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Welcome to the Alaska Region

It is a land of extremes. Where massive Sitka spruce create cathedral-like forests. Where frigid blue glaciers grind their way inexorably through mountains. Where humpback whales frolic in the encircling waters and brown bears stalk the wetlands. Where a nation focuses its attention on the balance between using and conserving resources.

This is the Alaska Region of the USDA Forest Service.

The men and women of the Alaska Region work with the public to manage more than 22 million acres in southcentral and southeast Alaska. Vast watersheds filled with rivers, salmon streams, and glaciers, form the foundation for the extensive forests and all they contain. The Forest Service in Alaska is a leader in protecting the land's bounty while providing a place for people to work and play.

The Tongass National Forest stretches the 500-mile length of the Alaska Panhandle and encompasses more than 80 percent of the land. Juneau, Sitka, Ketchikan, Petersburg and other communities are intimately involved in managing this vast temperate rain forest.

The Chugach National Forest makes a 210-mile arc around Prince William Sound and is a vital part of the communities of Anchorage, Seward, Cordova, Valdez and others.

The communities depend on national forest resources including spectacular scenery, timber and mining. Many rural residents use the forest for the candlefish, blueberries, deer, salmon, firewood and other resources needed to support a subsistence lifestyle.

National and international visitors join local residents in exploring the rivers and trails that stretch from sea level to the alpine. Commercial tours and cruises provide a front-row seat to the wildlife and scenery, while independent travelers make their own way to excellent fishing, kayaking and camping.

Sound land management planning provides the framework for protecting the resources while providing services to the public. The Tongass, in 1997, completed a 10-year effort to produce a plan revision that includes new protections while providing sustainable resources for southeast Alaska. The Chugach is working closely with the public to complete its own plan revision in 2001.

Chugach National Forest

Tongass National Forest

A History of Service

The history of managing these resources goes back more than 100 years when the first reserves were established in Alaska. In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison signed an executive order to recognize the first reserve in Alaska on Afognak Island in Southcentral Alaska. The land was set aside to protect fish, animals, birds, timber and other natural elements. By July 1907, Congress designated the Chugach National Forest that incorporated this initial reserve. The 4.5-million acre Alexander Archipelago formed the first reserved lands in southeast Alaska. In September 1907, Congress designated the Tongass National Forest and in July 1908, combined the Alexander Archipelago and Tongass into one national forest.

Over the years, the boundaries of the two forests and designations within them have changed. Two of the more important pieces of legislation driving these changes are the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act enacted in 1971 and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act enacted in 1980. The settlement act remains the vehicle to convey land from federal management to Alaska Native corporations. The lands act created extensive new wildernesses, including 14 on the Tongass. It also created two Forest Service national monuments, including the 2.3 million acres Misty Fiords National Monument on the southern tip of the Tongass and the almost one million acre Admiralty Island National Monument, west of Juneau.

Size Dictates Organization

The large areas covered by the two national forests creates challenges for both the public and the Forest Service. Much of the two forests are spread over many islands. While slowly changing in some areas, roads are virtually nonexistent in vast areas of the landscape. People often must travel by boat or aircraft. Where they do exist, roads are being reviewed to make sure they are developed to the best scientific standards to create the least impact in the watershed and the forest.

The size of the forests—the two largest in the nation—dictates organization. The Chugach uses a traditional organization with headquarters in Anchorage and three districts with offices in Seward, Cordova, and Girdwood. In the last several years, the Tongass has undergone a major reorganization. While in the past the forest was divided into three separate "areas", today the Tongass is unified under one forest supervisor located in Ketchikan. It still maintains three supervisors offices located in Sitka, Petersburg and Ketchikan that support the forest's ten ranger districts.

The regional office that supports the two forests is centrally located in Juneau.

Look for these southeast Alaska motifs throughout the Alaska Region Overview Book. Each design is based upon an ancient petroglyph carved into the rocks of the Tongass.

Saginaw Spirit, Wrangell

Killer Whale, Wrangell

Frog Spirit, Wrangell

Face

Ranger boats—like the Chugach Ranger pictured here in the early 1900s—continue to be a valuable tool in the management of the Tongass and Chugach National Forests.

A Forest of Rock & Ice—the Chugach

The 5.4-million acre Chugach National Forest forms a great arc around Prince William Sound and the Pacific Ocean. The forest stretches more than 200 miles from the Kenai Peninsula to the west, to the Bering Icefield to the east.

Here the Gulf of Alaska spins potent storms into the coastal areas and interior of Alaska. This curving coastline connects the narrow Alaska panhandle with the rest of the state and launches the long stretch of the Aleutian Islands to the west. Large islands like Montague and Hinchinbrook are flung out into the gulf.

Rocked by Earthquakes

This is a richly disturbed land as the earth's plates collide in a geologic push and shove. On March 27, 1964, one of the most powerful earthquakes ever recorded in North America shook the Chugach. The earthquake uplifted land as much as 20 feet, shook buildings to their foundations, and flooded villages with its massive tsunamis.

Maps printed with coastline information before 1964 are unreliable. What was shown as land may now be underwater. Earth appeared where the sea formerly ruled. Dead trees, killed by encroaching salt water, are still visible along Turnagain Arm east of Anchorage, ghostly reminders of the fury of the event. The earthquake bore witness to the powerful forces that shaped the vast mountain ranges, ridges, and sharp peaks of southcentral Alaska.

Carved by Glaciers

Above 2,000 feet, the alpine tundra is snow-free for only a few months each year. This snow contributes to the ice that carves the valleys. Famous glaciers like Portage, Childs and Columbia grind their way through the Chugach to the sea. Maps show hundreds of other glaciers like Harvard and Harriman or Dirty and Surprise.

Vast icefields on state, private, and federal lands feed the glaciers creating a profound solitude unimaginable outside of Alaska. This is a solitude where people enter by hiking, flying or snowmachining—and sometimes vanish.

Where the ice melts, river systems form amazing deltas that fan across the landscape. Frigid fresh water lakes and streams dot the map before reaching sloughs and estuaries, then salt water.

On the edges of Prince William Sound, abundant rain and snow nurture a hushed forest of spongy moss, western hemlock, and straight-growing Sitka spruce. The Kenai Peninsula has vegetation similar to interior Alaska, but also supports thousands of acres of birch, aspen, white spruce, and black spruce. This forest has been under attack in recent years from infestations of spruce bark beetle. The beetle has killed thousands of acres of trees on state, private and federal lands.

A Wildlife Mecca

Wildlife takes advantage of the ever-changing landscape. The vast wetlands of the Copper River Delta near Cordova serve as nesting, staging and feeding habitat for more than 20 million birds each year. In summer, these wetlands support one quarter of the world's population of trumpeter swans and dusky Canada geese.

The diverse lands and waters of the Chugach provide habitat for many types of birds including songbirds, shorebirds and birds of prey. Fish and marine mammals such as humpback whales, Steller's sea lions and sea otters swim through the waters and take advantage of the surrounding environment.

Mountain goats and Dall sheep cling to steep hillsides. The Chugach is the only national forest that supports a population of Dall sheep. Moose ramble their way through the Copper River Delta, while a herd of caribou roams the Kenai Peninsula. Sitka black-tailed deer populate islands in Prince William Sound. Black and brown (grizzly) bears inhabit most of the Chugach, foraging from the alpine slopes to the intertidal zones.

A Rich Culture

The Chugach is a melting pot of indigenous cultures. Chugach Eskimo, Eyak Indians, Kenaitze and other Athabascan Indian peoples continue to live in their homeland. Today they continue traditions extending thousands of years into the past.

Europeans first set foot on Alaska soil on the very eastern edge of the Chugach. In 1741 the Danish explorer Vitus Bering anchored his Russian-owned vessel in the lee of Kayak Island. German naturalist George Wilhem Steller explored the island for a few brief hours before returning to his ship and heading back to Russia. Russian fur traders soon established settlements in Prince William Sound. For over 100 years they harvested the rich bounty of sea otters pelts.

American towns developed after prospectors discovered gold in 1888 and railroads provided access to copper mines in 1911. Dating back to 1892, the Chugach contains one of the first reserves created by a presidential executive order. The reserve became the Chugach National Forest in 1907.

A Life Tied to the Land

Today, many rural residents live a subsistence lifestyle, just as Alaska Natives have for centuries. Communities in and around Prince William Sound rely on fishing, tourism and natural resources. Small gold-mining operations are scattered throughout the Chugach and Kenai mountains, and small-scale logging operations supply local markets.

Portage Valley is the state's top tourist attraction. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people travel the Seward Highway Scenic Byway to visit the valley and the award-winning Begich, Boggs Visitor Center at Portage Valley. Here they are treated to spectacular views of valley glaciers, an iceberg-filled lake, and new exhibits that interpret Prince William Sound and the Chugach National Forest.

The Chugach is the only national forest in the nation that is home to Dall sheep. This young male was photographed from the Seward Highway Scenic Byway. Photo by S. Frost.

Other visitors come in the spring to attend shorebird festivals or arrive in June or July to lure salmon out of the Kenai Peninsula's Russian River. In winter, snowmachining, heli-skiing and dogsledding are favorite activities for residents and an increasing number of tourists.

Less than one third of the Chugach is readily accessible by road from Anchorage or Seward. Most of the forest, and the communities of Cordova, Chenega, and Tatitlek, are accessible only by plane or boat.

