US Forest Service
Tongass National Forest
Conservation Strategy Summit
June 18 and 20, 2013
Meeting Summary

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Introduction

As part of its five-year review of the 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (the "Forest Plan"), the USDA Forest Service (USFS), Tongass National Forest (TNF) hosted two Summit sessions focused on the Forest Plan's Old-Growth Habitat Conservation Strategy. The one-day Summits were held in Ketchikan on June 18 and in Juneau on June 20, 2013, from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm each day.[1] This document summarizes information presented at the meeting, as well as comments made and questions asked during open discussion sessions. The meeting agendas are attached.

The Conservation Strategy was approved as part of the 1997 Forest Plan and updated in the 2008 Forest Plan Amendment. The strategy was designed to provide for the viability of wildlife species, well distributed across the Tongass through a series of old-growth forest reserves and a matrix of conditions within managed stands to meet the needs of wildlife. The current strategy can be found in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the 2008 Forest Plan, Volume II, Appendix D, online at:
http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5422739.pdf

The goal of the Summits was to introduce the general public, Alaska's industries (timber, fisheries, tourism, mining, etc.), state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations and other interested parties to the current Conservation Strategy and alternative approaches, and to provide for broad discussion of the efficacy of the current strategy, the potential need for revision, and opportunities and cautions that should be considered going forward. Presentations at the Summits addressed:

- Review of the current Conservation Strategy, new relevant science since 2008, and monitoring results.
- How the strategy provides for conservation of wildlife species on the TNF identified as candidates for listing as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).
- Consideration of the "Triple-Bottom Line" – How the Conservation Strategy affects the balance among three primary sets of needs to be met on the Tongass – environmental, economic, and socio-cultural.
- Assessing the efficacy of the current Conservation Strategy, and considering possible alternative approaches.

The consideration being given to the Conservation Strategy is part of a larger five-year review of the Tongass Forest Plan. To learn more about the TNF's 5-Year Review go to:
http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5402852

Comments on the Conservation Strategy and other elements of the Tongass Forest Plan are must be submitted by June 30, the close of the five-year review comment period, at: http://tnf-fiveyearreview.com The most helpful comments convey how the public feels forest plan

[1] Thirty people attended the Ketchikan Summit, of which 15 were not USFS employees. Forty-six attended in Juneau, of which 30 were not USFS employees.

implementation is going, why they feel that way, what is working well, and/or what they would like to occur in the future that isn't addressed in the Forest Plan.

Summary of Presentations

Forest Supervisor Forrest Cole welcomed participants to the Ketchikan Conservation Strategy Summit on June 18. Jason Anderson, Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor, welcomed those in attendance at the Juneau Summit on June 20.

Each of the presentations summarized below was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation that can be found online at:
http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5402852

Forest Service's 5-Year Review Process – Relationship to this Summit

Ketchikan – Ted Schenk, Wildlife, Subsistence and Planning Staff Officer, TNF
Juneau -- Sue Jennings, Forest Planner, TNF

The objective of the 5-year review of the 2008 Tongass Forest Plan is to provide the Forest Supervisor with insight about how the Forest Plan is being implemented, assist in determining whether any actions are needed to clarify or adjust the plan, and to maintain communication with stakeholders about its implementation.

Major components of the 5-year review include a needs assessment (completed December 2012), public comment period (January-June 30, 2013), public meetings (completed February-March 2013), a monitoring and evaluation report (May 2013), and Conservation Strategy Summits held in Juneau and Ketchikan in June 2013. A report summarizing public comments and an analysis of the Forest Plan's implementation since 2008 will be available in the spring of 2014. This report will inform the Forest Supervisor and Regional Forester determining follow-up actions. Actions that could result from the 5-year plan review include a written clarification of selected plan sections (1-2 months after review), a supplement to the plan (1-12 months), a minor plan amendment (1-3 years), or a plan revision (4-5 years).

The Forest Plan sets the desired conditions for all areas of the Tongass National Forest and is accompanied by an environmental analysis prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The final Tongass Forest Plan includes a "zoning map" depicting 19 Land Use Designations (LUDs). The plan also includes Goals and Objectives for desired future conditions, and Standards and Guidelines that guide management of the Forest in a manner that will meet the desired future conditions. Using adaptive management, the plan is implemented, monitored, and annually evaluated. This helps the TNF improve future management and to make any changes to projects that enforce the standards and guidelines.

The first Tongass Land Management Plan (known as TLMP) was adopted in 1976. The plan was revised 1997 and subsequently in 2008. The 19 LUDs in the TNF include:

- Wilderness and national monuments (2)
- Mostly natural settings (8)
- Moderate development (3)
- Intensive development (1)

- Overlays (5)

The overlay LUDs are applied on top of an underlying LUD, and include overlays for minerals, existing and proposed state road corridors, and existing and potential power transmission corridors.

During the 5-year review, the TNF is asking for comments from all stakeholders. After the end of the comment period, a team of USFS specialists will respond to the comments in a report to the Tongass Forest Supervisor. The Forest Supervisor will make a recommendation to the Regional Forester about whether or not to amend, supplement, or revise the Forest Plan. The action to be taken by the TNF will be a decision of the Regional Forester.

Questions:

Q (KTN): The Regional Forester is the decision-maker on the Forest Plan, but the comments initially go to the TNF Forest Supervisor?

> A: That is correct.

Q (KTN): What is meant by the term "development"?

> A: All on the ground development activities, including timber harvest, development of trails or cabins, etc. Noted that 1872 Mining Act regulates mining on federal lands.

Q (JNU): When you review comments, how much are you influenced by the number of comments you receive advocating a particular issue?

> A: The report will note how many comments were received on each topic, but we do not base our decision on the numbers. The numbers are less important than the quality of the comment in the context of the laws that guide the Forest Plan and TNF management. Form letters received in great numbers do not suggest that one value overrides another just because of the quantity received. Substantive comments are the most helpful to the 5-year review and the most effective.

Habitat Management

Brian Logan, Forest Wildlife Biologist, TNF

The mission of the USFS is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of the present and future generations. The framework that the agency uses is relative to regulatory compliance. Laws and executive orders related to habitat and wildlife conservation include:

- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (as amended)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (amended 1936 and 1972)
- Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1968 (as amended)
- Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972
- Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended)
- National Forest Management Act of 1976 (as amended)
- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980

- Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990
- Roadless Rule of 2001

Key regulatory authorities include:

- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) – The federal government has a unique role in regulating fish and game harvest to assure subsistence resources are available for harvest by federally-qualified subsistence users. The USFS works closely with the Federal Subsistence Board and Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils to develop harvest regulations for deer, bear, moose and other subsistence resources in Southeast Alaska.
- Endangered Species Act (ESA) – The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) administer the ESA. To date, Southeast Alaska has never had any terrestrial species listed as endangered or threatened species. The ESA was one of the main drivers in the development of conservation strategy for the FP in 1997.
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – NEPA requires environmental analysis of federal actions (including permitting) before decisions are made. Inclusiveness and transparency are the major purposes of this process.
- National Forest Management Act (NFMA) – NFMA directs the USFS to use a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to resource management. It also provides for public involvement in preparation of Forest Plans.

