

TONGASS FOREST PLAN 5 YEAR REVIEW TALKING POINTS

Why the 5 Year Review was done: Forest Service policy and regulation direct the Forest Supervisor to review the conditions on the land covered by the Plan at least every 5 years to determine whether conditions or demands of the public have changed significantly. Responding to appeals and litigation on the 1997 Forest Plan EIS process has affected the timing of this periodic review.

Visit the 5 Year Review on the web: A new section has been added to the Tongass National Forest website specific to the 5 Year Review. (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/index.shtml>, under the “*What’s New*” heading) This interactive site includes information on how the Review was done, as well as a comprehensive Determination document related to the need to revise the Tongass Forest Plan.

How the 5 Year Review was done: The 5 Year Review was conducted as an assessment, which includes an evaluation of existing information (like Annual Monitoring Reports), concerns expressed by internal and external sources, and specific items noted in the Forest Plan that are to be reviewed in 5 years. A key component of an assessment is to identify information needs, strategies to address concerns, and basic investment information to aid the Forest Supervisor in determining when it is best to address, or invest in a given concern or opportunity.

Overall conclusions of the 5 Year Review: Based on the 5 Year Review and implementation of the Forest Plan to date, it has been concluded that conditions or demands of the public have not changed significantly, and that the Forest Plan does not need to be revised at this time. This conclusion assumes that the evaluation of the conservation strategy will move forward, ongoing work with the ASQ timber models will continue, and that higher priority concern strategies will be addressed as included in the 5 Year Review and Forest Plan Maintenance Program.

Forest Plan Maintenance Program: The 5 Year Review has identified many opportunities for improving the current status of the Forest Plan and how we strategically maintain it into the future. The Tongass has established the new internet-based Forest Plan Maintenance Program found at (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/index.shtml>, under the “*What’s New*” heading). The Forest Plan Maintenance Program will allow the Tongass to move forward in addressing concerns from the Review, while also managing the many ongoing activities related to forest plan implementation and planning to minimize similar concerns in the future. The program includes built in responsibilities and accountability. It also includes a built-in process for addressing concerns as they are identified internally and externally. The 1982 planning regulations, as well as, the recently released Planning Regulations envision ongoing adjustments to forest plans to keep them more up-to-date. The Tongass Forest Plan Maintenance Program will help meet the intent of the regulations in a more consistent and efficient manner.

What's next: A key component of the 5 Year Review was creation of Concern Worksheets for each concern identified in the process. Each worksheet has been prioritized from very high to low, and includes the type of skills, timeframes and outputs needed to address that concern. Beginning with the highest priorities, the Forest Supervisor will be making specific assignments to address those concerns. It should be noted that work on many of the concerns are already in progress and will continue.

How public can participate in future: The 5 Year Review has resulted in identification of a number of Forest Plan related concerns. The Forest Plan is comprehensive and guides all activities and programs on the Tongass National Forest. Management of the Tongass is a dynamic process, so it is reasonable to expect new concerns or opportunities related to the Forest Plan to be identified in the future. To facilitate timely identification, the Forest Plan Maintenance Program provides an opportunity to identify new potential items in an ongoing manner. The Forest Plan Maintenance Program website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/index.shtml>, under the “*What’s New*” heading) has a section to help the public submit new potential concerns.

How the 5 Year Review relates to the new Planning Rule: The comprehensive mid-term review of the Forest Plan conducted by Tongass staff is consistent with provisions included in the new Planning Regulations released last week. The new Forest Plan Maintenance Program will provide for continuous review of the Plan by the Forest Service and the public, rather than only at five year intervals.