Visitors traveling to the Chugach will find remarkable variations in day length. At the summer solstice, the area receives more than twenty hours of daylight. At the winter solstice in December, the sun sets at 3:45 p.m. after just a short six hours of daylight.

The weather in this region varies greatly. A sunny day in Anchorage might turn rainy and foggy after just a short drive along Turnagain Arm. Near Anchorage, the mean high temperature for January is 13 degrees. By July that climbs to 58 degrees; August is the warmest month with a mean high of 64. Rainfall can average as little as 15 inches per year. However, in coastal communities of the Chugach, rainfall can exceed 160 inches per year!

The mountains, glaciers, ocean, and wetlands provide an almost unlimited variety of scenery for the people who live near the Chugach, and for those who come to visit.

A Forest of Islands—the Tongass

Water stored in glaciers creeps out to the sea. Water falls as rain and snow and feeds the temperate rain forest. Water carves the rocks and sheer cliffs. Water defines the Tongass National Forest.

The 17-million acre Tongass is the largest national forest in the United States. It encompasses nearly 90 percent of the southeastern panhandle of Alaska. It stretches from the southern tip of Prince of Wales Island 500 miles north to the Hubbard Glacier just north of Yakutat. After crossing Dixon Entrance, a voyager traveling north on the waters of the Inside Passage is surrounded by the Tongass.

Though home to the Northern Hemisphere's largest temperate rain forest, almost half of the Tongass is covered by ice, water, muskeg, and rock. The islands and mainland create 11,000 miles of shoreline where regal mountains rise from tidewater to overlook a mostly undeveloped and isolated landscape.

A Varied Landscape

Few places in the world can boast of the geologic and climatic variations that characterize the Tongass. At sea level, rain—and lots of it—may fall throughout the year. Climb just 1,600 feet, and the climate is too harsh for trees. Lush temperate rain forest thrives at sea level less than a two-mile's hike from the frigid, windy alpine where buttercups and sedges cling to a tenuous existence.

'Rivers of ice', or glaciers, grind their way down from the mountain tops. While some glaciers remain perched above sea level, others, called *tidewater glaciers,* deliver their icy cargo into the ocean. Even the face of the sea changes here as it surges through narrow channels and up glacier-carved fiords. Tides in southeast Alaska, while not as severe as some of the tides farther north, have a variation of as much as 25 feet in one 12-hour period. Tidal highs and lows alternate every 6.5 hours.

The Temperate Rain Forest

In the temperate rain forest, western hemlocks push their floppy tops up through the mist while Sitka spruce brave the icy, salt-laden winds along the water's edge. Subalpine fir, redcedar and yellow-cedar, and hardwoods like alder, find their own spot in the forest.

Unlike most places in the lower-48 states, it is wind, and not fire, that disturbs the forest, sometimes toppling acres of trees at a time. In areas protected from the wind, usually on the north side of ridges, trees may live to be more than 500 years old. About 90 percent of these old growth forests remain as they were 100 years ago before commercial logging began.

Unparalleled Wildlife

Each spring, the buzzy call of the varied thrush announces the arrival of warmer weather. It is joined by songbirds migrating their way north and others, such as the chestnut-backed chickadee and pine siskin, which make their homes here year-round. The largest known concentration of bald eagles gathers each fall and winter along the Chilkat River near Haines. Here, thousands of eagles feast on late runs of chum salmon. In spring, a eulachon (sea-run smelt) run lures hundreds of eagles to the Stikine River Delta near Wrangell. Within weeks, thousands of shorebirds stop on the delta to rest from their long trek north to summer breeding grounds.

Marine mammals are also abundant. Sea otters, seals and sea lions, porpoises and whales are often viewed throughout southeast Alaska.

The Tongass is home to healthy populations of animals that have become uncommon in other areas of the United States. Biologists estimate that 1,700 coastal brown (grizzly) bears—the highest density in North America—roam Admiralty Island and share the island with large populations of nesting bald eagles. The Alexander Archipelago wolf is fairly common throughout much of southeast Alaska. Mountain goats climb along steep, rocky crags above timberline. In fact, there are no threatened or endangered species on the Tongass National Forest. Other animals such as moose, deer, beaver, fox and porcupine are common throughout the forest.

Five species of Pacific salmon—chum, coho, king, pink and sockeye—depend upon the streams and waters of the Tongass for spawning. Dolly Varden char, and rainbow, steelhead, and cutthroat trout are common freshwater fish.

A Working Forest

People have lived and worked in this water-drenched land for untold generations. For thousands of years the Tlingit and Haida peoples have pulled the salmon and herring out of these waters and gathered the berries and other land-bounty. Each generation shares its knowledge of the land with the next. The Tsimshian moved from their former home in British Columbia to Annette Island in the late 1800s.

Gold in this era drew thousands of fortune-seekers up though the Inside Passage to towns like Douglas, Juneau and Skagway. As the gold production dwindled in the 1900s, communities rebuilt their economies around fishing, timber and then tourism. Past ways still flourish. Today, many rural residents depend on a subsistence lifestyle, just as Alaska Natives have for centuries.

A Forest For Visitors

The water routes are the gateway for Alaska visitors. Each year, over 600,000 visitors travel through the Tongass National Forest aboard cruise ships or the Alaska Marine Highway ferries. Local residents and tourists enjoy sailing, motor boating, kayaking and getting out on the water to fish.

The Mendenhall Visitor Center in Juneau is among the top three tourist attractions in the state. Visitors also travel to the Juneau Ice Field via helicopter and take organized boat trips into Misty Fiords and Tracy Arm. Ecotourism is one of the faster growing portions of the tourism industry.

Traveling through this watery world is a challenge. Roads between communities are rare. Only Hyder, Haines, and Skagway are connected to the North American road system. Prince of Wales Island roads connect the island communities. The Alaska Marine Highway ferries serve larger communities like Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg and Sitka. Tiny southeast communities like Angoon and Tenakee can only be reached by boat or small aircraft, generally float planes.

The changes in day length are far more pronounced here than in the lower-48 states. Ketchikan residents recreate with more than 17 hours of daylight at the summer solstice in late June. In winter, the daylight dwindles to just over seven hours.

The maritime environment dominates the weather. Normal summer highs average 55 to 60 degrees, with winter highs hovering around 30 to 35. Only rarely will the temperatures drop below zero. The climate is not only cool; it is very damp. Average precipitation varies from 162 inches a year in Ketchikan to 26 inches a year in Skagway.

People from all over the world are passionate about the wet and enigmatic Tongass National Forest. Some say they want a sense that wild places remain where wildlife may roam undisturbed. Others defend the need to be able to go to the woods and waters to make their living. With demands from all sides, the Forest Service tries to balance the needs of people whose way of life is based in using resources while leaving large stretches of the ecosystem undisturbed for people who want to go to the woods for recreation and inspiration.

An Alaska Native View on Subsistence

Carol Jorgensen is the National Tribal Government Program Manager in the Washington Office. In the 1990s she served as the assistant Forest Supervisor for the Stikine Area of the Tongass National Forest. This is how she introduces herself: "I am Tlingit, I am Eagle (Chaek), Dwkleidweidi, (Keet) Killerwhale Fin, I am Luxkahadi yadi." This information on subsistence is excerpted from a beautifully written longer-piece in which she explains the Tlingit view of life. It has been edited slightly for style.

When we talk of our way of life, it is from a holistic point of view. We cannot divide ourselves out as human beings from Creator's works. What we do affects everything that we interact with.

The term subsistence means so many things to different people. Some people who are non-Native and live in the rural area, see it as food on the table, the ability to provide for one's family and to make it in a world they have chosen to live in. Some see it in purely economic terms and the ability to save money, trade or make and earn a living.

Native people see subsistence as the very essence of their souls, the tapestry of their culture; it is how we communicate to one another, how we take care of each other, how we set up relationships between clans or groups of different villages. It is health, happiness, well being, love, communication and complete interaction on many things. It goes far beyond food.

Creator has given us to one another. This includes the trees, rocks, mountains, waters, birds, insects, fish and mammals. We are here to take care of each other and to relate to one another. When we look into the eyes of an animal, or any other living thing, we not only see, but hear its soul, and we respect that living entity and know that there are feelings there.

Because we have been raised in the environment, we watch that animal throughout its entire life cycle. We learn to think like that animal and to see its world through its own eyes. That is why we have such honor and pay homage to it through our clan system. It is not easy to put this into words; it is just something we as Native people know.

Native people are taught never to lose the sound of the heartbeat of the earth. All things live with balance, harmony, and practicality. Our earth is a living organism that provides sustenance, and Creator has blessed us with everything we could possibly need to take care of one another. If we abuse it, we are the ones that will pay.

When we prepare to go and find food, whether it be a plant, animal or fish, we must always look to our Creator and seek guidance and wisdom. If a life is offered to us through the sacrifice of an animal, we must always give respect to its life and give thanks for its sustenance. We honor it by using it to its fullest.

I will share that my husband, who is Inupiat from Kotzebue, and I go out into the early fall and harvest devil's club. When we harvest it, it is critical never to cut the grandfather root. The grandfather root is always farther away from the colony of devils club people. When you harvest the devils club it is done a certain way, and before you take it you share with the colony what you are taking it for. That way, the colony can exert its powers to help you out. When you take the root, you leave something

Salmon are a vital subsistence food item for all Alaskans.

in the form of a gift behind, showing that you are grateful. Later, when you are home, you also prepare it a certain way. It is very spiritual, along with the fact that it is medicine and good for you. We do not separate the spiritual part from the practical part. Everything has meaning, and we are very ceremonial. This is necessary to maintain proper relationship.

