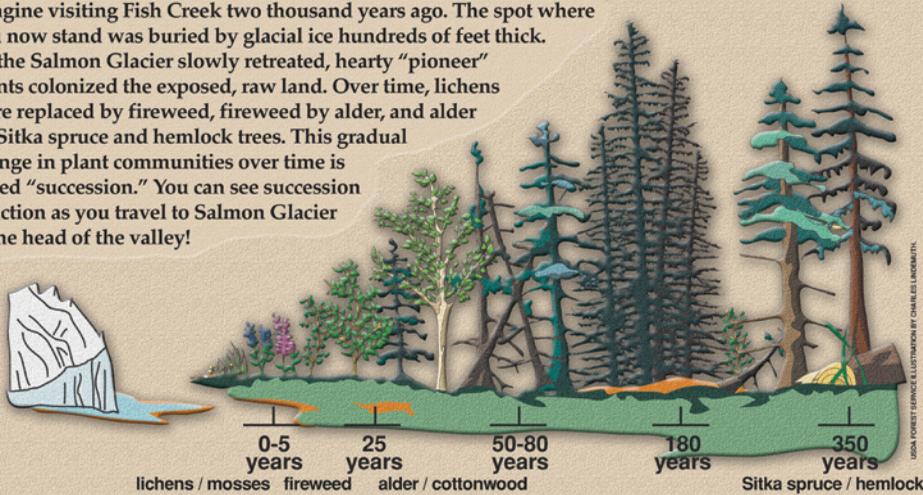


THE FISH CREEK ECOSYSTEM

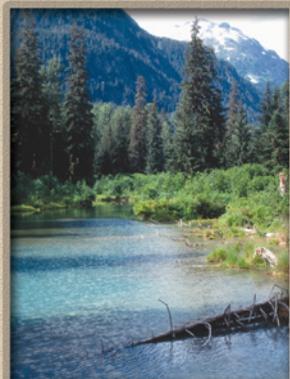


Fish Creek is a dynamic ecosystem that is continually shaped by natural forces and influenced by human actions.

Imagine visiting Fish Creek two thousand years ago. The spot where you now stand was buried by glacial ice hundreds of feet thick. As the Salmon Glacier slowly retreated, hearty "pioneer" plants colonized the exposed, raw land. Over time, lichens were replaced by fireweed, fireweed by alder, and alder by Sitka spruce and hemlock trees. This gradual change in plant communities over time is called "succession." You can see succession in action as you travel to Salmon Glacier at the head of the valley!



Although Salmon Glacier is large, it is but a remnant of the massive glacier that filled the valley thousands of years ago.



Today, the Fish Creek area continues to change. Many of the changes that we notice are the result of our action on the land. The small, blue lagoon was formed when the dike road was built. Although human-made, the lagoon provides a great home for young salmon fry, and the animals that feed on them.

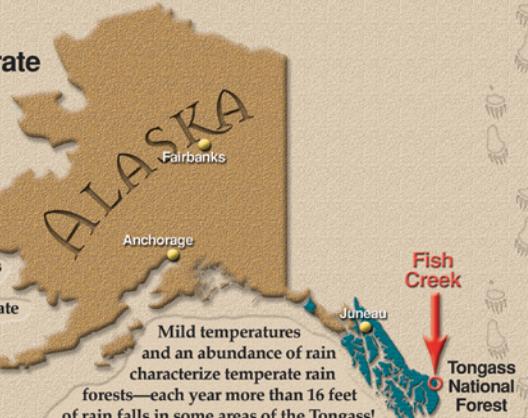
The blue lagoon.



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America's Temperate Rain Forest

Fish Creek is located in the far southeastern reaches of America's largest national forest—the Tongass. Spanning 500 miles, and encompassing nearly 17 million acres of land and 11,000 miles of shoreline, the Tongass National Forest is the largest protected temperate rain forest in the world.



Mild temperatures and an abundance of rain characterize temperate rain forests—each year more than 16 feet of rain falls in some areas of the Tongass! These conditions nourish one of the most productive natural systems in the world. The deep, dark forests of the Tongass are chiefly comprised of Sitka spruce, western and mountain hemlock, and red and yellow cedar.

