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USDA Forest Service
Alaska Region

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Alaska Regional Forester says 73-million-board-foot Logjam Timber Sale Project can go forward, under instructions

JUNEAU, Alaska- Regional Forester Denny Bschor affirmed Tongass National Forest Supervisor Forrest Cole's recent record of decision for the 73-million-board-foot Logjam Timber Sale project today. While Bschor affirmed Cole's decision, he had several instructions for the supervisor to follow while implementing individual sales within the project area.

Bschor received appeals from Cascadia Wildlands; Sitka Conservation Society; Southeast Alaska Conservation Society, Audubon Alaska, and Alaska Wilderness League (SEACC et al.); and Juneau Group of the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and the Tongass Conservation Society (Sierra Club et al.). The appeals raised a number of issues with the environmental analysis. The main issues were: range of alternatives; wildlife viability; timber economics; road costs and maintenance; silviculture; effects on watersheds; and climate change. In affirming the Supervisor's decision, Bschor denied all of the appeal points.

"Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack wants the Forest Service to focus on restoration and the health and resilience of our forest ecosystems and the rural communities that depend on them," Bschor said. "He wants us to work more collaboratively to improve community health and wealth in rural America. My instructions on implementing timber sales in the Logjam Project will bring the design and harvest of those sales into line with the Secretary's vision."

Bschor emphasized that, in order to maintain the health and the resiliency of the forest, restoration must be conducted on thousands of acres, and that work could not be done without the small mills currently operating in Southeast Alaska. But without timber sales, those few mills will cease to exist.

"It is apparent we that we need to provide timber to bridge the gap to get to restoration, but the devil's in the details," said Bschor. And the details are in Bschor's instructions to Cole. "I know that we have heard about a timber volume bridge before, but this is different. The Department and the

Agency will be bringing resources to bear, in combinations that have not been brought before, to get us there. We need a bridge."

Bschor recognizes that the Tongass has taken great strides in furthering the collaborative efforts associated with timber harvests, but he instructed the supervisor to develop a process for interested groups to become involved in the initial phases of long-term planning for conventional and young growth timber sales. He asked Cole to pursue through these front-end collaboration efforts stewardship-type contracts to achieve multiple objectives.

Instructions from Bschor also instructed the Supervisor to: mitigate effects of roads by modifying road standards; defer timber harvests in key wildlife corridors; and continue to emphasize young growth projects. Bschor also told the supervisor to conduct environmental analysis of young growth projects to determine if there is interest in them.

The selected alternative for this project will allow the harvest of approximately 73 million board feet of timber, the construction of about 5 miles of new forest road, 17 miles of temporary road, and the reconstruction of about 2.8 miles of existing road. None of the sale units in the project area enter inventoried roadless areas.

The project area is 60 miles northwest of Ketchikan, Alaska, near the community of Coffman Cove on Prince of Wales Island. The project area encompasses over 56,000 acres but the record of decision only allows timber harvest on up to 3,400 acres within the area. It is projected that timber harvest from these units will provide between 251 and 356 jobs over the life of the project.

The project can be implemented as early as October 9.