditional cultural structures, such as fish camps, at the most heavily frequented subsistence locations.

Renewable Energy and Carbon Sequestration

The old growth forests of the Tongass National Forest are nationally and globally significant because they exist in quantities and extensions in Alaska like few other places on the planet. In addition to the quantity of natural resource, subsistence, cultural, and economic resources, they also offer a significant source of sequestered carbon. The healthy intact forest ecosystems and soil processes provide climate change mitigation. Some landowners, including Sealaska Corporation, are finding ways to economically benefit from this carbon sequestration, through carbon credits. Sealaska utilizes the California carbon market to offset impacts of British Petroleum. These credits come with a promise to not log on specific lands for a minimum of 100 years. Since 2015, carbon markets in Alaska have represented over $350 million in credits – representing the largest producer of carbon offsets for the California program. a

Even with the opportunity for offsetting carbon through soil sequestration, Southeast Alaska also faces the challenge of providing affordable energy to its residents. Costs of living, especially with regards to energy, have continued to rise in the area. Often residents are limited to diesel when considering their energy choices, an option that is far from affordable. However, the region offers an abundance of renewable energy opportunities, particularly hydropower. Under the conditions of the carbon trading program, such renewable energy projects can still be developed on acres that are not to be logged.

Goals

1. Utilize forest resources as a way to offset climate change.
2. Diversify economic opportunities to include climate-positive alternatives.
3. Ensure affordable energy is accessible to Southeast Alaska residents.

Strategies: Renewable Energy and Carbon Sequestration

Investment	Offer loan or grant funding mechanisms, energy subsidies, tax credits, and/or other cost offsets to encourage investment in renewable energy infrastructure.
Research & Data	Analyze and develop new accounting methodologies to recognize ecological value, potentially building off existing models, such as SeaBank by Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust.

Annotated Reference List

Alaska Roadless Rule Citizen Advisory Committee Final Report to the Governor and State Forester
November 21, 2018

In August 2018, Alaska Governor Bill Walker and Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Purdue signed a memorandum of understanding, agreeing to cooperatively undertake a state-specific Roadless rulemaking process to address Roadless management and access concerns on the Tongass National Forest. As part of this undertaking, Governor Walker convened the Alaska Roadless Rule Citizen Advisory Committee to provide options for a state-specific Roadless Rule for possible inclusion in the National Environmental Policy Act review process. This report outlines the options and suggestions that the Committee developed. Access the report via this link. For more information on the process, see https://tongasslandmgmt.org/roadless-rule-citizens-advisory-committee/.

Alaska Longline Fisherman's Association Petition to the US Department of Agriculture

The Alaska Longline Fisherman's Association developed and submitted a petition to the US Department of Agriculture and US Forest Service to undertake a Salmon Conservation Rulemaking for the Tongass National Forest. This petition was developed in response to declining anadromous fish habitat and corresponding harvest numbers, which can be attributed to changing environmental conditions associated with climate change and direct land management. Access the petition via this link.

Alaska Tribal Administrative Procedures Act Petition to the US Department of Agriculture
July 21, 2020

In response to the decision-making process regarding the Alaska Roadless rulemaking, several Alaska Native Tribes coordinated to submit an Administrative Procedures Act petition to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Signatories included representatives of Tribal villages and associations, including the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, as well as Tribal communities of Kasaan, Kake, Saxman, Klawock, Ketchikan, Skagway, Hoonah, and Yakutat. The petition urges the USDA to commence a rulemaking process to create a "Traditional Homelands Conservation Rule" to identify and protect traditional and cultural resources and places. Access the petition via this link.

Harvesting Carbon Credits
September 30, 2019

Alaska Business magazine published this article by Alaska Native Magazine, which provides a description of the cap and trade market for carbon, and the opportunities for implementing the program in Alaska. It offers a summary of the economic impacts of the program to date, and offers cautions and suggestions for future investment in the program. Sealaska Corporation's experience in the program is highlighted as a key example of the program's effectiveness. Access the article via this link.

A New Way to Profit from Ancient Alaska Forests – Leave Them Standing
February 7, 2020

This National Geographic article describes the opportunities for carbon markets in Alaska, by detailing the experience of Sealaska Corporation in its decision to utilize carbon offsets as an economic opportunity. The article offers the pros and cons of the approach, contrasting it with the old growth logging industry, while also sharing Sealaska's story in implementing the program. Access the article via this link.

Pre-Commercial Thinning: Improving Young Growth Forests through Effective Management

In 2020, the State of Alaska convened a pre-commercial thinning (PCT) task force to develop recommendations to improve implementation of the PCT program on the Tongass National Forest. This report represents the full list of Task Force recommendations and suggestions for changes to the program. The executive summary outlines those recommendations identified as near-term priorities, including contracting mechanisms and approaches, worker and housing standards, labor force and contractor availability, and thinning prioritization and financial responsibility. Access the report via this link. For more information on the process, see https://tongasslandmgmt.org/pre-commercial-thinning/.