In Southeast, trees are very important to our people. We honor the tree. When we cut bark from the tree there is a certain way we must do it or we can hurt the life of the tree. When we take a tree we have a ceremony before we take it, and we share with it that we are going to build a beautiful canoe to take us to one another. That canoe will live with us a long time. When the canoe is finished, we celebrate and dedicate it to our Creator and to our people.

I realize this all seems very complex and spiritual, but that is the way of our people. It is not a romanticism or life of the past; it is just something we all have been taught and is very real to us. Everything relates back to Creator; body, soul and spirit are all connected and must be in balance.

Carol Jorgensen is the National Tribal Government Program Manager for the USDA Forest Service.

Subsistence Today

Alaska is unique in many respects—not least of which is the management of subsistence uses. The importance of subsistence hunting and fishing to Alaska Natives and Alaska's rural residents has long been recognized. Two key pieces of legislation from the early 1980s—the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act *(ANILCA)* and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act *(ANCSA)*—laid the groundwork for protecting traditional subsistence uses of Alaska resources on Federal lands.

The State of Alaska managed statewide subsistence harvests until late 1989 when the Alaska Supreme Court ruled that the rural residency preference required by Federal law violated the Alaska Constitution. Despite repeated efforts, the State has been unable to bring its regulatory framework back into compliance with ANILCA.

Under ANILCA, the Federal Government began managing subsistence hunting and trapping on Alaska's public lands in 1990. However, Congress established a moratorium on the Federal subsistence 'take over' until December 1998. Recent court decisions have expanded federal subsistence management to also include fisheries. These public lands include lands managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the USDA Forest Service, as well as all non-navigable waters on these lands.

Currently, rural residents may harvest fish and wildlife under Federal subsistence regulations if a recognized consistent and traditional subsistence use of that species exists.

The Federal Subsistence Management Program involves the five Federal land management agencies. A Federal Subsistence Board oversees the program and Regional Advisory Councils and State representative play an active role in Board deliberations.

Federal Subsistence management is an evolving and unique management challenge. The Alaska Region is actively engaged in developing solutions that serve both the users and the resource.

A Brief Timeline

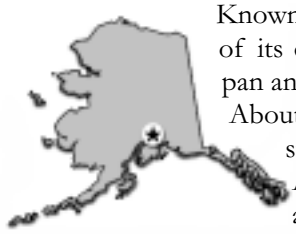
The story of Alaska's great National Foests cannot be separated from the compelling story of her people and their history. The following summarized timeline attempts to place the modern history of Alaska's National Forests in the context of the State's epic history.

Alaska Prehistory—Over 10,000 years of settlement by Alaska Natives before the first Europeans arrived.

1741 First European contact with Alaska with Bering/Chirikov expedition.
1774 to 1791 Charles III of Spain sends expeditions along the northwest coast.
1776 Captain James Cook of England journeys into Turnagain Arm and Prince William Sound.
1784 First permanent Russian settlement is established on Kodiak Island.
1799 Aleksandr Andreyevich Baranov establishes Russian trading post known today as Old Sitka.
1805 First cargo of Russian furs from Russian-America is delivered to China.
1867 Secretary of State, William H. Seward, negotiates purchase of Russian America for $7.2 million – less than two cents per acre.
1880 Joe Juneau and Richard Harris discover gold on Gastineau Channel. Juneau is established.
1884 Congress passes First Organic Act.
1887 Congress creates the Indian Reservation on Annette Island.
1892 President Benjamin Harrison establishes Afognak Forest and Fish Culture Reserve – a precursor to the Chugach National Forest.
1896 Klondike Gold Rush begins.
1902 President Theodore Roosevelt establishes Alexander Archipelago Forest Reserve – a precursor to the Tongass National Forest.
1903 Alaska - Canada border is settled.
1907 Tongass and Chugach National Forest established by proclamation.
1910 Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot fired by President Taft over Alaska mining disputes.
1913 First Alaska Territorial Legislature convenes.
1924 Congress extends citizenship to all American Indians.
1942 Japan bombs Dutch Harbor; invades Aleutian Islands.
1942 Alaska Spruce Log Program established on Tongass to provide airplane lumber for military.
1948 Alaska Highway opens to civilian traffic.
1951 Tongass NF, under Regional Forester B. Frank Heintzleman enters into 50 year timber contracts.
1953 First large pulp mill opens in Ketchikan.
1957 Atlantic Richfield discovers oil on Kenai Peninsula, ushering in Alaska's modern oil era.
1959 Alaska is admitted to the Union as the 49th state.
1964 Good Friday Earthquake rocks southcentral Alaska.
1971 Congress passes Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act *(ANCSA)*.
1974 Construction begins on trans-Alaska pipeline.
1977 Trans-Alaska Pipeline is complete.
1980 Congress passes Alaska National Lands Conservation Act *(ANILCA)*.
1987 Congress passes amendments to ANSCA.
1989 *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill in Prince William Sound (*Chugach National Forest*) is largest in U.S. history.
1990 Congress passes Tongass Timber Reform Act.
1997 Revision of Tongass Land Management Plan completed.
2000 President William Clinton institutes administrative rule protecting roadless areas on National Forests.
2001 Dale Bosworth chosen as 15th Chief of the Forest Service.

The Communities of the Chugach

Anchorage



Known as the crossroads of the world because of its close proximity to Russia, Europe, Japan and Asia, this city is the largest in Alaska. About 254,000 people, nearly one-half of the state's population, live in the municipality. Anchorage is the center of commerce and distribution for much of the rest of the state. Government, tourism, the oil industry and transportation provide most of the jobs.

The Municipality of Anchorage is home to nearly 1/2 of the population of Alaska. It is the gateway to the Chugach National Forest.

Anchorage is a unique mixture of contrasts from the old frontier to the jet age. Sandwiched between the skyscrapers of today linger old cabins and streams where salmon still spawn. You can go hiking in the alpine of Chugach State Park in the morning and enjoy an opera or ballet in the evening.

Anchorage serves as a jumping-off point for many places in the Chugach National Forest. National forest land on the Kenai Peninsula and around Valdez may be reached by road from Anchorage.

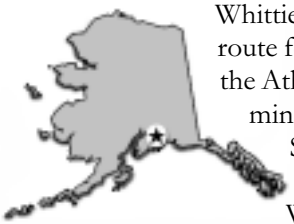
The Supervisor's Office for the Chugach National Forest is located in Anchorage. Several other federal agencies—the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management—have their regional offices here.

Girdwood

Girdwood is a small community near the north end of the Kenai Peninsula. One of the highlights of Girdwood is Mt. Alyeska Ski Resort. Nearby facilities include a 300 room luxury hotel, lodge, ski school, equipment rental shop, restaurants and condo rentals. With long, dark nights in winter, the slopes feature two lighted chair lifts, an aerial tramway, and a restaurant. During the summer, the tramway carries visitors to the mountain peaks for breathtaking views of the encircling mountains.

The Glacier Ranger District office is located in Girdwood. The district employs twenty-six permanent employees.

Whittier



Whittier, at the head of the Passage Canal, originally was part of the portage route for trade between the Chugach Eskimoes of Prince William Sound and the Athabascan Indians of Cook Inlet. It was used extensively by prospecting miners during the gold rush as the route was the quickest passage from the Sound to the Cook Inlet and Interior regions.

The community was established by the U.S. Army during World War II and is, today, a historical landmark. As an ice-free, deep water port, Whittier's strategic value to Anchorage and Interior Alaska was soon recognized. The completion of the Whittier to Portage railroad in 1943 transformed the community into the primary debarkation point for cargo, troops, and dependents of the Alaska Command. In 1948 the military began construction of the first of two buildings for their military personnel.

Today this small community serves as the major gateway to Prince William Sound. With the recent completion of the road into Whittier, tourism and marine recreation are expected to increase.

Seward

This picturesque community, nestled between high mountain ranges on the Kenai Peninsula, has a population of 2,830. The town was named for United States Secretary of State William H. Seward. He was instrumental in arranging the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867.

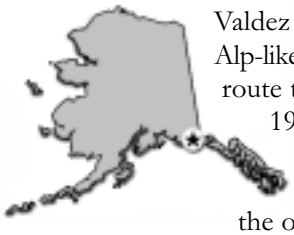
The town was built around the construction of the railroad to Fairbanks in 1903. Today the economy is based on tourism, fishing, and shipping through the year-round, ice-free port that is accessible by road and railroad.

The Seward Ranger District of the Chugach National Forest is located in Seward. The headquarters for Kenai Fiords National Park is also in Seward and plans are in the works to build an interagency facility in this bustling town.

The district employs 24 permanent employees.

The bustling port of Seward is home to both the Seward Ranger District and the Kenai Fiords National Park headquarters.

Valdez



Valdez is often called Alaska's 'Little Switzerland' because of the surrounding Alp-like Chugach Mountains. It began as the starting point for the 'All-American' route to the Klondike gold fields in 1898. The town was destroyed during the 1964 Alaska Earthquake and relocated to its present location. Today, the area at the head of Valdez Arm is the terminus for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and 4,036 people call it home. The economy is dependent on the oil industry, tourism and commercial fishing.

More than 200,000 tourists come to Valdez each summer and almost half of them visit the Forest Service's Crooked Creek Information Site located just outside Valdez on the Richardson Highway.

The Cordova Ranger District operates a satellite, summer operation in Valdez that employs five seasonal employees.