The USFS works closely with various state and federal agencies, Alaska Native Tribes, and the public in order to make informed decisions about the content of the Forest Plan and how it is implemented.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Steve Brockmann, Ecological Services Program, USFWS

The current TNF Conservation Strategy has helped prevent endangered species listings in the Tongass. One of the duties of the USFWS is to administer the ESA, in coordination with NMFS. The USFWS' Ecological Services Program works with federal agencies and applicants for federal permits, and is tasked with identifying ways to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife. Relative to the ESA, the USFWS's objective is to work with partners to conserve species and habitat so that an ESA listing is not necessary, and to protect or recover listed species.

The ESA exists to prevent extinctions. If a species is believed to be in danger of extinction, they are listed as either threatened (future endangerment) or endangered (current endangerment). The ESA protects the species and the ecosystems on which they depend. If a species is listed then take is prohibited, federal actions that would jeopardize the species are banned ("jeopardy standard"), and adverse modification of critical habitat is prohibited. Federal agencies must consult with USFWS or NMFS if they propose to implement a project that may affect listed species. If a terrestrial species were to be listed in the TNF, for example, there would be consultation requirements for timber sales, construction of roads or cabins, or other development.

Consideration of whether to list a species under the ESA begins with a petition to do so. Petition filing is followed by a review to see if the petition presents substantial information (*90 day finding*). If warranted, a *status review* is conducted to evaluate threats, using best available information. The factors considered in judging the level of threat to the species are: habitat loss, overutilization (harvest), disease or predation, inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms, other natural or manmade factors. If one or a combination of these factors warrants, then a *12-month finding* is conducted and a final decision made about the listing.

Although Southeast Alaskan terrestrial species have never been listed as endangered or threatened, petitions have been filed for forest dependent species including the Alexander Archipelago Wolf (1993), Queen Charlotte Goshawk (1994), and Prince of Wales Flying Squirrel (2011). The USFWS also conducted an assessment of the Prince of Wales Spruce Grouse (without a filed petition) and determined there was not significant threat to the species.

The 1993 and 1994 petitions stimulated a lot of concentrated work on the wildlife conservation elements of the 1997 Forest Plan. The Tongass Conservation Strategy was specifically designed to conserve (and thereby avoid the need to list) the wolf, goshawk, and other old-growth forest-dependent species. It was tailored to the conditions of the Southeast Alaskan island ecosystem, which include:

- Limited dispersal between islands for many species
- Incomplete faunas that vary among islands
- Endemic species and subspecies
- Independent populations (recruitment from adjacent populations may not occur)
- Species prone to extinction

Important features of the Conservation Strategy designed for the TNF include the following, which apply to every island in the Forest:

- Old Growth Reserves (OGRs), linked by corridors make it possible for species to move from one area to the next (coarse filter);
- Standards and Guidelines tailored to the different wildlife species, applied to development or activities;
- Small OGRs located in each watershed, to provide stepping stones for dispersal through timber harvest areas.

In closing, the existing Conservation Strategy has been successful in preventing ESA listings in Southeast Alaska. The 5-year review of the Forest Plan presents an opportunity to improve conservation where vulnerabilities have been identified, but we should be careful that we don't weaken the strategy's effectiveness.

Questions:

Q (KTN): When the USFWS is considering a petition to list, are they constrained geographically? You mentioned that the wolves in Southeast are the same as the coastal wolves of British Columbia. Can you not look beyond the border when you consider the petition?

A: The USFWS' analysis is not constrained by political geographic boundaries. We evaluate the species on a range-wide basis. One example was the goshawk that was nearly listed in British Columbia.

Q (KTN): Have there been any introduced species in Southeast Alaska?

A: Elk and marten have been introduced. There is a distinct subspecies of marten on Kuiu and Admiralty Islands. Introduction of the American Marten to Kuiu Island is polluting the gene pool. Admiralty Island has the only remaining population of the pure marten subspecies.

Q (KTN): Does the Conservation Strategy need to be static on the landscape (such as designated OGRs that are mapped on the landscape, to be successful?

A: You can probably have a more dynamic strategy. However, if the conservation reserves are constantly changing, it will not work. The current Conservation Strategy has a more robust framework than the strategy that it replaced, which was dynamic but ineffective.

Q (KTN): Over time, if the landscape is changing – for example, if a young growth stand is developing productive habitat – why can you not move the OGR areas?

A: It takes a long time for young growth stands to become productive habitat. It may be possible to make adjustments in the reserves based on truly changed conditions, but again, if it is only a reserve until someone wants to cut it, it will not be a very effective conservation strategy.

Q (JNU): Can critical habitat apply to prey species?

A: The ESA says that the species "and ecosystems on which they depend" must be protected, so one could make the case that habitat for important prey species must be protected. For example, habitat for prey species on which spotted owl depended was designated as critical when the owl was listed under the ESA.

Triple Bottom Line Approach to Screening Conservation Strategies for Resource Development

Ketchikan – Wade Zammit, President and CEO, Sealaska Timber Corporation
Juneau – Kyle Moselle, Large Project Coordinator, Alaska Department of Natural Resources

The triple bottom line is a concept for land and resource planning and management that is well-applied in the consideration of the Conservation Strategy. The concept has three components:

- Environment. A healthy environment provides sustainable development opportunities, protects wildlife habitat, enhances recreational and subsistence activities, and enables quality of life.
- Economics. A robust and stable economy creates wealth, expands job opportunities, and builds healthy communities.
- Social/Community Structure. A strong social/community structure incentivizes workforce development and provides local jobs, uses natural resources in a responsible and renewable manner, drives resource education, and promotes social wellbeing.

A balance between the environmental, economic, and community goals creates sustainability of all components. That is, promoting a healthy environment that supports a robust economy, in turn perpetuates a strong social/community structure.

The socioeconomic trends in rural Southeast Alaska suggest that the status quo is not sustainable. In the region's rural communities, unemployment is high, school enrollment has decreased 33% since 1995, and populations remain stagnant. The decrease in timber sales and the limited available amount of timber production in the Tongass indicates that there is an imbalance in the components of the triple bottom line, with environmental considerations receiving more emphasis than economic and social/community structure.

According to the final report (2012) from the Alaska Timber Jobs Task Force, Alaska's federal and state forests have the potential to be a model of sustainability. The "working forest" is a concept that encompasses the triple bottom line and urges stakeholders to work together towards multiple use and responsible management. It embraces diverse and broad objectives related to responsible use of natural resources, providing jobs, stimulating local economies, and supporting communities. These broad objectives have the potential to unify diverse stakeholders and interest groups while framing many of the State of Alaska's short and long-term goals for the region.

Questions:

Q (KTN): Are there other regions in the world that can show what a sustainable timber model looks like?

> A: It would be a challenge to find a situation that might be comparable to this region. Many areas have a high rate of private land ownership, which is unlike Southeast Alaska. The triple bottom line is a model that would provide opportunity to meet all of these goals. One challenge that we can address is to enhance constructive communication between groups in the region, which is part of the Working Forest Group's intent. Another challenge is that the State of Alaska needs to have more involvement in the federal decision-making process. The decisions about our resources are currently being made out of state.

Q (JNU): Did the Working Forest Group come out of the work of the State's Timber Task Force?

> A: No. The group came from the Timber Cluster Group that was part of the Southeast Cluster Initiative coordinated by the Juneau Economic Development Council, in partnership with the USFS, to enhance the competitiveness of businesses in five economic clusters and to promote stronger and more sustainable economies and communities in Southeast Alaska.

