



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Revision 101 and how to be Engaged Webinar

Questions & Answers

March 6, 2024

1) Will the plan revision process outline future land disbursements to State University and mental health?

Land ownership is always a topic of interest and there will be an element of the plan revision assessment that will identify current land ownership. Future land disbursements are speculative, and it is outside the scope of Forest Service authority to address directly although the revised plan may provide desired conditions, goals, or objectives regarding potential future land disbursement. Information regarding current land selections authorized by current statutes can be found on the Bureau of Land Management's webpage. Any information provided on this topic will be reviewed and considered by the Forest Supervisor in developing the draft proposed Plan.

2) Would you talk about the consultation requirements for Tribes vs Native Corporations? It seems they have very different objectives.

We have already reached out to Tribes and the Alaska Native Corporations providing an opportunity for engagement and consultation. There will be much more engagement with the Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations throughout this process, given how important it is to bring in that perspective and information.

The 2012 planning rule recognizes treaty rights and that the federal government has certain trust responsibilities and a unique legal relationship with federally recognized Indian Tribes. The 2012 planning rule requires the responsible official to honor the government-to-government relationship between federally recognized Indian Tribes and the Federal government.

The responsible official is required to conduct consultation with federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations consistent with the requirements of Executive Order 13175, which establishes consultation requirements for the Federal government, and 25 U.S.C. 450 note, which requires that Federal agencies consult with Alaska Native Corporations on the same basis as Indian Tribes under the Executive Order. In addition, the responsible official is required to encourage participation by Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations in the overall public involvement effort throughout the planning process and to request information about native knowledge, land ethics, cultural issues and sacred and culturally significant sites to inform the planning process. Federally recognized Tribes will also be encouraged to seek cooperating agency status where appropriate, which will provide them with further opportunities to be engaged throughout the land management planning process.

3) Will there be opportunities to request adjustments in land use zoning? For example, roadless areas on Baranof Island are currently allocated to timber uses, but in actuality they are used for recreation and by salmon. Can we change those as part of the process?

There will be a review of all current Forest Plan land use designations (LUDs); any recommendations for changing them will be considered by the responsible official for inclusion in one or more alternatives in the Planning process. There will many different perspectives on how land use should change, so there are likely to be a few alternatives involving different land use designations. These will likely be different than the current land use designations and will be based on the findings in the assessment, need for change, and what we hear from the public. The revised plan will no longer call these land use designations (LUDs) and instead will use the term management areas or geographic areas, but they are the same concepts. Land use designations required by law, like the Wilderness and LUD II designation, can only be changed by Congress.

4) Are there any non-US Forest Service groups or organizations that are working to inform the Tongass plan revision that are formally recognized by the US Forest Service? For example, Sustainable Southeast Partnership, Tongass Transition Collaborative, etc.

We are reaching out to our local groups and organizations to make sure they are a part of the process and kept informed. To ensure the widest range of community voices are heard and diverse economic interests are addressed, we have signed agreements with Spruce Root Inc. and the Juneau Economic Development Council to help with the public engagement process. Spruce Root Inc. is an indigenous-led institution deeply committed to community-based work and is uniquely suited to helping the Forest Service ensure public engagement is inclusive and equitable. The Juneau Economic Development Council will work with other engagement partners, tourism interests, and the public to provide feedback on recreation, tourism, and related resources. We have those formal partnerships but are also exploring opportunities for additional coordination.

5) Will the final decisions be made solely by the US Forest Service or are there any partner organizations that will be invited to the decision-making process?

The decision made as part of this forest plan revision process is made and signed solely by the Responsible Official, the Tongass Forest Supervisor. However, the Forest Supervisor has invited and continues to outreach to bring Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, the public, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations to the table to inform their decision. Their decision is also informed by relevant science, other laws regulations and policies, and analysis findings of resources specialists. Identification of Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) is done by the Regional Forester for the Alaska Region.

6) Will the scoping process include agency developed alternatives? Or will the Forest Service wait until after scoping to develop alternatives?

For scoping, we plan to release a draft proposed plan; called a proposed action in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping process. Once we get feedback from Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Governments and organizations, and the public during the scoping period, alternatives to the draft proposed plan would be developed based on that feedback.

7) Is the current plan available on the website?

The current Tongass National Forest plan is posted here:

[Tongass National Forest - Planning \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/land-management/forest/tongass-national-forest-planning)

8) In overgrown communities or boroughs, is there a point where National Forest Service land is considered for private ownership?

The Forest Service has only limited authority to dispose of Forest Service lands. Decisions about individual landownership adjustments won't be made as part of the plan revision process; these are project level decisions. With that said, the topic will be discussed and may highlight areas where landownership adjustments are needed or may be important. The revised plan can set the framework for landownership adjustments in the future through desired conditions, goals and objectives.

For more information or to sign up for our email distribution list, please refer to the Tongass Revision Website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fseprd1105492>