Cordova

Located on the eastern side of the Chugach National Forest, this charming community and is home to2,454 people. It is nestled between Prince William Sound to the west and the wetlands of the Copper River Delta to the east.

Cordova was built as the terminus of the Copper River and Northwestern Railway that brought copper ore from the Kennecott Copper Mine to the north.

When the mines closed in 1938, Cordova's main industry became commercial fishing and fish processing. Today, 'Copper River kings and reds' are highly-prized and are acclaimed as some of the finest salmon comercially available.

Cordova is accessible only by plane or boat.

The Cordova Ranger District is located in this community and employs a permanent workforce of twenty-one employees.

Cordova is one of the ten most important commercial fishing ports in Alaska.

The Communities of the Tongass

Yakutat

Once the main winter village for local Tlingits, today the Yakutat area has about 680 people, mainly Alaska Natives. The community is located on the northwestern corner of the Alaska panhandle. Residents are heavily dependent on national forest resources to support the local economy.

Most residents make their living in commercial, sport, and subsistence fishing. Timber harvesting is a relatively new industry in Yakutat. The greatest potential for economic growth is in commercial fishing, recreation, and tourism. Yakutat is regularly accessible by jet aircraft with rare trips available on the Alaska State Ferry System.

Yakutat is home to the rare glacier bear, a bluish variation of the black bear. The Situk River is thought to be the single most productive fishery in the Pacific Rim. People come from all over the world to see the bears, to fish for steelhead and salmon, and to hunt for mountain goat and moose. The Forest Service maintains fourteen public cabins in the area.

The Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve operates a small office in Yakutat. The Yakutat Ranger District has its headquarters here and employs eight permanent employees.

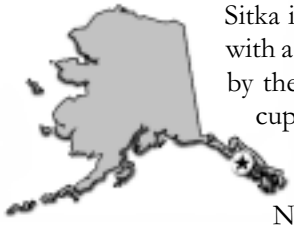
Hoonah

Hoonah, population 860, is a predominantly Tlingit community on the northern part of Chichagof Island about 40 air miles west of Juneau. Jobs in the area are dominated by fishing and timber. Fire destroyed most of Hoonah in 1946. The community was rebuilt with war materials quickly diverted from shipments under way to Hawaii.

Juneau residents and others visit Hoonah in increasing numbers to take advantage of the recreation along the road system. This visitation is viewed with mixed feelings by local residents who had enjoyed the relative isolation of the community; some residents resent competition for resources such as deer, berries and firewood.

The Hoonah Ranger District is located in this small community and employs thirteen permanent employees.

Sitka



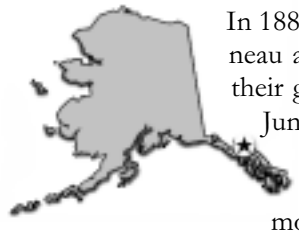
Sitka is the fifth largest city in Alaska with a population of 8,835. Long used by the Tlingit Indians, Sitka was occupied by the Russians in 1799 for use as a trade center. It was named the Russian capitol in North America. Ignoring hundreds of years of Alaska Native occupation, the Russians sold their interests in Alaska to the U.S. in 1867 and Sitka became Alaska's first territorial capitol.

Today Sitka is a very diverse community and depends upon fishing, tourism, health services, education, timber, and government for its economic base. The Sitka National Historical Park preserves and interprets the area's rich Tlingit and Russian Heritage.

Sitka is home for both the Sitka Ranger District and the Sitka Supervisor's Office.

The beautiful seaside community of Sitka has a rich Native Alaskan and Russian heritage.

Juneau



In 1880, two prospectors, Joe Juneau and Richard Harris, staked their gold claims in what is now Juneau. Because of the growing mining activity in the area, territorial officials moved the capitol from Sitka to Juneau in 1900. Juneau is now Alaska's third largest city with a population of 30,711 people.

Juneau had the largest low-grade gold mines in the world until World War II when gold mining was deemed a nonessential activity. The lack of workers forced the mines to close. The Treadwell, Alaska-Gastineau and the Alaska-Juneau mines produced over $150 million in gold from 1900 to 1944.

Home to the Alaska Regional Office, the Juneau Ranger District, Admiralty National Monument and the Forest Sciences Lab, Juneau is the capitol of Alaska.

Because of its setting at the foot of Mount Juneau and Mount Roberts, Juneau is often called the 'San Francisco of the North.' This picturesque setting is repeated in the character of the downtown area where many buildings have recently been restored to their turn-of-the-century origins. It is common to see several cruise ships docked downtown every day during the summer, bringing hundreds of thousands of visitors to the capitol city annually.

State and federal government are the major employers today although the tourism industry has expanded dramatically during the last ten years. The Forest Service maintains a large presence in Juneau with the Regional Office, Juneau Ranger District, Admiralty National Monument and Forestry Sciences Lab located in this bustling city.

Angoon

Located west of Juneau, Angoon is the only permanent community on Admiralty Island. Tlingit Natives inhabited Admiralty for centuries and today are the main residents in Angoon, a village of about 600 people on the western coast. Alaska Native clans, such as the Dog Salmon and Bear, shape the art and family structures. The culture also molds the ceremonies of birth, marriage and death.

Most residents lead a subsistence lifestyle with a strong respect for cultural traditions. The nearness of historic clan houses and modern buildings along Angoon streets are the obvious symbols of the forces of past and present at work in the village. The newer buildings have been constructed since a highly-disputed shelling by the US Navy in the later part of the 19th century.

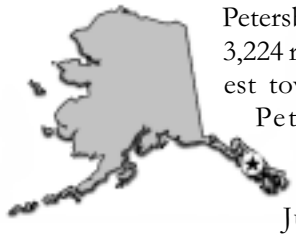
Community celebrations may include traditional potlatches or Christian church services. Subsistence resources such as salmon, deer, halibut, shellfish, kelp, berries and alder are gathered from nearby shorelines as they have been gathered for more than 1,000 years.

The community joined forces with environmental groups to promote monument and wilderness designation for Admiralty Island during the 1970s.

In accordance with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, the village corporation (Kootznoowoo, Inc.) selected lands on Prince of Wales Island in deference for culturally important lands on Admiralty Island.

The city, tribal government, village corporation and Forest Service are actively working together to provide essential services within the community and to enhance and diversify Angoon's economy in a manner that will be compatible with its culture.

Petersburg



Petersburg, with a population of 3,224 residents, is the fourth largest town in Southeast Alaska. Petersburg is located on Mitkof Island, north of Ketchikan and south of Juneau. Petersburg was founded by Norwegian immigrants who were attracted by its similarity to their homeland. Known as "Little Norway", Petersburg celebrates its Norwegian heritage with rosemaled storefronts. Rosemaling is Norwegian for rose painting, an activity used to enliven a long winter.

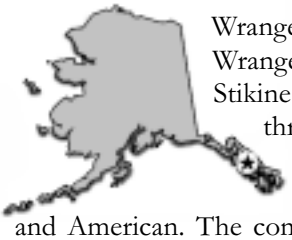
Petersburg is known as the "LIttle Norway" of Alaska.

The economy of Petersburg depends on the natural resources of the area. Fishing and fish processing are the dominant industry, with increasing contributions from tourism.

Nearby wildernesses include the Petersburg Creek-Duncan Salt Chuck, and the Stikine-LeConte Wildernesses.

The community is home to both the Petersburg Ranger District and the Petersburg Supervisor's Office.

Wrangell



Wrangell is a community of 2,600 residents, located on the north end of Wrangell Island. Its history is linked to its proximity to the Stikine River. The Stikine meets the Inside Passage near Wrangell and provides a water highway through the Alaska coastal mainland and into British Columbia.

Wrangell is the only town in Alaska to have been governed not only by Alaska Natives but also under three flags—Russian, British and American. The community's past began with Indian fur trade on the river and it later experienced the boom and bust of three 19th century gold rushes.

Today, Wrangell's economy is based on timber and fishing. Tourism is playing an increasing role. Bears at Anan Bay and migratory birds on the Stikine River Delta lure visitors for world-class wildlife viewing. Many also visit the nearby Stikine-LeConte Wilderness. In addition, Wrangell acts as a service center for gold mining at Bronson Creek, which flows into the Iskut River, a major tributary of the Stikine River.

The Wrangell Ranger District is located in Wrangell and employes thirty-eight permanent employees.

Craig

With 1,397 residents, Craig is the largest community on Prince of Wales Island. It is located on the west side of the island. Originally called Fish Egg, Craig was a seasonal fishing camp of Tlingit and Haida Indians.

The town is named for Craig Millar, who established a saltery there in 1906. Craig is the major fishing port for the island and its economy is still tied to fishing and logging. However, tourism is on the rise with a service and retail economy building. Over the last few years, Craig has been the fastest growing First Class city in Alaska.

This friendly community is home to the Craig Ranger District. The District employes thirty-five permanent employees.

Thorne Bay

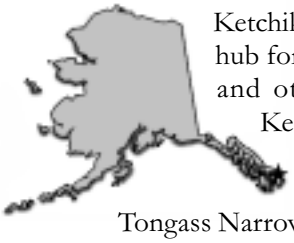
Thorne Bay, with 557 residents, began as a logging camp in 1962, authorized under the terms of the long-term timber contract held by Ketchikan Pulp Company. The state received title to national forest lands around the Thorne Bay logging camp on August 22, 1980. Those lands were subdivided, and residents who occupied lots were given the opportunity to purchase them.