2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, Old-Growth Habitat Conservation Strategy: The Current Strategy, New Science, and Monitoring

Brian Logan, Wildlife Biologist, TNF

The Tongass Nation Forest is approximately 17 million acres and is home to 73,000 people in Southeast Alaska living in 35 mostly rural communities in an island ecosystem known as the Alexander Archipelago. The region has over 21,000 islands, 96 of which are over 1,000 acres in size. As the largest, relatively intact rainforest in North America, it makes up about 14% of the

global temperate rainforest. Cover types of the forest include non-forest land (40%), productive old growth (POG) (30%), unproductive old growth (25%), young-growth (YG) (4%), and water (1%). High frequency wind is the principle disturbance agent in the TNF, while fire is virtually absent.

Historically, most of the timber harvest occurred from the mid-1960s through the mid-1990s. The predominant harvest strategy was clearcut logging in low elevation, high volume timber stands. The USFS uses the amount of productive old growth (POG) on the Forest in 1954 (5,405,872 acres) as a baseline for the original amount of POG in the TNF. Today, about 92% of POG remains and 83% is expected to remain after 100+ years. Seven percent of the beach fringe has been harvested. There is substantial young growth distributed on the Tongass in past harvest areas; approximately 1/3 of the young growth acreage (~200,000 acres) has been treated with pre-commercial thinning to date. Timber harvest and the TNF's delicate insular biogeography present conservation planning challenges and long-term viability concerns for old growth ecosystem components.

The 1997 Forest Plan planning process represented a new paradigm in science/manager partnerships. During planning, six scientists became full-time members of the Forest Plan Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). They maintained separate and well-defined roles, and consulted with more than 50 other scientists within the university system. They developed the Tongass Old Growth Reserve Conservation Strategy to maintain viable and well-distributed populations of old growth dependent wildlife species and to provide other multiple public uses (timber production, recreation, tourism, mining, subsistence). To design the Conservation Strategy, the IDT used scientific literature, created species assessments, conducted workshops and reviews, and formed risk assessment panels. They did not, however, make management recommendations or policy decisions, or make decisions regarding the amount of risk to assume in the strategy.

The Tongass Conservation Strategy is not "risk free." It is a balanced strategy with an acceptable level of risk for ensuring continued wildlife species viability while meeting the requirements of NFMA. The strategy is detailed in Appendix D of the FEIS for the 2008 Forest Plan. The basic component of the Conservation Strategy include:

- The coarse filter, also called 'reserves,' focuses on the characteristics of the entire ecosystems and landscapes. The reserve system includes large/medium/small OGRs, non-development LUDs, and islands less than 1,000 acres. The general design features and assumptions of the reserve network:
  - Are located so that spacing is maintained in the four cardinal directions.
  - Are more circular rather than linear in shape to maximize the amount of interior forest habitat.
  - Contain minimal amounts of early seral habitat.
  - Include riparian, beach, and estuary habitats as contributing elements.
  - Involve site-specific factors to help meet multiple biodiversity or wildlife habitat objectives.
- The fine filter, also called 'the matrix,' is a series of forest-wide Standards and Guidelines focused on 13 wildlife species and their habitats. The fine filter also includes beach and riparian corridors, and other non-development lands (such as non-development LUDs).

The 1997 TNF Old-Growth Conservation Strategy was reviewed, revised, and incorporated into the 2008 Forest Plan Amendment with the following additions:

- New geologic special area
- A new experimental forest north of Juneau
- Conversion of a large area of remote recreation LUD north of Juneau to a semi-remote recreation.
- Conversion of development LUD areas on Chichagof and Kupreanof Islands to semi-remote recreation designations and other minor LUD refinements.
- Goshawk foraging habitat and high value marten habitat standards and guidelines were replaced with a new Standards and Guidelines based on management of legacy timber stands
- Adjusted boundaries of small OGRs, adding 90,000 acres to the reserve network

In collaboration with other federal and state agencies, the USFS uses multiple monitoring programs to evaluate habitat trends and species-specific population trends. Monitoring programs are implemented for the 13 Management Indicator Species (MIS) identified for the TNF. An interagency group has been evaluating the MIS list to determine if adjustments should be made; no decisions have been made yet regarding this change, or any change in species monitoring.

Monitoring has not identified any concerns regarding species viability. Annual and five-year monitoring reports are posted on the TNF's website. Population trends appear to be stable. Habitat trends are stable. Bald eagle numbers are steady. Goshawk surveys (4,000 completed) have identified seven new nests. Monitoring results and ongoing research results will be considered in the review of the Conservation Strategy.

Questions:

Q (KTN): Does the current Conservation Strategy presume creation of old growth over time?

> A: The OGR network is somewhat of a "virtual" network. Because the Forest Plan hasn't been fully implemented and we haven't harvested the full Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) for the full 100-year timber rotation, most of the OGRs are surrounded by more old growth. The designers of the Conservation Strategy recognized the disturbance ecology, but it wasn't an adaptive strategy and, as a result, very little was written about young growth management. (Steve Brockmann noted, however, that the Old Growth LUD does call for actions that would accelerate the transition to old growth conditions in this LUD.)

Q (KTN): What percentage of old growth is protected within the developed land base?

> A: Overall, 92% of the old growth in the TNF is protected.

Q (KTN): When the Conservation Strategy was designed, what were the assumptions about how other non-federal lands were being managed?

A: We assumed that there would be no habitat value provided on other lands. The courts have held that the USFS is responsible for maintaining viability at the scale of the planning area, which is the entire TNF.

Q (KTN): Was the Tongass' roadless rule exemption accounted for during the last Forest Plan?

A: The roadless exemption existed, but we did not account for it in the 2008 plan.

Q (KTN): Do the Standards and Guidelines for goshawks apply to young growth habitat?

A: No, they apply only in old growth. However, goshawks do nest in young growth. We've run into some situations where we have this issue of the Standards and Guidelines not protecting a nest in young growth and it would be a good thing to comment on.

Q (KTN): What are the reasons for why the Forest Service closes roads?

A: Access and travel management assessment is a process that we use to evaluate our roads. Sometimes we close them because there may be concerns about over-harvesting, but we usually close roads because we can't afford to maintain them.

Q (JNU): Are endangered human communities considered in the Forest Plan?

A: The triple bottom line is not included in the Forest Plan specifically, but there was a social and economic analysis in the FEIS prepared for each of the Forest Plans during the NEPA process. See also Chapter 2 of the current Forest Plan.

Q (JNU): Is every acre of the forest subject to the conservation strategy?

A: Yes. Standards and Guidelines for species are not place-specific, rather they are animal-specific.

Southeast Alaska Conservation Assessment and Integrated Resource Framework

Dave Albert, The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) developed the Southeast Alaska Conservation Assessment from 2004-2008 in partnership with Audubon Alaska, in the context of the 2008 Forest Plan revision. The assessment and the maps it generates illustrate what a smart balance of conservation and development looks like in the Tongass from TNC's perspective and has been used to help inform the Tongass Roundtable discussions among different stakeholders. The assessment was published in 2008 and is available online at: http://home.gci.net/~tnc/HTML/Consv_assessment.html.

TNC's assessment is not a complete alternative conservation strategy for the TNF. The methodology used is not the same as that used in the TNF Conservation Strategy and doesn't take into account all of the species specific work that the USFS does. TNC also looked region-wide, across management boundaries (private, state, federal lands), while the TNF's strategy considers only USFS-managed lands.

Coastal temperate rain forests are rare around the world. The greatest amount is in North America and, from a global prospective, we have a responsibility to conserve this resource. Management practices applied in the Pacific Northwest have failed to conserve old growth and other important habitats and maintain the viability of some species (e.g., spotted owl).

