

## Background and Context Information for TTC Members

The following background information provides some context and helps explain the role of the Tongass Transition Collaborative (TTC) in providing feedback and recommendations to the Forest Service, Tongass staff regarding strategy to achieve a successful Young Growth Transition, including within the context of SASSfm. SASSfm is the framework by which the Forest Service will continue working toward achieving the Transition under direction contained in the current Tongass Land Management Plan.

- In 2013, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack issued a memo directing the Tongass NF to transition from an Old Growth dependent timber economy to one which will increasingly rely on harvest of Young Growth (YG) timber, while also maintaining a viable forest products industry.
  - The Secretary then authorized formation of the Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC): a group formed under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, whose members represented a wide spectrum of interests and economic sectors in SE Alaska, and who collectively shared a strong commitment to devising collaborative solutions.
  - The purpose of the TAC was to supply the Forest Service (FS) with recommendations on how best to achieve a successful Transition to YG, specifically, provide advice on the suitable and available land base for developing an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable forest management program on the Tongass National Forest with emphasis on young growth management to include consideration of appropriate standards and guidelines and advice on how to speed the shift from old growth to young growth in a manner that was economically viable for the existing industry.
  - As part of its deliberative process, and to involve the public, the TAC held meetings in various communities throughout SE Alaska.
- 18 Months after it was formed the TAC provided its final recommendations to the Forest Service:
  - One recommendation was to complete a forest inventory and analysis covering all Young Growth (YG) forest stands located on the Tongass National Forest.
  - The Tongass Forest Plan was amended in 2016 and contained numerous YG Transition related recommendations formulated and provided by the TAC. Appendix B of the Tongass Land Management Plan (2016) contains the final TAC recommendations.
- Following completion of its charter, some former TAC members created the Tongass Transition Collaborative (TTC), an ad hoc group whose purpose was to monitor and advocate for implementation of YG Transition recommendations on the Tongass. The TTC has been mostly inactive since 2019, due partly at least to discussions beginning in 2016 about the possibility of exempting the Tongass from the Roadless Rule, and because its members were engaged in other YG Transition related efforts; PCT Taskforce and the YG Symposium.
- From 2016-2021 Tongass Young Growth (TYG1) Challenge Cost Share Agreement (CCSA) between DOF and FS. The Agreement included several projects:

- o Completed a YG forest inventory and analysis for the Tongass. (field plots were located across 42,000 acres and 7 Ranger Districts)
- o Convened a Pre-Commercial Thinning (PCT) Taskforce to recommend ways of re-vitalizing a program of PCT on the Tongass – facilitated by Meridian Institute.
- o Held a YG Symposium to share recent YG project outcomes and to identify next steps towards a successful YG Transition – facilitated by Meridian Institute and Spruce Root.

A pdf document describing major project accomplishments (TYG I Brochure) is available on the TTC website maintained by Meridian Institute.

- Other continuing YG Transition efforts rooted in TAC YG recommendations, include:
  - o The state’s ongoing “Bridge Timber” commitment to annually provide the industry with a supply of timber volume over the next 5 years, after which greater supplies of Tongass YG timber are projected to become available on the Tongass – beginning in 2028 between 50 MMBF and 125 MMBF or more will be available each year through 2040 on the Tongass.
  - o Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) timber sales at Gravina and Kosciusko Islands, involving a mix of both OG and YG on adjoining state and federal forest lands.
- 2021 SE Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS) funding created TYG II CCSA between FS and DOF. Projects in the current Agreement include:
  - o Facilitate continued meetings of the SE Alaska All-Land Owners Group (LOG) and fund a part-time projects manager to work towards completing project initiatives authorized by the Group. The main purpose of the group is to share information and infrastructure, including roads, to coordinate timber sales and other resource projects across all participating ownerships in the region. The project work plan (Exhibit A) and a document briefly describing the purpose and history of LOG containing a list of LOG project initiatives are both available on the TTC website maintained by Meridian Institute.
  - o Complete a YG Working Forest Analysis for all participating non-federal lands in SE Alaska and combine results with the prior results from the Tongass YG inventory and analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of YG forest resources across all participating ownerships in SE Alaska. The project workplan (TYG II Scope of Work) is available on the TTC website maintained by Meridian Institute.
  - o Facilitate reconstituting the TTC to assist the FS with its 5-Yr Forest Plan review.
    - DOF entered into a Cooperative Agreement with Meridian Institute to reconstitute the TTC and to facilitate its meetings. The goal of this project is for the TTC to assist the FS in its 5-Yr. Forest Plan review by evaluating how well the FS has implemented YG Transition goals contained in the 2016 Forest Plan Amendment. The project workplan (TYG II Scope of Work) is available on the TTC website maintained by Meridian Institute.