Thorne Bay was incorporated as a city in 1982. Through state funding and some rural development funding from the Forest Service, Thorne Bay has constructed a city park, boat and float plane dock, a state-of-the-art landfill, and a new water and sewer system.

The Thorne Bay Ranger District is located in the city of Thorne Bay. The district employs fifty-two permanent employees.

The Thorne Bay Ranger District manages a diverse array of resource programs.

Ketchikan



Ketchikan is the supply center and transportation hub for southern, southeast Alaska with Saxman and other smaller communities nearby. The Ketchikan vicinity is a bustling, lively community of 7,922 people. Ketchikan is long and narrow as it snakes between the Tongass Narrows and tall mountains. The entire width of land is taken up by houses, staircases—all perched on steep mountain sides—and streets built out over the water on wooden pilings .

Incorporated in 1900, Ketchikan's rich past dates back generations when this area became the ancestral home of the Tongass clan of the Tlingits, who fished salmon from the mouth of Ketchikan Creek.

Contemporary settlement and industry began when the first of many canneries opened in 1887, establishing Ketchikan as an economic and cultural hub in southeast Alaska.

Ketchikan's Creek Street is a popular, historic reminder of the city's colorful past. Photo by USDA-FS; Sandy Skrien.

Today the community still relies upon commercial fishing and timber, although cruiseship tourism is a growing sector of the economy.

Ketchikan is home to the Ketchikan-Misty Ranger District and the Ketchikan Supervisor's Office.

Forests for People

The National Forests of Alaska belong to the American people. The dedicated employees of the Region strive to strike a sound balance between the needs of the resources and the needs of the public. In the last two decades, Alaska's National Forests have been catapulted to center stage in the heated national debate over the use of public lands. No one can deny that Alaskans and the American public care deeply about the future of these public treasures.

In these changing times, the Alaska Region has worked to redefine its vision of the future and its goals and priorities. The fundamental and overarching objective of the Alaska Region is to protect the health and productivity of the land we manage and to help other landowners with the health and productivity of the land they manage. Most of the region's program of work is dedicated to this end.

We are first and foremost natural and cultural resource managers. One of our essential jobs is to manage all the resources of the National Forests to meet the multiple use needs of society. These needs encompass the full range of goods and services provided by forest ecosystems, such as timber and non-timber forest products, mineral resources, fish and wildlife habitats, subsistence opportunities, recreational settings, scenic landscapes, heritage resources, and scientific understanding. Another of our essential jobs is to help private landowners meet many of these same needs. We take pride in the work we have done in the past, and we will continue that work into the future.

At the same time, we recognize that this is an era of change in the Alaska Region. We have an historic opportunity to set a new direction for the Region, to emphasize new things, and to set new priorities for our time, energy, and budget. For the next few years, we have chosen to focus on four strategic priorities:

Recreation & Tourism
Communities
Alaska Natives
Organizational Effectiveness

These are not new initiatives added on top of our existing work. Rather, they are aspects of our ongoing work that—properly emphasized—will best contribute to the new future for the Alaska Region that we intend to create.

The following chapter outlines the region's strategic priorities and the diverse and ambitious management programs implemented by the Alaska Region.

"caring for the land, and serving people."

Photo by USDA-FS; Randy Schrank

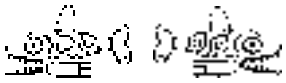
The Alaska Region's Priorities

Recreation & Tourism—A Vision . . .

We will work to create a future where the Forest Service is recognized for its expertise and leadership in Alaska's recreation and tourism. Through proper planning, recreation and tourism is ecologically sustainable and is a consistent economic component of southeast and southcentral Alaska communities. Working cooperatively with other government agencies, industry groups, and Alaska communities, we have developed a statewide framework that helps guide recreation and tourism development and management. Our forward-looking recreation and tourism strategy is a key component in our Forest Plans, our action plans, and our annual program of work. The Forest Service national headquarters has enabled the Alaska Region, through special policy support, to partner with state and federal agencies, tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, and private parties to deliver superior visitor service in our market niche.

Strategy

The strategy will focus on what makes Alaska special. Marine-based recreational activities, Alaska modes of access (i.e. float plane, kayak, dog team, helicopter, etc.), remote public use cabins, back country winter sports, wildlife and fish viewing areas, fishing and hunting opportunities, glacier and ice field exploration, temperate rain forest activities, and recreation experiences in heritage tourism are all unique attributes of the spectrum of recreational experiences in Alaska's National Forests.



Plan for and manage recreation and tourism growth.

- In collaboration with the forests and stakeholders, identify priorities for completing carrying capacity analyses—in the following year analyses should be completed for the shoreline areas of Juneau, Admiralty National Monument, Sitka and Hoonah Ranger Districts; Thorne River Corridor on Prince of Wales Island; and western Prince William Sound.
- Lead efforts to bring together all groups interested in recreation and tourism across Alaska.
- Complete an environmental impact statement (EIS) for commercial helicopter-supported recreation on the Chugach National Forest.

Take our educational programs to the people.

- Develop collaborative interpretive programs throughout the region.
- Develop a program to teach frontline tourism industry providers about Alaska's National Forests.
- Involve cooperators in interpretive training opportunities throughout region.

Increase resources (funding, personnel, equipment and supplies) **for managing the recreation and tourism program.**

- Communicate accomplishments, funding needs, and funding process to stakeholders through better relationships with the media and production of an annual accomplishment report.
- Develop a marketing strategy for the Chugach National Forest.
- Establish a partnership program that will enhance national forest program support and increase stewardship of forest resources.

Increase recreation and tourism opportunities in a way that supports the economies of southcentral and southeast Alaska.

- Develop additional major wildlife and fish viewing areas.
- Establish a Regional Heritage Expedition program through Fee Demo and provide at least one Expedition each year.
- Work with communities to create trail coalitions.

Communities – A Vision . . .

We will work to create a future where communities adjacent to Alaska's national forests believe that the U.S. Forest Service is doing everything within its power to work with communities to help them achieve community goals, manage change, and improve their quality of life. Federal, State, and local officials, Native and cultural leaders, interest groups and other key Alaskan leaders share this belief. People have these beliefs because we are effectively communicating the tangible actions we are taking to help communities. All such actions are consistent with our responsibility to sustain the long-term health of the land.

Strategy

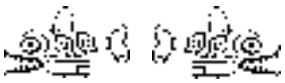
Our focus will be Alaskan communities whose livelihoods and quality of life are affected by nearby National Forest lands. We will increase our role in assisting communities to meet their goals and objectives. This includes working to improve national understanding of the unique needs and circumstances of Alaskan communities, and pursuing opportunities to generate support for communities.

Connect with Communities. By strengthening our linkages with communities, we will become more responsive to their individual needs and priorities while fostering positive and more visible Forest Service presence, service, and outreach.

Share Stewardship with Communities . Our delivery of the National Resources Agenda and Forest Plan goals and objectives will emphasize community-based approaches and a commitment to community involvement in decision-making processes.

Build Community Capacity . We will help communities increase capacity to pursue their unique goals, manage change, and participate more fully with us in management, protection, and use of natural resources.

Advance Community Goals . We will actively assist communities in advancing their goals for economic security, diversification of livelihoods, and quality of life.



Strengthen linkages and communications with communities.

Ensure pro-active communication with our communities by developing communication plans and strategies.

Enhance community involvement in decisions.

Engage Juneau in identifying solutions to flight-seeing noise issue via a mediation effort.

Encourage, promote, recognize and reward employee involvement in communities.

Establish Regional guidelines to offer employees the opportunity to do volunteer community service work on government time.

Establish an annual Chugach Forest Supervisor's Community Service award program to recognize employees for their work on behalf of communities.

Profile forest projects that directly benefit communities through media coverage and community leadership participation.

Increase pool of State & Private Forestry Rural Community Assistance funds for Alaska communities.

Provide workshops for line officers and staff to increase awareness and understanding of community assistance programs.

Conduct community workshops to increase visibility of and community participation in S&PF assistance programs.

Assist communities with projects and funding that benefit them.

Move forward with Federal Highway projects on Prince of Wales Island, Kake and Sitka.

Continue fuel hazard tree removal near communities of Moose Pass and Hope.

Develop policy and guidelines to encourage the use of Alaska grown wood in Forest Service construction projects in Region 10.

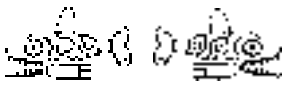
Alaska Natives—A Vision . . .

We will work to create a future where the unique legal status, history, cultural heritage, spiritual and religious practices, and traditional knowledge of Alaska Natives are recognized and incorporated into the Region's management decisions and policy-making processes. Close working relationships exist among the Forest Service and Alaska Native leaders, federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native organizations, adjacent Alaska Native landowners, and individuals in the Alaska Native community. Forest Service employees in the Region understand, honor, and apply appropriate protocols when consulting and working with Alaska Natives across the full spectrum of our working relationships. Forest Service employees are trained in and model their understanding of and sensitivity toward Alaska Native culture, traditions, and current concerns and priorities. Native leaders trust the employees of the Alaska Region and the Forest Service as a whole.

Strategy

We will allocate people, money, and material assets to accomplish the goals and each task therein. We recognize that in an ongoing relationship, work will continue at multiple levels. When resources are limited, we will clearly communicate our expectations and priorities to avoid any surprises. The tasks build upon one another to attain the goals and ultimately fulfill our vision. Native partners will be watching carefully and measuring our success.