The Tongass is a mosaic of productivity, both ecologically and economically. The assessment helps determine how productivity is distributed across the region, including valuable timber lands and ecologically valuable lands. TNC used an ecoregional assessment methodology to develop an integrated resource assessment that considers how to optimize conservation of biological values and also provide for sustainable timber production on the TNF.

The assessment measures biodiversity by evaluating the occurrence and distribution of ecosystems (terrestrial, coastal, freshwater, estuarine), focal species (brown bear, salmon, marbled murrelet, deer winter habitat), and forest types (upland, riparian, karst). It assesses the extent of conservation by looking at current landscape conditions, conservation status (across land ownerships), and geographic distribution of land use and conserved lands across the region (including consideration of the natural landscape fragmentation and islands).

It is important to note that, while the TNF includes nearly 17 million acres, only about 5.5 million acres is productive forest. Even less acreage is economically viable timber that would supply industry – and we must consider that this productive timber also has habitat value.

Patterns of past timber harvest illustrated by the assessment include:

- Tree size – Large tree forests have been disproportionately logged historically (data from 1986-2004), at a rate that is 2.8 times their availability on the landscape. Fifteen percent of the TNF is small tree forests, but only 6% of those forests have been harvested to date.
- Landform scale – Logging in productive old growth on karst formations has occurred at a rate that is 5.6 times the availability of this forest type on the TNF. Lower elevations are logged more than high elevations (data from 1954-2004).
- Biogeographic provinces – Timber harvest has been disproportionately high on Prince of Wales Island, with 38% of logging from 1954-2004 occurring there.
- Landscape-scale contiguous forests – In areas on Prince of Wales Island that were historically largely-contiguous forest, there are now only a few high density patches remaining. There has been a 90% reduction of productive old growth on northern Prince of Wales.

MARXAN spatial optimization tools were used to evaluate core areas of biological value, at both sub-watershed and watershed scales. Value for timber production was also modeled, with consideration of economic, biological and other constraints. MARXAN was used to design and map a landscape that would optimize and sustain both conservation and timber production on the TNF – identifying the "best places to harvest to meet economic constraints and also provide for biodiversity. This framework was not endorsed universally among all conservation interests (for example, it did not protect all roadless areas). However, it has proved to be a very useful tool to engage USFS and stakeholders in substantive discussions about potential ways to resolve conflict over timber supply and conservation on the Tongass.

<u>Questions</u>:

Q (KTN): Concerning the map of conservation area design for biodiversity and timber supply, was all of the land considered regardless of its current LUD? That is, did you consider everything could be open for development, aside from Congressionally-designated Wilderness?

A: No. LUDs were a factor. Only areas within the Timber LUDs were considered to be available for timber production.

Q (KTN): Why is northern Kuiu Island so high in biodiversity? It does not have exceptional wildlife.

A: The area has high salmon production and has high volume trees.

Q (KTN): What is an example of the criteria used to give a high score vs. low score for biodiversity?

A: The criteria were the biodiversity targets (e.g., salmon habitat, bear habitat, deer habitat, large trees, riparian upland, estuary). The places with the highest concentrations of these attributes received the highest scores.

Q (JNU): Did you look at other Management Indicator Species or only the 4-5 species listed in the presentation?

A: The assessment looked at the species listed above, not the full list of MIS identified in the Forest Plan.

Q (JNU): Has this model been used elsewhere?

A: Yes, all over the world. It was developed initially for assessment of the Great Barrier Reef.

Comment: The assessment was very valuable in Tongass Futures Roundtable discussions and is also a useful tool in planning future timber sales. There would be substantial value to updating the data and the assessment for 2004-2013.

Comment: Suggest developing better criteria to measure habitat sustainability, not just the size class of timber. Note that historical conditions aren't necessarily what species need to maintain viability. Using past conditions to understand how ecosystems function and have been used is valuable, but using it to define species needs or picking 1954 or another year as a desired condition from the standpoint of species conservation is problematic.

Comment: It would be interesting to see how it would look if the assessment were run without the constraint of the current LUD designations (e.g., if it were a "clean slate" and timber production wasn't necessarily constrained to the current Timber LUDs).

Finding a Sustainable Conservation Strategy for the Tongass National Forest – Opportunities & Challenges

Don Riemer, DR Systems, Inc.

Developing a sustainable Conservation Strategy for the TNF requires a solution that meets the triple-bottom line, balancing environmental, economic, and social/community needs. The approach uses landscape dynamics, considering that every acre can do a number of things over time (uses and designations of land may change over time in a sustainable landscape). It also applies the Satoyama principle (people and the environment can go hand in hand, operating in a sustainable landscape).

Using the OPTIONS© scenario-based spatial analysis tool, resource and landscape data is used on a site-specific, individual polygon basis. It is designed to address all environmental and socio-cultural requirements first, before any consumptive use or extraction of resources is allowed within the modeling framework.

The approach applies the following principles:

- Take advantage of the variability and productivity of the land base, spreading activities over a larger proportion of the landscape, but with an overall less dense footprint for any one activity.
- Proactively manage the land base to meet multiple objectives over time.
- Use silviculture techniques (including pre-commercial and commercial thinning) to grow new habitat. Habitat value in timber stands is not just based on age (e.g., can create conditions for valuable habitat outside of just the 300-year-old POG) and valuable habitat areas can move around over time (looking at a long timeframe).
- Use variable-retention techniques for timber harvesting.
- Include restoration and rehabilitation (potentially funded by timber harvest contractors) as a tool for active forest management and habitat creation.
- Use spatial, scenario-based planning techniques.
- Pay close attention to details, the application of specific data at the polygon level.

OPTIONS can generate a suite of scenarios showing where and when activities would be forecasted to occur, for managers and the public to consider. Selected scenario(s) can be tested further with outcomes of management displayed.

The current Forest Plan and Conservation Strategy is based on more concentrated land management, focusing timber harvest and other development in certain areas and protecting/conserving other areas through reserves – with "hard boundaries" over a rotation of 100-120 years. OPTIONS develops more dispersed management scenarios without such hard boundaries, over a longer time scale. It is a different planning and management approach.

Questions:

Q (KTN): With declining federal budgets and the high cost of local planning, is it practical to assume that the Forest Service can do this type of planning?

> A: The timber industry and other industries could be asked to help fund planning, as they are beneficiaries.

Q (KTN): What are some advantages to this model over others that have been used previously?

> A: OPTIONS is not an optimization model. It is scenario-based, using dynamic links to GIS data at the polygon level, and it allows the user to access much more detail. All of the data layers are stacked with landscape polygons as an overlay. The software is designed to meet all environmental and socio-cultural requirements and it extracts any consumptive use requirements, like timber harvest. It's easy to test sensitivities of an end case by changing the rules up front.

Q (KTN): Can you add economics to these models as well?

A: Yes, you can build in information about costs and revenues.

Q (KTN): What is the largest landscape for which this type of model has been run?

A: Used OPTIONS for the entire State of Georgia, testing application of its forest management practices and policies. Also used for a large land area in California. Developed scenarios for large land base in Washington that must be managed to generate revenue for a Trust.

Q (JNU): Can this be a sustainable model for the timber industry?

A: Yes, but in order to achieve a high level of constant timber supply, it would have to be built into the plan over the long range.

