

Tongass National Forest Forest Plan 5-Year Review

WRANGELL PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

1.0 Introduction

The Tongass National Forest (TNF) is conducting a five year review of the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Public meetings and solicitation of comments are major components of the review. The Forest is soliciting written comments from the public, TNF employees, tribal governments, and stakeholders. The Forest held this public meeting at the Wrangell Borough Council Chambers on February 7, 2013 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to explain the purpose and process for the five year review, to offer information on making meaningful comments, and to provide time for questions and discussion. District Ranger Bob Dalrymple introduced Forest Service employees. Forest Planner Sue Jennings did a power point presentation on the Forest Plan and answered questions.

A total of 20 people attended this meeting (see attached attendance list).

Graduate student, Britta Schroeder spoke on her graduate work of mapping comments.

2.0 Clarifying Questions and Answers

This section summarizes the many clarifying questions and responses discussed at the meeting.

Roadless Rule

- Many people asked questions about the Roadless Rule (Carol Rushmore, Tim Rooney, and others). It was explained that where the Roadless Rule is at odds with the Forest Plan, the Roadless Rule overrules the Forest Plan. If Roadless were lifted, it would allow for more timber harvest in Wrangell.

Old Growth Reserves (OGRs) and the Conservation Strategy

- Several people had questions about OGRs (Carol Rushmore and others). It was explained that OGRs can be changed following Forest Plan direction.
- Some small OGRs are not in roadless areas.
- It was suggested by both audience members and FS personnel that the Conservation Strategy could be reevaluated in light of shifting Roadless Rule exemptions.
- The Conservation Strategy has been in place since 1997, with updates made in 2008. OGRs can be changed at the project level.
- A map showing LUDs against the roadless layer would be a helpful visual, in

meetings and on website.

Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ)

- Jackie deMontigny asked about ASQ. Sue pointed to the Record of Decision (ROD) as the source of information about ASQ.

Information Needs Assessment (INA)

- Diane O'Brien asked what kinds of things are in the INA. Sue directed her to chapter 6 of the Forest Plan and explained the goal of using the best science available. (Sue Jennings said Chapter 6 at the meeting but the INA is in Appendix B.)

Adaptive Management

- Based on monitoring, the Forest Plan can be modified through the NEPA process, culminating in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement, with its components of public involvement. This is how adaptive management works.

Comments Process

- Comments are routed initially to the contractor and Sue and next to an interdisciplinary team (IDT). Sue responds promptly, answering questions as necessary.
- Comments and analysis are later routed to the Forest Supervisor for a determination.
- Comments and analysis will be published in an appendix of the report. Commenters' contact information may be published along with comments.
- A request to extend the comment period has been made to the Forest Service Chief. No determination to extend the comment period has been made, yet. If decision is made to extend the comment period, the Forest Service will publicize this information.
- Comments from the Borough that are submitted during this comment period will be analyzed, but this review does not address any needs or decisions of the Borough that are not submitted in comment form.
- Comments should be specific to concerns; where, what standard and guideline is not working, be site specific. The broad picture is also helpful, but the middle details are not necessary.

Planning Rule

- This five year review process is being grandfathered in under the 1982 Planning Rule, which has an appeal process, rather than the new 2012 Planning Rule

which has an objection process. In five years, the Tongass will be subject to the new rule. Appeal process vs. objection process is likely to not make much difference in the context of public involvement.

Timber Production Land Use Designation (LUD)

- The Forest Plan is a permissive document with general, not specific, constraints in regards to timber harvest.
- Jackie suggested that maps of the whole Tongass be used in discussing timber harvest as a way to visualize where timber harvest is and is not occurring.

Current Projects

- Could be put on hold, or slowed if the Forest Supervisor determines that a significant Forest Plan amendment is needed.

Guide to the Forest Plan

- Diane asked if a quick guide was available. The Forest Plan Implementation training power point will be posted to the website by the end of next week.

Communication Sites and Utility Corridors

- TNF is seeking comments from the industry regarding future development. Transportation and utility sites and corridors overrule the underlying LUD.

Land Exchanges

- Could also affect the Forest Plan, either significantly or non-significantly depending on size. A large exchange could slow or stop other projects in progress in the affected area.

Wrangell Island 10 Year Timber Project

- The current status of the project is at issue development and preliminary alternative themes stage. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is expected in late spring or early summer. Only governmental agencies may participate in the IDT; non-governmental organizations are excluded. The IDT consists of an internal Forest Service group and also formal cooperators.
- Diane inquired about public comment on changing Standards and Guidelines. Bob answered that the public will have the opportunity to comment on this in the summer.
- This project is a stewardship project in addition to being a timber sale. Carol is a contact person for ideas or concerns on the stewardship component.

3.0 Comments

This section summarizes the formal comments offered by individuals at the meeting.

Stephen Todd

- Leadership is headed in the right direction in mirroring messages arising from collaborative groups over the past years.
- The Forest Plan should be updated to reflect inputs from:
 - Changing economic markets,
 - Legal and executive changes such as the Roadless rule,
 - New developments in science, specifically in ecology, i.e. beetles, and climate change, i.e. forests as a carbon sink.
- The Forest Plan should incorporate values of:
 - Stewardship,
 - Collaboration,
 - Promotion of vibrant communities.
- Timber management should focus on small sales, micro-sales, and local mills, rather than being export driven.

Carol Rushmore

- Please budget Wrangell into future public meetings planning.
- Create economic incentives with a smaller scale industry
- Analyze the Conservation Strategy and OGRs
 - Consider moving OGRs to allow for additional harvesting capacity.
- Recreation management should be based on sub-regions rather than being applied forest wide.
 - Carrying capacities should be permitted to vary by district, to be able to consider the variability of recreation use that occurs. (For my own clarification, I spoke with Carol Rushmore on 2/14/13 and she clarified that she was talking about the components of the carrying capacity, group size and number of encounters, and these should be based on sub-regions. I failed to clarify at the meeting so did so through a phone call /s/ Sue Jennings).

Diane O'Brien

- The Forest Service is trustworthy because of the trustworthy guidance offered by the Forest Plan.
- The Wrangell Island 10 Year Timber Project should follow the Forest Plan as it is. Do not incorporate plan amendments into this project.

Meeting Attendees

1. Mary Byford
2. Rich Rhodes
3. Brian McNitt
4. Angie Eldred
5. Bob Christensen
6. Britta Schroeder
7. Julie Decker
8. Ernie Christian
9. Rock Kar
10. Jaqueline deMontigny
11. Stephen Todd
12. Dorothy A. Hunt-Sweat
13. Paul Slenkamp
14. Olivia S. Sinaiko
15. Marlene Clark
16. Daniel Blake
17. Carol Rushmore
18. Timothy Rooney
19. Bill Willard
20. Diane O'Brien

TNF Team

1. District Ranger Bob Dalrymple
2. Forest Planner Sue Jennings
3. District Staff Officer Austin O'Brien
4. Note Taker Suzanne Webb