This action plan should be viewed as evolutionary, strategic, and iterative. Ongoing review, evaluation, and update by the Regional Leadership Team should be a part of action plan implementation. The action plan is part of an ongoing, long-term commitment to building a new relationship with Alaska Natives. It also exists within the context of national, functional, and local planning.



Foster and build positive working relationships with Alaska Natives.

- Establish clear roles and responsibilities as they relate to Native Relations within the Forest Service.
- Conduct meetings in Native communities focused on building positive working relationships with Alaska Natives.
- Support Tribal events such as cultural events and camps.
- Pursue co-location of Hoonah Ranger District Office and Hoonah Indian Association government office.
- Repatriate all human remains and associated funerary objects in FS custody to Native Alaska Tribes.
- Consult Tribal governments from pre-decisional stages of NEPA proposed actions through project decision and implementation.

Establish and use protocols for working together with Alaska Native organizations.

- Train Forest Service personnel on each Forest and in the Regional Office about cross-cultural communications.
- Develop Chugach National Forest protocols.
- Update Regional Tribal Government Relations Strategy and Consultation Guidance for consistency and alignment with action plan and national strategy.

Ensure that Forest Service employees recognize and respect Alaska Native cultural values and traditional ecological knowledge.

- Offer annual Government-to-Government Training to include areas such as consultation, Alaska Native law, Native Americans and cultural and natural resources management.
- Educate Chugach National Forest employees about laws, policies and issues affecting Alaska Natives and public lands.
- Create opportunities to work with ANCSA corporations, federally-recognized Tribes, and other Alaska Native organizations to assist with economic development or for cooperative land management.

Organizational & Employee Effectiveness—A Vision . . .

We are mutually and jointly responsible to each other for the success of the Region. We will work to create a future where the Alaska Region uses a "one Forest Service" operating style based on teamwork within and between the National Forest System *(NFS)*, Operations *(OPS)*, and State & Private Forestry *(S&PF)* deputy areas in Alaska and our teammates at the Pacific Northwest Research Station *(PNW)* and Law Enforcement *(LEI)*. We adhere to the following key organizational principles:

- *Decentralization*—we keep decisions close to the customers and close to the ground.
- *Interdependence*—we recognize that we depend on each other for our success.
- *Integration*—we pursue common goals.
- *Alignment*—our programs support our strategic objectives.
- *Accountability*—we are responsible for results.
- *Adherence to budget principle*s—our budget decisions reinforce our management philosophy, and our budget process is open and understandable.

Strategy

By placing trust, authority, responsibility and resources with those closest to the land and our publics, we will develop and maintain a workforce and organization that achieves the best possible results at the lowest reasonable cost through**:**

Roles and Responsibilities . Developing explicit agreements that define the roles, responsibilities and desired relationships of the Alaska Region, PNW Station and Law Enforcement to enhance interdependence, trust and integration, while gaining mutual understanding and support between organizational levels and staffs.

Accountability. Establishing, implementing and evaluating mechanisms for program and individual accountability that are consistently applied using Forest Service standards.

Information. Improving the timeliness, integration and quality of information to enable effective decision-making.

Workforce. Developing and implementing workforce/workload planning strategies from the ground up to ensure a highly skilled, informed and diverse workforce.

Develop roles, responsibilities and desired relationships of the Alaska Region, PNW Station and Law Enforcement.

- Define the common objectives of the Alaska Region and PNW.
- Define the roles and address the integration of Law Enforcement (LEI) within the Alaska Region.
- Develop a process in which line and staff officers work at least one week of their first year in a position at another level of the organization.

Establish and implement mechanisms for evaluating program and individual accountability.

- Identify, develop and articulate specific servic standards for all programs and ensure that those standards are reflected in programs of work.
- Develop Region-wide budget principles and accountability to increase the understanding of the new Regional principles.

Improve timeliness, integration and quality of information.

- Develop and implement ways to maximize the use of Agency-wide and Regional information technology.

Develop and implement workforce and workload planning strategies.

- Develop and complete a Regional workforce plan consistent with national direction.
- Develop and implement a recruitment and retention strategy tiered to the National Recruitment Strategy for premanent and temporary workforce.
- Complete staffing and finalize all job offers associated with Tongass target organization.
- Complete Tongass organization monitoring activities.

The National Forests

s of Alaska


YUKON
RRITORY
WHITEHORSE
BRITISH
COLUMBIA
CANADA
UNITED STATES
Glacier Bay
Juneau (State Capital ~ Regional Office)
Hoonah
Admiralty National Monument
TONGASS
Sitka
Petersburg
Wrangell
Misty Fiords National Monument
Thorne Bay
Craig
Ketchikan (Tongass NF Headquarters)
NGASS
TIONAL
FOREST
ALEXANDER ARCHIPELAGO
DIXON ENTRANCE

Ecosytem Planning

Planning provides the framework for all activities in the national forests. The planning program makes sure the Alaska Region is completing required plans and is following legislation such as the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Forest Management Act. The planning program also ensures that the public has the opportunity to work with the Forest Service to develop sound alternatives for both broad management decisions and for local projects.

Planners and resource specialists develop land and resource management plans that contain the broad direction for a national forest. These forest plans are designed to last for 10 to 15 years and are then revised to reflect new information. The Chugach National Forest is working with the public to complete its revision and should be completed in 2001. The Tongass National Forest completed its plan revision in May 1997.

So, how much protection does a fish stream need? These forest-level plans provide the guidelines. The plan also would show if a cabin is appropriate for the type of recreation anticipated in a specific area and would say whether the land in a watershed is suitable for timber harvesting.

At a more local level, planners and resource specialists analyze specific project proposals. These proposals are based on the direction in the forest plans, but consider site-specific information in greater detail. For example, if timber harvesting is permitted in a watershed, project planners must consider information specific to that area. How might the soils be affected? Was there an earlier timber sale in the area? What wildlife species live there and how can they be protected during a sale?

Resource specialists come together to form interdisciplinary teams to complete plans and projects at all levels. By working as a team, multiple resources will be considered and individual team members add their own expertise to the process.

The public has an important role in planning. By working with the Forest Service, the public helps the agency consider all aspects of a plan or project, leading to better decisions.

A line officer, such as a district ranger, forest supervisor or regional forester, makes the final decision for each project and forest plan. If members of the public say they do not feel that their information was properly used during the planning process, they have the right to appeal the decision to a higher level of authority within the Forest Service.

Engineering & Aviation Management

Engineering works with five programs in the Alaska Region:

- Aviation management
- Environmental engineering
- Facilities engineering
- Roads and transportation corridors
- Geometronics

Aviation Management

Managing the two largest national forests in America, one might wonder how the employees of the Alaska Region get around to do their jobs. No roads connect Juneau, Sitka, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Wrangell, Cordova, and others to the North American road system. Aviation is the key link in helping employees carry out the mission of the Forest Service in Alaska.

Annually, the Alaska Region operates fixed-wing and rotor-wing aircraft under contract and rental agreements with commercial aircraft operators. Annual flight-use averages between 7,000 and 10,000 hours with a budget between $3 million and $4 million.

Safety is the highest priority for aviation management. To ensure safety, efficiency and effectiveness, Forest Service inspectors examine more than 100 aircraft and pilots each year. These inspections are in addition to the commercial aircraft operator requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Environmental Engineering

The Alaska Region sets a high priority for meeting environmental and pollution control laws internally and among the diverse contractors and permittees operating on the forests. These laws include Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; Clean Water Act; Pollution Prevention Act; Safe Drinking Water Act; Oil Pollution Act of 1990; and others.

The regional hazmat program, operated consistent with a US Department of Agriculture initiative, is a large part of the environmental engineering workload.

Under an interagency agreement with the Bureau of Land Management, the region has developed an inventory of more than 200 abandoned and inactive mines. These include 20 with contaminant releases greater than legally acceptable levels. Cleanup at these sites is progressing.

Pollution prevention planning for fueling operations ensures that hazardous materials are properly stored. Waste reduction is emphasized throughout the Alaska Region. In some places, people are retrofitting several remote camps and barges with solar power systems, to reduce fossil fuel consumption and to lessen the possibility of spills associated with fuel storage and over-water fueling.

Safe drinking water for employees and visitors is assured through the work of environmental and facilities engineers to design, operate and maintain water and sewer systems on the forests.

Geometronics

The Geometronics group is responsible for the organization, presentation, communication, distribution, and utilization of geospatial data in graphic or digital form. Geometronics incorporates the art and science of cartography in conjunction with photogrammetry, geodesy, geography, remote sensing, imagery analysis, and computer mapping technology to graphically display the spatial relationship of geographical data through maps and other information products.

Products include standardized map sheets (forest-wide) and special use maps in hardcopy and digital formats. An aerial photography archive is maintained at the Regional Office in Juneau with photos dating from 1926 through 2000. These valuable assets are available to Forest Service personnel and to the public.

Training and project technical assistance is provided to Forest Service personnel on an as-needed basis. In recent years, the Geometronics group has developed expertise in GPS data collection, GIS display and analysis, and digital aerial photo acquisition. The group also provides oversight, technical support, and Region-wide coordination for the cadastral surveying program. The cadastral surveying program is vital to land management, land ownership, and engineering issues within the Alaska Region.

The Alaska Region Geometronics staff is on the forefront of mapping technology. Through the use of computer-aided mapping systems, GPS receivers, aerial photography and satellite imagery, we are able to provide timely and accurate mapping products for our internal and external customers. The Juneau Trails map and the Juneau Ice Field visitor's map are recent examples of products enjoyed by forest visitors.