Q (JNU): Is this part of a conservation strategy that DR Systems is developing for the State of Alaska?

A: DR Systems is preparing comments on the Forest Plan for the Southeast Conference. A triple bottom line solution is being developed using spatial analysis for the TNF, looking at rules, regulations, and what you can do over the long-term.

Q (JNU): Do you anticipate a difficulty coming up with solutions from your firm's base in Washington State, when the Forest Plan process requires so much public input?

A: Plans and projects must always go through the public process. There will be a range of scenarios initially developed. Those scenarios would be narrowed to several alternatives. Southeast Conference is expected to select one or two that they would want to recommend for further consideration.

Q (JNU): Would this model allow areas that provide habitat values to move around over time, rather than having static habitat areas (such as the OGRs)?

A: Yes, over longer time frames (such as 300 years) areas that contribute habitat can be moved around on the landscape, as new habitat develops naturally or is "grown" through active management. However, you can also run scenarios with more fixed habitat reserves.

Q (JNU): What datasets will you be using? The existing data is limited, especially about vegetation responses to active management and the characteristics of young growth.

A: It's true that there aren't a lot of long-term historical datasets for many of these areas in the TNF, but we will use data from the USFS for this region, and data from comparable areas in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia.

Comment (KTN): A model that allows you to evaluate scenarios at this level of detail might test with better precision whether the current Conservation Strategy is more than what is needed to assure species viability.

Comment (KTN): The model is only as good as the input data. The TNF has lots of GIS layers, but data is available only at a large spatial scale. There are limitations to getting to the level of specificity (polygon level) using data provided by the USFS. This level of detail is a "great goal", but there would need to be on the ground site analysis to have confidence in the products.

Summary of Discussion Sessions

At both the Ketchikan and Juneau Summits, participants opted to stay in a large group for open discussion, rather than break into small groups as proposed in the agendas. The following questions were provided to stimulate discussion. Discussion was wide-ranging and did not follow the order of these questions, but the meeting notes below have been organized under these general topics.

Current Conservation Strategy

- What elements of the current Conservation Strategy do you think work now and should be carried forward?
- What should be changed? Why?
- What has changed since 2008 that you want the Forest Service to consider in its evaluation of the Conservation Strategy?

New Approaches / Alternative Strategies

- What are some new approaches or alternatives to the Conservation Strategy that you think should be considered?
- What are some cautions about new approaches or alternatives?

Note that the comments summarized below represent a wide range of views expressed by meeting participants. The comments are paraphrased, not verbatim. They are not statements of group consensus and are not listed in order of importance or priority.

Ketchikan Summit

I What elements of the current Conservation Strategy work now and should be carried forward?

- The Conservation Strategy is working well for species conservation, though its implementation raises economic issues. Major changes to the strategy would be difficult to accomplish in a reasonable timeframe.

II What elements of the current Conservation Strategy should be considered for change, and why?

- Impacts on timber industry and community economies – Implementation of the wildlife Conservation Strategy (and other elements of the Forest Plan) is not providing the needed balance between the environment and socioeconomics. Wrangell wants to see jobs created. Wrangell lost its large mill. It's small mills need a consistent timber supply. The community is concerned about conservation too, but there needs to be flexibility to allow for development that the communities and businesses can depend on. (*Noted in discussion that there are avenues to change the Forest Plan in the context of individual projects or timber sales, but this can be time-consuming. Also, changes made at the scale*

of a local community or project must be considered in the context of how it affects being able to achieve conservation or other objectives at a larger scale.)

- Triple-bottom line – The triple-bottom line (economy, socio-cultural, environment) needs to be considered in the review of the Conservation Strategy and reflected in a new design.
- Matrix management affects development – The feasibility and economics of timber sales are impacted by rules that address protection of scenic views and viewsheds (i.e., Visual Priority Routes, Scenic Integrity Objectives). These rules apply in the matrix and are considered to be part of the wildlife conservation strategy, even though their main intent does not relate to wildlife conservation. Similarly, the non-development LUDs (especially Remote Recreation and Semi-Remote Recreation), which are also considered to be part of the Conservation Strategy, constrain development.
- Consider all industries and uses – The old growth reserve system in the Conservation Strategy is focused on the timber industry. Hydroelectric development, mining, transportation (roads), recreation and subsistence are all affected by the strategy and other elements of the Forest Plan, and must be fully considered.
- Revisit the definition of "old growth" –
  - Need to look at the 16 criteria in the Forest Plan that are used to define the Old Growth LUD. Simply because an area is defined in the plan as old growth, it may not necessarily contribute substantially to wildlife conservation as habitat.
  - Not all old growth is created equal. The criteria should distinguish old growth that are a priority for protection, and areas a priority for restoration, etc.
  - Also noted that the value of old growth as wildlife habitat varies by species. Old growth's contribution to deer habitat and productivity is not the same as its contribution to marten. The aggregation of these services makes up the entirety of old growth's contribution to wildlife habitat.
  - Recent scientific work in Washington and Oregon has been looking further at the ecological contributions of old growth, based on site index (not stand volume).
- Consider whether the current conservation strategy is over-reaching. Would it be possible to reduce reserve areas and other requirements and still be able to provide for viable wildlife species, well distributed on the Forest?

III What has changed since 2008 that the Tongass NF should consider in its evaluation of the Conservation Strategy?

- Roadless rule –
  - Application of the roadless rule to the Tongass changes the management picture and must be one of the forefront topics in the five-year review of the Forest Plan and the conservation strategy. This is a significantly changed condition since 2008.
  - Closing roadless areas to development does not equate with a wildlife conservation strategy. Roadless areas were not strategically located for conservation values.

- Need to evaluate what contribution the roadless areas do make to the Conservation Strategy, as the TNF considers changes to the strategy.
- Application of the roadless rule is now concentrating development in areas that have roads and other infrastructure (since these areas are eligible for development). This concentration of use has consequences. Is there some tolerance for developing areas that have historically been set aside, to reduce the pressure on areas where use is now concentrated?
- Recommend new rulemaking to reinstitute the TNF's exemption from the roadless rule.

- Climate change – The TNF must take a systematic look at new climate science and determine its effects on the Conservation Strategy and on elements of the forest that people value (such as adequate water flows for salmon on the southern Tongass).
- Young growth –
  - The 1997 and 2008 Conservation Strategy did not address young growth in any substantial way. A revised strategy must consider how young growth can contribute to wildlife conservation, to the timber supply, and to other Forest uses and values.
  - The Conservation Strategy should not rely solely on old growth reserves, but should consider the ecological value of highly managed young growth landscapes. There are some young growth stands (particularly in lower elevations) that in the near future could make good habitat conservation areas (particularly as deer winter range). When planning for young growth harvests, managers need to use creative timber sale designs and harvest techniques to transition the stands into productive habitat.
  - The Forest Plan needs to consider how the transition to a young growth-based timber program affects wildlife conservation. The sooner society can economically benefit from young growth harvest, the less pressure there will be on old growth areas that contribute to wildlife conservation.
  - The plan should consider new products from young growth harvest, such as biomass for energy.
  - The Forest Plan needs to address when young growth stands will be considered viable elements of the Conservation Strategy, so protection of these acres can be "exchanged" for use of old growth reserve acres (that may be of lower value as wildlife habitat) elsewhere.
- Land ownership – Land ownership has changed since the Conservation Strategy was developed, and may change further (e.g., Sealaska land exchange, proposal to establish two million acre State of Alaska forest).
- Trend in timber supply – Current trends in timber supply should be considered in the evaluation of the Conservation Strategy. Why are we only able to meet 30-40% of timber demand (the "seek to meet" number) annually? Is the Conservation Strategy an impediment? (Noted that industry needs a more certain supply to be able to plan, obtain financing, and prosper.)