Request for Cultural Red Cedar Trees and Economic Assessment of Traditional Carving, Weaving, and Artisan Economy
March 17, 2020

In a letter to representatives of the US Forest Service, Tribal representatives from Kasaan, Klawock, Kake, and Hydaburg expressed the cultural importance of access to forest resources for traditional arts, including the value of artisans to the Tribal economy. Red and yellow old growth trees represent an important cultural resource for carving totems, which serve to share the story of Tribal peoples. The letter includes a request for procurement of Tribal use trees, an assessment of available trees and local demand, and a collaboratively designed long-term resource management plan for cultural use wood.

Social and Economic Monitoring of the Tongass National Forest and Southeast Alaska Communities: Monitoring Plan and Baseline Report
Winter 2020

Building on the monitoring recommendations of the Tongass Advisory Committee, researchers from University of Oregon's Ecosystem Workforce Program began the first steps in development of a plan to track social and economic conditions in Southeast Alaska before, during, and after the transition to young growth timber. The purpose of this report is to provide the recommended baseline social and economic reporting for the Tongass National Forest and Southeast Alaska communities, and provide a monitoring plan to be replicated in future years. Areas of data collection included: demographic trends; economic opportunity; agency capacity; National Forest service contracts and grants and agreements; timber sales and processing facilities; and stakeholder perceptions. Access the report via this link. For more information on the research, including access to original data, see https://ewp.uoregon.edu/TongassTransition.

Tongass Advisory Committee Final Recommendations
December 2015

The Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC) was federally chartered in winter 2014 to advise the Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture on developing an ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable forest management strategy for the Tongass National Forest. Through extensive modeling of young growth availability, literature review, and consideration of public comments, the TAC achieved consensus on a comprehensive package of recommendations, including those to be incorporated into the Forest plan amendment, as well as operational changes, research, and investments needed to implement the transition. Access the report via this link. For more information on the process, see https://tongasslandmgmt.org/tongass-advisory-committee/.

Young Growth Forest Management in Southeast Alaska
Spring 2020

In fall 2019, the Southeast Alaska Young Growth Forest Symposium was convened with the purpose of identifying tangible opportunities for the future of the Tongass National Forest and surrounding communities. Southeast Alaska stakeholders, agency staff, and community members came together for discussions around collaborative forest planning, forest inventory and data analysis, timber markets and manufacturing, and workforce development and sustainable economies. This report provides an overview of each of those topics, along with specific suggestions for tangible opportunities. Access the report via this link. For more information about the event, including a full summary, see https://tongasslandmgmt.org/october-21-23-2019-third-young-growth-symposium/.

Additional Resources

Analysis of Young Growth Forest Inventory Information and Future Timber Volume Estimates on the Tongass National Forest
November 2, 2020

This report, developed for the Tongass National Forest and State of Alaska, documents the process and outcomes of the recent young growth forest inventory and mapping updates – an effort to better quantify and describe young growth forest resources across the Tongass National Forest. Using results of young growth data analyses and revised mapping, the report provides estimates of the available young growth timber base, fall-down percentages in young growth stands, and the net young growth timber base to be managed for future timber production and harvest. The report also offers a projection of the potential flow of young growth timber volume over time and descriptions of new young growth forest planning tools developed during the project. Access the report via this link.

Bridges to a New Era: A Report on the Past, Present, and Potential Future of Tribal Co-Management on Federal Public Lands
September 2020

Given that US federal public lands are often placed on traditional Tribal lands, researchers explored the context in which Tribal consultation and engagement operate and offer best practices to improve the current process to one that represents a co-management approach. The report includes a contextual overview of principles of federal Indian law; common approaches to tribal engagement on public lands; history, law, and politics of tribal co-management; and federalism and intergovernmental relations. With this context in mind, the report offers options for tribal co-management legislation aimed at using existing authorities and processes as a bridge to tribal co-management, including the use of Tribal consultation. Access the report via this link. For more information about the research, see https://www.cfc.umt.edu/bolle/tribal-comanagement-on-public-lands/.

Understanding Rural Attitudes Toward the Environment and Conservation in America
February 2020

Researchers at Duke University's Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions explored attitudes and perspectives of rural voters in response to environmental legislation. The study sought to answer questions regarding opposition versus support of different legislative options, and how to utilize that information to inform future policy that directly addresses rural needs and priorities. The report concludes with a list of policy implications – broad recommendations for how to ensure rural voices are included and have ownership in national-level policymaking. Access the report via this link. For additional information, including infographics and related publications, visit https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/publications/understanding-rural-attitudes-toward-environment-and-conservation-america.