

Forest Service, Tongass National Forest

Alaska Region

CHARTER

1. Committee's Official Designation

Tongass Advisory Committee

2. Authority

The Charter for the Tongass Advisory Committee (Committee) is hereby established under the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. 2.

3. Objectives and Scope of Activities

The Committee will advise the Secretary of Agriculture, through the Chief of the Forest Service, by providing advice and recommendations for developing an ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable forest management strategy on the Tongass National Forest. Recommendations and advice may inform the modification of the 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan.

This forest management strategy will emphasize a shift to young growth management. The rationale for shifting to a predominantly young growth-based forest management program is explained in the January 2013 Leader's Intent Paper, providing overall direction for the Committee. The 5-Year Tongass Integrated Plan (TIP), released in May 2013, identified old growth timber sales that can provide a bridge to support a transition within 10 to 15 years in a way that is economically viable for the existing industry. The Secretary's July 2, 2013 Memorandum, Addressing Sustainable Forestry in Southeast Alaska also directed the identification of young growth and restoration projects that could be completed over the next five years, as well as shifts in staff and financial resources towards young growth management. Planning, integration, and funding of that program of work will be driven and guided by work on key projects with collaborative partners.

4. Description of Duties

The Committee will be solely advisory in nature. All activities of the Committee will be conducted in an open, transparent, and accessible manner. The Committee will be

asked to perform the following duties or other requests made by the Secretary or Chief.

- a) As necessary and appropriate, identify the key elements to be considered for a potential Forest Plan modification assuming young growth is the focus of vegetation management in the future, while recognizing and balancing the other unique and equally important resource values of the Tongass, such as tourism, recreation, fishing, subsistence, and renewable energy.
- b) Offer recommendations 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. Considerations include standards and guides and land use designations for a future modification of the Tongass Land Management Plan.
- c) Provide advice on how to speed the shift from predominately old growth management to predominately young growth management, in a way that is economically viable for the existing industry. This may include consideration of options for managing stands.
- d) Offer advice on opportunities to work cooperatively with other landowners on an all lands young growth forest management strategy.

5. Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports

The Committee will report to the Secretary of Agriculture, through the Chief of the Forest Service.

6. Support

Clerical and administrative support will be provided by the Forest Service. The Tongass National Forest and Alaska Region will also provide significant technical support to the committee to ensure members have access to appropriate and relevant data as needed.

7. Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years

Members of the Committee will serve without compensation. In performance of their duties away from the homes or regular places of business, Committee members may be allowed reimbursement for travel expenses in accordance with Federal per diem rates for attendance at meetings as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5703. All expenses will be subject to approval of the Designated Federal Officer (DFO).

Estimated annual operating costs for the committee is \$980,000 including: travel, lodging and per diem, committee facilitation, administrative support expenses, and Federal staff support (estimated as four full time equivalents staff per year).

Committee expenses will be covered through the annual budget of the USDA Forest Service.

8. Designated Federal Officer

A permanent Federal employee will be appointed in accordance with agency procedures and will serve as the Designated Federal Officer (DFO). The DFO will approve or call the advisory committee and subcommittees' meetings, prepare and approve all meeting agendas, attend all committee and subcommittee meetings, adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest, and chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.

The Forest Supervisor for the Tongass National Forest will serve as the DFO. The Deputy Forest Supervisor for the Tongass National Forest will serve as the Acting DFO.

9. Number and Frequency of Meetings

The Committee will meet as often as necessary to complete its work, perhaps as frequently as every month. A quorum of 10 members of the 15 member committee must be present to constitute an official meeting. The committee shall not hold any meetings except at the call of, or with the advance approval of, the DFO. Attendance may be in-person, by telephone, or by other electronic means.

10. Duration

Continuing.

The Committee will be up to 2 years in duration, but the majority of the work is expected to be accomplished between March 1, 2014 and December 30, 2014.

11. Termination

The Committee will expire 2 years after the date of filing unless prior to that date, it is renewed accordance with FACA, Section 14. The Committee will not meet or take any action without a valid current charter.

12. Membership and Designation

12a. The Committee will be fairly balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. The Committee will be comprised of not more than 15 members. The members appointed to the Committee will be knowledgeable of ecological, social, and economic issues impacting Southeast Alaska, while providing a balanced and broad representation within the following interests:

- i. Federally Recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Organizations and/or Alaska Native Corporation representatives;
- ii. National or regional environmental and/or conservation organizations;
- iii. Timber industry representatives;
- iv. Federal, State and local government representatives; and
- v. Other commercial users, those holding land use permits or the public at large.

Committee members must have a demonstrated commitment to working collaboratively and finding solutions that meet multiple stakeholder values.

Committee advice and recommendations must be approved by consensus of the groups represented (2 out of 3 within each interest group) but not consensus of all participants.

One substitute (alternate) will be selected for each interest group.

Nominees will be sought through an open and public process that includes, but is not limited to, nominees submitted by Alaska Native Organizations, local and State governments, community based/non-governmental organizations, environmental and conservation groups, and individuals who represent the interests of the public served by National Forest System programs and land resources.

12b. Equal opportunity practices in accordance with USDA policies will be followed in all appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA, membership will include to the extent possible, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

12c. The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

12d. Of these members, one person who is recognized for his or her ability to lead a group in a fair and focused manner, and who has been briefed on the mission of this Committee will be designated by the Secretary to be the Chairperson. A co-Chairperson may be assigned, especially to facilitate his or her transition to become the Chairperson in the future.

12e. Ethics Statement

To maintain the highest levels of honesty, integrity, and ethical conduct, no Committee or subcommittee member shall participate in any “specific party matters” (i.e., matters are narrowly focused and typically involve specific transactions between identified parties) such as a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, grant, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct or indirect financial interest. This includes the requirement for Committee or Subcommittee members to immediately disclose to the DFO (for discussion with USDA’s Office of Ethics) any specific party matter in which the member’s immediate family, relatives, business partners or employer would be directly seeking to financially benefit from the Committee’s recommendations. Members of the Committee shall be required to disclose their direct or indirect interest in leases, licenses, permits, contracts, claims, grants, or agreements that involve lands or resources administered by the Forest Service, or in any litigation related thereto. For purposes of this paragraph, indirect interest includes holdings of a spouse or a dependent child.

All members will receive ethics training to identify and avoid any actions that would cause the public to question the integrity of the Committee’s advice and recommendations. Members who are appointed as “Representatives” are not subject to Federal ethics laws because such appointment allows them to represent the point(s) of view of a particular group, business sector, or segment of the public.

Members appointed as “Special Government Employees” (SGEs) are considered intermittent Federal employees and are subject to Federal ethics laws. SGEs are appointed due to their personal knowledge, academic scholarship, background or expertise. No SGE may participate in any activity in which the member has a prohibited financial interest. Appointees who are SGEs are required to complete and submit a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE-450 form) and, upon request, USDA will assist SGEs in preparing these financial reports. To ensure the highest level of compliance with applicable ethical standards USDA will provide ethics training to SGEs on an annual basis. The provisions of these paragraphs are not meant to exhaustively cover all Federal ethics laws and do not affect any other statutory or regulatory obligations to which advisory committee members are subject.

13. Subcommittees

The Forest Service has the authority to create subcommittees. Subcommittees must report back to the parent committee, and must not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency.

14. Recordkeeping

The records of this Committee, formally and informally established subcommittees, or other subgroups of the committee, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 26, Item 2 or other approved agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552.

15. Filing Date

FEB 10 2014