IV. What are some new approaches or alternatives to the Conservation Strategy that you think should be considered?

- Dynamic conservation strategy, based on active management –
  - Recommend that rather than a static system based on designated old growth reserves, the Conservation Strategy be a more dynamic system that allows protection of high value conservation areas, with adjustment of those areas over time as conditions change and to seek balance with other uses.
  - There needs to be more flexibility at the timber sale (project) level to balance conservation and other uses, and allow uses that are important to local economies (such as timber) to take place. There is not enough flexibility and discretion in the Standards and Guidelines, and in the location and layout of reserves.
  - As a means to provide more flexibility at the project level, the TNF should consider the proper balance of Standards (mandatory requirements) and Guidelines (suggestions, but not mandatory) in the Forest Plan.
  - When providing flexibility at the project level, managers must consider risk. How much risk is the manager willing to assume as they interpret and apply the rules? Noted that the Forest Service seems to be less comfortable with assuming risk, due to appeals and litigation. Environmental analyses become thicker in volume each year.
  - Developers would prefer to have a single development LUD, within which projects are designed to comply with Standards and Guidelines, rather than complex LUD zoning that narrows the options on the ground.
  - The OPTIONS planning tool presented at the Summit by the Southeast Conference offers a more dynamic approach to planning and balancing competing uses. The tool constructs multiple scenarios for evaluation and review by managers and the public. Lands may be designated for certain uses, but that zoning is not permanent, but can be adjusted as desired future conditions or conditions on the ground change. OPTIONS stores and overlays data at a small-scale polygon level. Scenarios can be reevaluated under different assumptions over time. The value of the output depends on the data quality, and the Tongass would need to invest in more data.

V. What are some cautions about new approaches or alternatives?

- It is not clear how the OPTIONS planning tool presented at the Summit would generate a land-based plan that could be counted upon to achieve wildlife conservation. The flexibility it provides may make it difficult for the public to have confidence that it will achieve wildlife objectives over time.
- Is it prudent for the TNF to spend funds on revising the conservation strategy? Are there good reasons to make that investment? Is an alternative needed? (*In response, one party noted that it is the Forest's obligation to see that the Conservation Strategy is not over-reaching in favor of environmental objectives, at the detriment of economic and socio-cultural objectives.)*

VI. Other comments (not as specific to the Conservation Strategy)

- Noted that over its history, the Forest has planned timber sales primarily around what would be economic to harvest and has disproportionately harvested higher yield productive old growth.
- When designing the timber program, the TNF needs to consider the realistic operational range of active timber industry businesses in the region. The operational range is not forest-wide, due to the location of the businesses, equipment, and infrastructure.
- Would it be possible for The Nature Conservancy to update its conservation assessment for the Tongass for 2004-2013, with consideration of new issues such as young growth, changes in management policy, etc? The information included in the assessment is a valuable resource for management.

Juneau Summit

I. What elements of the current Conservation Strategy work now and should be carried forward?

- Fish Bay Reserve – The Fish Bay reserve on North Baranof Island is working well and should not be changed. This reserve (which actually includes older young growth stands) is very well located. It is in a high productivity area that supports salmon, bear, deer and other species, and provides connectivity to other reserves.
- Benefits of Conservation Strategy – The strategy benefits fish and wildlife resources that benefit industries such as tourism, fishing, hunting/guiding, and trapping.
- The TNF should look at what has changed since 2008, but do not "throw the baby out with the bathwater". The Forest Plan is comprehensive and does address socioeconomics as well as biological considerations.
- Efficacy of the Conservation Strategy –
  - The Conservation Strategy is generally effective, with minor updating (e.g., see comments below regarding young growth and restoration).
  - Generally the strategy is working. There has been no loss of species and no ESA listings. It would be unwise to do a large revision to the current strategy. The TNF has the opportunity to make timber available using the discretion provided for in the current conservation strategy, within the existing Land Use Designation framework.

II. What elements of the current Conservation Strategy should be considered for change, and why?

- Impacts on timber industry –
  - The 2008 Conservation Strategy's old growth reserve system has put off-limits most of the lower cost high value timber and the timber industry has struggled. The

Standards and Guidelines further restrict timber operations and cause timbers sales to be very costly. There is not nearly enough economical timber. Only two percent of the Tongass is managed for timber (with recent imposition of the roadless rule) and 80% of the productive old growth has been preserved. This is not the balance among uses that the National Forest Management Act requires. The TNF needs to increase the timber sale program dramatically and can't do that under the current Conservation Strategy. The timber industry wants to protect wildlife, but also need timber sales and need to find a balance. We encourage the Forest Service to look at alternatives strategies.

  - It is important to look for middle-ground solutions. For example, deer are important to communities, but there are timber harvest strategies that can meet needs for deer habitat and populations, while still allowing timber harvests to be economical.

- Impacts on employment and communities –
  - Schools are facing closure, communities are relying on government handouts, and energy costs are very high. The socioeconomic situation in Southeast Alaska has declined. We need a comprehensive new approach that balances conservation with other human needs. There is too much importance put on the value of species, without considering the values that people need.
  - Many people had to leave the state to find work after the timber industry declined. We can't replace these jobs with tourism or trapping. The strategy review needs to consider these effects on jobs and on communities. Noted that some functions (such as road maintenance) that used to be done by the timber industry as part of the timber program now must be paid for with federal budget dollars.
- Triple-bottom line – The TNF needs to consider "the unintended consequences" of the conservation strategy Southeast Alaska's economy and communities. The triple-bottom line must be addressed in evaluation of the Conservation Strategy and in a new design.
- Balance of uses – A question to consider: "Does the current Conservation Strategy help or hinder in finding the balance of uses on the Forest?"
- Efficacy of the Conservation Strategy (uncertain) –
  - Elements of the Conservation Strategy that have been changed since 1997 have made it less effective. It does not hold true that just because there hasn't yet been an ESA listing, the Conservation Strategy is working. New science indicates there is vulnerability for certain species (e.g., flying squirrel).
  - It is uncertain whether the current Conservation Strategy is working, given the timber harvest is well below the Annual Sale Quantity (ASQ) identified in the Forest Plan, and yet there is still the possibility for a species listing under the ESA.
- Productivity of managed stands and deer winter range –
  - There are opportunities to make changes in the reserve system to incorporate previously harvested stands in lower elevations. These areas could be actively managed to create good deer winter range (e.g., through small patch cuts, single tree harvest) and to get some timber benefit (e.g., young growth products, biomass).

These areas could be brought into the reserve system and industry could then harvest some of the lower value old growth stands that are now in reserves. Often, old growth stands on north-facing slopes are slow growing and big, but less valuable for wildlife.

- Some changes are needed to address deer winter habitat (for example, on northeast Chichagof, near Petersburg, areas on Prince of Wales Island). People are saying they can't get their subsistence deer and that deer populations are not rebounding after severe winters. The Forest Plan needs to do address winter deer habitat to ensure that subsistence needs of communities are met. Deer populations must also be addressed to ensure the health of the Alexander Archipelago wolf, which has been considered for listing under the ESA.

