



News Release

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE-FOREST SERVICE

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Tongass Supervisor reaffirms decision on Logjam after meeting with appellants

KETCHIKAN, Alaska – Tongass National Forest Supervisor Forrest Cole last week met with appellants of the Logjam timber sale in an effort to find common ground on the sale.

In June, Cole signed the Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the project, located on the Thorne Bay Ranger District, Prince of Wales Island. He selected Alternative 5, authorizing the harvest of 73 million board feet (mmbf) of timber over the course of several years.

Local and national conservation groups appealed the project in July, and asked the Forest Service to consider a Conservation Alternative (CA) they had authored, which would cut the allowed harvest for the sale in half.

After careful consideration of the CA and other points discussed with the appellants, Cole said he found their proposal does not provide enough near-term and long term stability to the current timber industry because of the reduced volume. It also would not meet the purpose of the 2008 Forest Plan Amendment—which sought to resolve many of the conflicts over the Tongass timber program. Implementation of the Logjam project is part of that plan.

Cole emphasized the Logjam timber sale does not allow harvest in any roadless areas—a consideration long sought by environmental groups. In addition, Cole's other primary concerns regarding the CA include the following:

- If the proposal was agreed to, a new decision on the project would be necessary and a new appeal period would be required
- This would not only negate any offering of a timber sale in 2009, but also delay any offering till late 2010
- The remaining volume available under the CA would require all of the 2010 field season to prepare for offer, causing an operational delay of at least one additional year for the timber industry
- That delay that would create further hardship for loggers, mill owners, their employees and families, who already face uncertainty because of an encumbered Tongass timber supply

Cole said he recognizes and appreciates the hard work that the appellants put into their CA and the resolution effort. And while last week's meetings did not result in a resolution, Cole said it provided valuable lessons to improve upon the collaborative momentum of the past few years.

"I am convinced that starting these discussions earlier in the process can yield better outcomes for all involved," said Cole. "I intend to facilitate stakeholder involvement earlier in the development of current and future project level analyses to be more proactive with those who are willing to spend so much time working together."

Appeals will be reviewed by Regional Forester Denny Bschor, the highest Forest Service authority in Alaska. He is expected to issue a decision by September 24, 2009.

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