Facilities

The Forest Service in Alaska owns or leases many types and sizes of administrative buildings. Some of the more common types of facilities are office space; barracks for seasonal field crews; family housing in remote communities where housing in the private sector is scarce and auto shops.

The Forest Service facilities engineering program involves developing and maintaining more than 470,000 square feet of administrative space within the Alaska Region. This infrastructure represents a significant public investment.

The facilities engineering program also supports the recreation program by providing technical support in the planning, design, construction and management of the facilities that support recreation use on national forest lands.

Transportation and Utility Corridors

In Alaska, road availability varies greatly by location. The Chugach National Forest has 91 miles of roads while the Tongass National Forest has about 4,000. Prince of Wales Island is the most-heavily roaded area in the region. Over the next five years over $50 million dollars is planned to be spent to improve the road system on the island.

Utilities like electrical power also need a corridor through the forest. While it may be practical to run utilities where roads are impossible, planners and landscape architects prefer to put roads and utilities together. The southeast Alaska intertie project is in the process of being implemented.

When managers select a final alternative for a forest land and resource management plan, their decision includes corridors for roads and utilities. The Chugach National Forest is completing a plan revision that will review current corridors and consider what will be needed during the next 10 to 15 years.

Roads provide access to national forest land while utility corridors allow communities to connect to power, water, phones and other utilities. By carefully overseeing these forms of access, engineers and planners can ensure the best levels of service while minimizing the effects on the land.

Wildlife, Fish, Ecology & Watersheds

When people envision the wildness of Alaska they conjure images of moose stalking through wetlands, brown bears fishing along streams, bald eagles soaring over ancient forests, and salmon flashing silver in the streams. The Wildlife, Fish, Ecology and Watershed (WFEW) program is charged with ensuring that such scenes endure for future generations.

Wildlife

The National Forest Management Act requires the Forest Service to maintain habitat for well-distributed, healthy populations of all wildlife. In other words, the agency must properly manage and sustain the places where wildlife live.

On a day-to-day basis, biologists consider small and large projects, such as prescribed burning, thinning, and nest structure development, that may benefit wildlife. Wildlife biologists work with planners to make sure other projects, such as trail construction or timber harvesting, do not harm wildlife or their habitats. They also work with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to coordinate with the state's wildlife responsibilities on national forest land.

Increasing awareness of the abundant, unique and diverse wildlife in the national forests is a goal that leads to better pubic understanding and support for wildlife. The Forest Service works closely with other federal, state and non-government groups in Alaska supporting and promoting Watchable Wildlife programs across the state.

Fisheries

Located along the fisheries-rich rim of the Gulf of Alaska, the 32,000 miles of streams and 189,000 acres of lakes in the Tongass and Chugach National Forests provide major commercial, subsistence and sports fisheries.

Alaskan waters have generally produced as much as 95 percent of the nation's commercial wild salmon catch. About 30 percent of the state's salmon catch comes from fish produced in waters in and near the national forests. Within southeast Alaska, that figure jumps to 80 percent.

Habitat protection is the highest priority for the fisheries program. In 1995, fisheries biologists completed an Anadromous Fish Habitat Assessment that forms the foundation for the fisheries standards and guidelines for the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan.

Biologists develop projects to improve fish habitats in specific areas. As an example, since the 1950s, the Forest Service has invested more than $30 million to construct over 400 fish projects. Today a total of 58 fish ladders can be found in the Region, providing access for salmon to upstream habitat.

Ecology

Ecology is the study of the interrelationships among plants, animals and their physical environment. Understanding ecological patterns and processes forms an important foundation for resource management. The ecology program provides sound environmental information to managers so their decisions can reflect these interrelationships. This vital information provides the opportunity to make the wisest use of the resources while protecting them for generations to come.

In the Alaska Region, ecologists work with researchers and many specialists such as soil scientists, botanists, hydrologists and wildlife biologists to develop a greater understanding of the ecosystems. The Chugach and Tongass National Forests provide unique opportunities to study natural ecological processes in relatively pristine environments.

As the Forest Service seeks to adapt its management to reflect the best scientific information, ecological studies help guide decisions as they effect ecosystems.

Watersheds

Water is the lifeblood for Alaska's national forests. In fact, the chief of the Forest Service recently emphasized that the future health of the national forests depends on protecting watersheds.

In the Alaska region, specialists analyze watersheds by reviewing three things: the existing condition of the land around a stream; how healthy the stream environment is communities that rely on this water for drinking and for species that live in and near the water; and the rocks, wetlands and soils as they vary in and around the water channel.

The most important concerns for watershed analysis in the Alaska Region include erosion processes, water quantity and quality, aquatic and riparian species and habitats, stream channel conditions and cumulative impacts to these resources.

Subsistence

The federal land management agencies in Alaska are responsible for managing subsistence uses of fish and game on the more than 200 million acres of public lands in Alaska.

The Alaska Region plays an integral role in statewide regulation and development of the subsistence program through the Federal Subsistence Program. Fish and wildlife subsistence biologists work with communities to assure that local needs are met while resources are wisely managed.

Forest Management

Recreation, tourism, wildlife, timber production and other resources depend on the forests of southeast and southcentral Alaska. Forest managers must consider forest health, harvesting, and long-term production to meet the competing demands on Alaska's national forests. In addition to providing fish and wildlife with a place to live, Alaska's national forests also supply human needs.

For many years, the forests provided Alaska Natives with plants, berries and trees used for everything from canoes to fish traps to basket weaving. They depended on trees for firewood and building materials for their shelters. Many people in rural areas continue this subsistence lifestyle.

Today, timber is an important economic base for communities, especially in southeast Alaska. It joins tourism and fishing as one of Alaska's top three employers.

The End of the Fifty Year Contracts

Over the last fifty years, the timber industry in Alaska has seen dramatic changes. At one time, much of the timber in southeast Alaska was harvested under long-term timber sale contracts.

The Forest Service established these contracts in the 1950s to help stabilize an economy that shifted seasonally with the fish industry and was declining in the mining industry. The long-term guarantee for timber attracted investment capital for pulp mills and year-round timber enterprises.

The requirements for timber harvest to satisfy these contracts came to an end in the 1990s when the pulp mills closed in Sitka and Ketchikan.

Currently, sales are prepared in a wide variety of sizes to meet the needs of both small- and large-scale purchasers. The Tongass National Forest prepares timber sales that allow loggers to harvest a yearly average of up to 267 million board feet of timber. This amount would supply enough timber to build and finish 16,900 average homes.

A 'New' Timber Industry

Foresters design many timber sales so they can be sold to small, local enterprises in Southeast Alaska. The local timber industry is diversifying to provide employment for additional local wood processing and take advantage of markets for specialty wood products.

The Alaska Region is changing the way it prepares timber sales for several reasons. The Forest Service is learning more about fish and wildlife habitat need in the forests. Foresters have increased their understanding about how trees grow in southeast Alaska. The agency is responding to the number of people in the public who say they oppose timber harvesting, particularly clearcutting.

For many years, planners designed timber sales in southeast Alaska to be harvested using clearcutting that removes all the trees at one time. Under the revised Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, the Forest Service is studying techniques to find alternative harvesting methods that retain some trees.

These alternatives to clearcutting could reduce controversy over timber harvesting. That could translate into providing timber-related jobs while protecting wildlife and fisheries habitat.

Foresters' Work

Foresters and silviculturalists work in the forest management program of the Region. They inventory and map the forests and make sure they are replanted after harvesting or natural disturbance.

An overriding management objective for timber harvesting includes ensuring that healthy new trees take the place of the ones that are cut. Foresters ensure that timber stands are regenerating within five years of the final harvest. In the Alaska Region, more than ninety percent of harvested lands grow back naturally. Foresters plant trees in areas that do not come back naturally and to meet goals for biodiversity.

Healthy forests promote wildlife, clean waters, healthy watersheds, timber production and a natural environment for the communities of southcentral and southeastern Alaska. All three of Alaska's major employers—tourism, fishing and timber—depend on these benefits.

Significant Accomplishments for FY2000

Harvest of 149 million board feet of timber.
2,470 acres of reforestation.
3,813 acres of thinning.
Continued research partnerships on:
- Alternatives to clearcutting.
- Young-growth management.
- Demand for Tongass timber.

Public Services

Public Services manages a diverse roster of programs that help carry out the agency's mission to "care for the land and serve people." It works with five primary programs:

Recreation	Heritage Resources
Lands	Minerals & Geology
Wilderness	

Recreation

Nationally and locally, people value Alaska's national forests for the chance to go camping, fishing, cross-country skiing and to enjoy other outdoor activities. Increasingly, the public sees outdoor recreation as one of the greatest values of their national forests.

The Alaska Region provides a wide range of recreational opportunities for all who visit the national forests. Whether visiting the forests by cruise ship or kayak; by mountain bike or scenic byway, forest visitors are welcomed by well-maintained facilities, knowledgable forest guides, and spectacular scenery.

Visitors use trails, cabins, picnic areas and campgrounds in areas that range from fairly developed to very remote. The Region maintains over 190 recreation cabins, over 900 miles of hiking trails, 27 campgrounds and 37 picnic grounds.

The region also maintains world-class visitor centers in Portage Valley on the Chugach National Forest, and in Juneau and Ketchikan on the Tongass. At these exceptional facilities the region hosts over 645,000 visitors each year. The Begich, Boggs Visitor Center in Portage Valley has recently finished a three year renovation effort.