III. What has changed since 2008 that the Tongass NF should consider in its evaluation of the Conservation Strategy?

- New science – Since 2008, there have been 12 research publications that address the Conservation Strategy (regarding flying squirrels, goshawk, marten). Research has now called into question the validity of the assumptions underlying the strategy. This must be addressed. The recent petition to list the flying squirrel under the ESA is a result of this new science, and more petitions could result.
- Revisit all assumptions underlying strategy – All of the assumptions that underlie the 2008 Conservation Strategy should be revisited, updated, and evaluated to see what changes in the strategy are needed to respond to the updated assumptions. For example, the assumption that the average ASQ would be 267 mmbf never came to pass. The actual ASQ has been 30-40 mmbf.
- Young growth –
  - The 1997 and 2008 Conservation Strategy did not address young growth in any substantial way. A revised strategy must give substantial consideration to how young growth can contribute to conservation, to the timber supply, and to other uses of the Forest.
  - The Forest Plan needs to consider the ecological value of actively managed young growth landscapes. Even though some watersheds have been cut, they may still have ecological value that should be considered in the Conservation Strategy. Selected young growth stands could be actively managed to create high value deer winter habitat.
  - Since 2008, there is new scientific information about the habitat values (and potential values) of young growth, such as the Tongass-Wide Young Growth Studies (TWGS). Areas identified in the Forest Plan as "productive old growth" are not necessarily the most productive habitat on the TNF for fish and wildlife.
  - The designers of the 1997 Conservation Strategy decided to utilize an old growth reserve system, rather than a strategy based on more active management, because they were less certain at that time about how to actively-manage young growth stands to achieve conservation objectives.

- Fisheries values – A Trout Unlimited report (2009) documents the value of salmon and trout to the region's economy. In 2007, 7,100 jobs in the region were attributed to salmon and trout, with total revenue of $1 billion. Fish need to be addressed in the Forest Plan's Conservation Strategy.
- Restoration – There is new emphasis on restoration projects on the TNF that needs to be considered in evaluating the Conservation Strategy. How can restoration help achieve the strategy's objectives?
- Socioeconomic trends – Southeast Alaska has continued to suffer declines in year-round, wage-earning jobs and the economy has declined, particularly in rural communities. Communities are suffering and schools are facing closure. This continuing trend needs to be considered in the TNF's evaluation of the Conservation Strategy.
- Tourism and other non-timber industries – Visitation has increased from 500,000 to 1 million visitors from 2008 to 2013. The TNF must evaluate the economic growth in tourism, fishing, and other non-timber industries and the importance of these to the region, not just focus on timber industry.
- Climate change
- Conservation Strategy was not fully implemented – The Conservation Strategy was not fully implemented nor tested, since the assumed ASQ has not been met and there has not been a full 100-year rotation. Has the Forest Service done modeling that inputs all assumptions to model the effects on viability? This type of modeling should be done, or updated for changed conditions. *In response, USFS noted that the Forplan Model was used in 1997 and the Spectrum modeling system in 2008 (see Appendix B of the 2008 Forest Plan). In 2008, TNF planners modeled a 100-year scenario given the scientific understandings of that time, and asked scientists to evaluate the probability that the strategy would maintain species' viability.*
- Land ownership – Land ownership has changed since the Conservation Strategy was developed. On Prince of Wales Island, there are now more private and state lands, which are substantially managed for timber production. The Alaska Mental Health Land Trust wants to come to Prince of Wales.
- Roadless Rule – Application of the roadless rule to the Tongass changes the management picture and must be one of the forefront topics in the five-year review of the Forest Plan and the conservation strategy. This is a significantly changed condition since 2008. Closing roadless areas to development does not equate with a wildlife conservation strategy. Roadless areas were not strategically located for conservation values.

IV. What are some new approaches or alternatives to the Conservation Strategy that you think should be considered?

- Consider changing the scale at which the Conservation Strategy is designed and applied –
  - Would it be more effective to focus on and plan for desired future conditions for wildlife conservation and other outcomes at a smaller scale, in selected areas where there is most need to find balance among competing uses? This may be the best

approach to design solutions that effectively balance multiple uses on the landscape and achieve the triple-bottom line.

  - Evaluating environmental health and species viability at the full-Forest scale may mask impacts happening in smaller-scale, discrete areas. Each Ranger District on the TNF is the size of other regions' forests. There is value to working at a smaller scale.
  - It would be possible to test the OPTIONS planning system (suggested by Southeast Conference) at a watershed-level in an actively managed landscape, to see how it could work on the TNF. Developing land use scenarios at the watershed level is a good scale at which to work.
  - Watershed assessments (such as those being conducted by Trout Unlimited) could play an important role when planning and balancing uses at this scale.

- Consider a more dynamic Conservation Strategy, based on active management –
  - Is there a new way to more actively-manage for conservation that is more dynamic and adaptive, rather than static on the landscape?
  - Benefits to this – potential conversation value of actively managed landscapes, potential commercial benefits of thinning, depends on residents/communities to find business niches that use thinned materials.
  - Note that the USFS did not opt for this initially (instead established reserves). May be benefit now, but would it require starting with a clean slate? Does our current commitment to a reserve system keep us from making this type of big change in our strategy?
- Does the Conservation Strategy overreach? – In the past, was any assessment done of the "minimum" conservation strategy needed to maintain viable, well-distributed wildlife species across the Tongass? *Response was no; scientific panels were asked to rate the potential for the old growth reserve system to maintain viable populations for selected species. The panels determined that the strategy would meet this objective, but did not evaluate whether a less robust strategy would also be effective.*
- Reconsider the objectives of the Conservation Strategy – Should the objective of the Conservation Strategy be to achieve a "harvestable surplus" of a species, rather than just "maintain viability"?

V. What are some cautions about new approaches or alternatives?

- Southeast Alaska's island ecosystem is significantly different than a continental environment in terms of design of a conservation strategy. You can't "move habitat around" and just trade acre for acre. It is essential for the TNF to recognize this, if is considering applying an alternative conservation strategy or approach that has been used elsewhere.
- If young growth stands are going to be incorporated into the reserve system, they need to be actively-managed (through pre-commercial and commercial thinning) to develop a landscape that provides for species' dispersion and other wildlife conservation services,

before removing the old growth that is now providing those services from the reserve system.

- Changes in the Conservation Strategy might raise "red flags" that would create more pressure for ESA listings.
- Due to increasing environmental stressors, like climate change, the Conservation Strategy should be more precautionary and err on the side of giving species more space.

VI. Other comments (not as specific to the Conservation Strategy)

- There are limits to what can be used for timber sales in the future, because of how much has been cut already. Most of that timber resource is gone. What we need to figure out what to do differently with the timber resources that are left.
- Very unfortunately, the collapse of rural economies is happening nationwide. High costs of energy are a key issue and must be addressed. Need viable energy alternatives.
- In Southeast Alaska, we need to create jobs with what we are producing (e.g., value-added processing, not shipping whole logs to Korea). Mining is another important economic opportunity, but needs to be done responsibly.
- Jobs in non-timber industries are very important to the Southeast Alaska economy and need more Forest Service recognition and support.
- Comments regarding Tongass timber program:
  - Important to provide a program that provides year-round, wage-earning jobs, supports communities. The current timber program does not do this. (See additional comments above.)
  - Smaller timber sales may be more feasible; supply material for value-added industries that support communities.
  - Small mills are trying to make the transition to young growth, but do need a supply of old growth to keep them afloat as they continue to make that transition.
  - Young growth will not provide sufficient volume for timber industry at this time.
  - Refitting mills to be able to work with young growth rather than old growth is very high cost.
  - Forest Plan should be more deliberate in outlining the transition to young growth-based industry; how and when does that occur in the future?
  - Assumptions the TNF is now using related to transition to young growth-based industry. Note that it is a "new world" for Tongass managers and for the industry and everyone is learning as we go.

    Young growth is not yet old enough.

    There is a limited demand for young growth (and not generally for value-added products).

A stable supply of old growth is still needed to make the transition to a young growth-based industry.

The skills, equipment, and other assets provided by the wood products industry need to be kept in the region, to be able to make the transition to a young growth-based industry.

- It is important to continue to talk about the right balance of use and conservation, even though we haven't been able to agree to the point of balance yet. We need to keep talking together.

US Forest Service
Tongass National Forest
Conservation Strategy Summit

Tuesday, June 18, 2013 –
Best Western, Landing
Sunny Point Ballroom
3434 Tongass Avenue, Ketchikan, AK
8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Agenda

Objectives:

- Present information about the 2008 Old-Growth Habitat Conservation Strategy, new science since 2008, and monitoring results.
- Provide opportunity for discussion of the current strategy, need for revisions, and potential alternatives, to inform comments to be submitted during the Tongass National Forest 2008 Land and Resource Management Plan Five-Year review.
- Provide information about the 2013 Tongass Forest Plan Five-Year review process.

8:30 – 8:45 Welcoming Remarks & Intro - Purpose of Summit
Speaker: Forrest Cole – Forest Supervisor

8:45 – 9:00 Forest Service's 5 Year Review Process – Relationship to this Summit
Presenter: Ted Schenk - Wildlife Subsistence and Planning Staff Officer

9:00 – 9:40 Background Regarding Conservation Strategies

Habitat Management
Presenter: Brian Logan, Forest Wildlife Biologist, Tongass National Forest

Threatened and Endangered Species
Presenter: Steve Brockmann, Field Supervisor, US Fish and Wildlife

9:40 – 9:55 Socioeconomics - Triple Bottom Line Approach to Screening Conservation Strategies for Resource Development
Presenter: Wade Zammit - President and CEO - Sealaska Timber Corporation

9:55 – 10:10 Break

Tongass Forest Plan
Five-Year Review Process

Written comments are due on June 30, 2013.

Go to http://tnf-5yearreview.com for an online comment form (preferred), or mail written comments to:

Tongass National Forest
TNF 5-Year Review
648 Mission Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901-6591

10:10-11:15 **2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, Old-Growth Habitat Conservation Strategy: The Current Strategy, New Science, Monitoring**
Presenter: Brian Logan

11:15–11:45 Southeast Alaska Conservation Assessment and Integrated Resource Framework.
Presenter: David Albert, Dir. of Conservation Science, The Nature Conservancy

11:45–12:15 **Alternative Strategy**
Presenter: Don Reimer, Representing Southeast Conference

12:15–1:30 **Lunch** (on your own)

1:30–3:45 **Small Group discussion sessions** – Jan Caulfield, Facilitator

I Current Conservation Strategy
Consider and discuss the following questions:
- What elements of the current Conservation Strategy do you think work now and should be carried forward?
- What should be changed? Why?
- What has changed since 2008 (e.g., new scientific information, policies, or changing conditions) that you want the Forest Service to consider in its evaluation of the Conservation Strategy?

2:20–2:35 **Break**

II New Approaches / Alternative Strategies
With consideration of the proposed alternative strategies presented today – and other ideas or options that you might have:
- What elements of the alternative strategies presented do you want considered further, and why?
- What elements of the proposals give you concern? Why?
- What other ideas or options that you want the Forest Service to consider, and why?

3:45–4:00 **Break**

4:00–4:45 **Small Group reports to full group**

4:45–5:00 **Wrap-up and Next Steps**

5:00 **Adjourn**

Intent of Small Group Sessions

- Provide opportunity for constructive discussion among participants regarding the current Conservation Strategy and possible alternatives or revisions to that strategy. The goal is not to debate competing points of view. It is to explore issues through a constructive exchange of ideas and information that may lead to a new and deeper understanding of issues or even new approaches that should be considered.
- Stimulate and inform individuals and organizations as they prepare their comments on the Conservation Strategy for the Five-Year Review.
- Notes from the small group and large group discussion will be included in a Summary Report that will be considered by the Tongass National Forest during the

US Forest Service
Tongass National Forest
Conservation Strategy Summit

Thursday, June 20, 2013 –
Hickel Room, Centennial Hall
101 Egan Drive, Juneau, AK
8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Agenda

Objectives:

- Present information about the 2008 Old-Growth Habitat Conservation Strategy, new science since 2008, and monitoring results.
- Provide opportunity for discussion of the current strategy, need for revisions, and potential alternatives, to inform comments to be submitted during the Tongass National Forest 2008 Land and Resource Management Plan Five-Year review.
- Provide information about the 2013 Tongass Forest Plan Five-Year review process.

8:30 – 8:45 **Welcoming Remarks & Intro - Purpose of Summit**
Speaker: Ted Schenk - Wildlife Subsistence and Planning Staff Officer

8:45 – 9:00 **Forest Service's 5 Year Review Process – Relationship to this Summit**
Presenter: Sue Jennings – Forest Planner

9:00 – 9:40 **Background Regarding Conservation Strategies**

Habitat Management
Presenter: Brian Logan, Forest Wildlife Biologist, Tongass National Forest

Threatened and Endangered Species
Presenter: Steve Brockmann, Field Supervisor, US Fish and Wildlife

9:40 – 9:55 **Socioeconomics - Triple Bottom Line Approach to Screening Conservation Strategies for Resource Development**
Presenter: Sealaska Timber Corporation

9:55 – 10:10 **Break**

Tongass Forest Plan
Five-Year Review Process

Written comments are due on June 30, 2013.

Go to http://tnf-5yearreview.com for an online comment form (preferred), or mail written comments to:

Tongass National Forest
TNF 5-Year Review
648 Mission Street
Ketchikan. AK 99901-6591

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11:45–12:15 Alternative Strategy

Presenter: Don Reimer, Representing Southeast Conference

12:15–1:30 **Lunch** (on your own)

1:30–3:45 **Small Group discussion sessions** – Jan Caulfield, Facilitator

I Current Conservation Strategy
Consider and discuss the following questions:
- What elements of the current Conservation Strategy do you think work now and should be carried forward?
- What should be changed? Why?
- What has changed since 2008 (e.g., new scientific information, policies, or changing conditions) that you want the Forest Service to consider in its evaluation of the Conservation Strategy?

2:20–2:35 **Break**

II New Approaches / Alternative Strategies
With consideration of the proposed alternative strategies presented today – and other ideas or options that you might have:
- What elements of the alternative strategies presented do you want considered further, and why?
- What elements of the proposals give you concern? Why?
- What other ideas or options that you want the Forest Service to consider, and why?

3:45–4:00 **Break**

4:00–4:45 **Small Group reports to full group**

4:45–5:00 **Wrap-up and Next Steps**

5:00 **Adjourn**

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- Stimulate and inform individuals and organizations as they prepare their comments on the Conservation Strategy for the Five-Year Review.
- Notes from the small group and large group discussion will be included in a Summary Report that will be considered by the Tongass National Forest during the Five-Year Review.