Wilderness

Vast areas of Alaska's national forests are set aside as Wilderness, or in some other special designation. In fact, more than a third of the Tongass is declared Wilderness or is in a special class where no timber harvesting is permitted. The program provides for the effective management of these special areas.

Heritage Resources

Long before the tall buildings sprang up in Anchorage and Juneau and cruiseships brought visitors to Alaskan shores people made their home and life among the bounty of Alaska's forests and sea.

Archeologists know of more than 3,500 historic and prehistoric sites on the Chugach and Tongass national forests. These sites bear witness to more than 10,000 years of Alaska Native and 250 years of European and American settlement. The Alaska Region has three National Historic Landmarks and lists ten sites on the National Register of Historic Places. The heritage resources program emphasizes a balance between gathering knowledge and ensuring compliance with environmental and heritage resource laws. It seeks to encourage site protection through public awareness and participation.

Lands

Alaska's national forests, owned by the public and managed by the Forest Service, are the two largest forests in the United States. In coordination with the State of Alaska, Native individuals and corporations, and other Federal agencies, the Lands Program oversees the orderly implementation of land entitlement programs authorized by Congress. This includes the conveyance of 400,000 acres to the State of Alaska under provisions of the Alaska Statehood Act, numerous Alaska Native selections conveyed to Native Corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and individual Alaska Native allotments authorized under provisions of the Alaska Native Allotment Act of 1906.

Minerals & Geology

Minerals development is as much a part of Alaska's future as it has been a part of its past. Alaska's national forests have enormous potential as a future source of hard rock minerals. Precious and base metals, uranium and rare earth elements, limestone and marble, and sand, gravel, and stone are among the mineral resources found in the Chugach and Tongass National Forests.

The Greens Creek Mine, within Admiralty National Monument, produces more silver than any other mine in the United States. A potential gold mine near Juneau would be the second largest mining venture in Alaska's national forests in more than 75 years.

The minerals program in the Alaska Region administers and monitors mining operations on Alaska's national forests to ensure that present operators use environmentally sound methods. Employees also evaluate past mining activities for environmental damage.

While seeking to balance environmental concerns, the program provides local economic benefits and minerals of national economic, military and industrial importance.

Law Enforcement & Investigations

Law enforcement plays an integral role in the management of National Forest System (NFS) lands. As a full partner with all management programs in the Alaska Region, the Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) team strives to serve people, provide for public and employee safety, and protect the resources and property under the jurisdiction of the USDA Forest Service. The law enforcement organization is a diverse workforce committed to integrity, professionalism, and accountability.

Protecting the natural and cultural resources of this nation is no small task and the challenges that the dedicated men and women in Alaska face everyday are enormous. Law enforcement operations that are considered routine elsewhere in the U.S., take on a different level of danger in the remote and rugged Alaskan frontier. Unlike FS officers in many other regions, Alaska officers face a range of challenging conditions including extensive travel by boat and plane, variable and extreme weather conditions, lack of improved roads and a scarcity of other law enforcement officers to back them up in remote areas.

Patrolling Forests

Patrol (usually by boat) of the nearly 11,000-mile shoreline of the Tongass National Forest can be risky and difficult. The Chugach National Forest, with more shoreline than the entire continental U.S., can only be adequately patrolled by small plane. Like the Tongass, extended boat patrols are possible on the Chugach, however, the severe weather conditions associated with the Gulf of Alaska can make these perilous.

LEI staff must be prepared, use good common sense, and make sound judgments, in order to ensure their safety and complete their work. To improve officer safety, many operations are undertaken with law enforcement cooperators when personnel are available and policies allow. Forest Service officers engage in cooperative patrols with the US Coast Guard, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Fish and Wildlife Protection Division, Alaska State Troopers, local police departments, and at times, Canadian regulatory agencies. Our officers are also commissioned Alaska State Peace Officers, offering them greater flexibility in accomplishing the overall law enforcement mission.

Evolving Responsibilities

LEI personnel in Alaska enforce the same FS regulations and federal laws as their counterparts in the lower 48, with one very notable exception. In Alaska, LEI is the single regulatory authority on NFS lands relative to Federal Subsistence Wildlife and Fisheries enforcement. As mandated by ANILCA Title VIII, the primary focus of LEI in subsistence management is to protect the customary and traditional harvesting of fish, wildlife, and other natural resources, by qualified rural Alaskans. Since 1992, LEI has been actively involved in fulfilling this mandate.

This broadening of responsibility added a new level of complexity to the duties of FS law enforcement in Alaska. It has brought about an exponential growth in workload as well as significant political and socioeconomic pressures to be proactive in protecting the subsistence priority. In order to conserve healthy fish and wildlife populations for qualified subsistence users, current enforcement actions focus on regulating the non-qualified user while attempting to avoid over regulation of the qualified user.

Building Partnerships

Our practical approach to this "new" responsibility provides our officers unique and valuable opportunities to interact with Tribal governments, Native Alaskans, and rural residents in a positive and productive manner. It allows LEI to collaborate with a greater number of customers, both internal and external, and provides LEI the ability to work side by side with biologists and resource management specialists in the development and administration of a unique natural resource program.

Additionally, significant increases in tourism, outfitting/guiding, and population growth are requiring an entire restructuring of the law enforcement organization and a comprehensive assessment of "how we do business". LEI in the Alaska Region is building a competent and professional workforce with an infrastructure that will increase public and employee safety while responding to the growing needs of the Forest Service in this unique state.

It is the vision of the Alaska Region, Forest Service LEI team to be recognized as a leader in public safety and natural resource protection. By building internal and external collaborative relationships throughout Alaska, LEI is better equipped to help the agency *"care for the land and serve people."*

Operations

The men and women who work in the Operations staff, as the administrative unit in the Alaska Region is called, play a critical role in meeting the needs of employees and the public. Like any large organization, the Forest Service needs employees to keep the computers running, order supplies, work with vendors and contractors, pay the bills, do the payroll and take care of the administrative details that keep a unit functioning.

The Operations unit ensures that all other programs have the people, financial structure, goods and services, technology and information resources required to meet the needs of the public. They ensure that the region operates as efficiently and as cost-effectively as possible within the many laws that govern the Region's operations.

In the Alaska Region, 'Operations' is a deputy area with a Deputy Regional Forester guiding the unit. The program manages the following diverse functions:

Information Resources Management
Financial Management Office
Acquisition Management
Human Resources
Conflict Resolution
Civil Rights/Tribal Government

Information Resources Management

The information resources management staff manages the region's telecommunications and information technology infrastructure. Employees have access to computer technology, telephones, e-mail and the Internet, and radio support is provided to employees working in remote locations. Industry standard software, training, and support is available to meet the business needs of the region. Security measures protect the data and technology.

This staff works with the natural resource professionals to ensure consistent data standards exist, information is integrated, and applications are in place to manage the national forests.

The staff has oversight responsibilities for records and directives management. The efforts of the staff make it possible to share quality information with the agency and the public to support sound decision-making and promote the generation of new ideas.

Office of Financial Management

The fiscal and accounting services staff provides timely processing of vendor payments, employee payments, and collections of moneys due the Forest Service. They provide financial reports and analyses to regional management. Other responsibilities include:

Appropriations law and usage interpretations.
Claims for and against the government.
Financial management of fleet and computer equipment operations.
Internal and external auditing.

The Region also provided a valuable team member to the national-level work for the Timber Information Management Project (TIM). The Region participated in the Beta, initial and final end-to-end tests of the program.

The program is also responsible for preparing outyear budgets. The Region has made good progress in implementing the new Budget Formulation and Execution System (BFES). In addition to providing critical training to forest and leadership staff, the program also developed draft baseline allocations.

Acquisition Management

The procurement and property staff makes needed purchases for the region including establishing contracts for work such as buildings, roads, trails and environmental documentation. They establish leases for housing, office and

warehouse space, and land for log transfer facilities. They track accountable personal property such as computers, radios, and guns. Last year the program was responsible for purchasing over 25 million dollars of property and services. The program also is responsible for providing property management services to the Alaska Region, Forest Sciences Labs and Pacific Northwest Research units.

In the last two years the Region has established a grants and agreements service center in Ketchikan. Serving the entire Region, these specialists assist in writing and awarding grants and agreements that allow the Forest Service to work more easily with other government agencies and private organizations. In the previous year these agreements leveraged Forest Service funds by 2.1 million dollars and created numerous partnerships. The program has initiated over 25 memoranda of understandings with Alaska Native organizations.

Human Resources

The human resources staff ensures that qualified people are hired and retained by the agency. They make sure Forest Service employees receive training, get paid, and have a healthy working environment based on a sound safety program. Human Resources deals with both the positive—awards; and the negatives—adverse actions and discipline.

The Region has recently entered a precedent-setting partnership with the Occupational Safety and Health Agency to work together to promote employee safety.

Beginning in 2001, the Region will transition to a service center concept for human resources management. In the coming years, all personnel functions will be handled through this streamlined, region-wide service center.

Conflict Resolution

The Forest Service created the Early Intervention Program (EIP) in 1997 to provide a forum through which parties involved in workplace conflicts could resolve them with as few formal trappings as possible. The Alaska Region expanded this program to include Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) of conflicts with the public as well as mediation of workplace issues.

The EIP is a conflict management tool that provides all Forest Service employees a way to address conflicts and manage workplace disputes at the lowest possible level by resolving the underlying issues and preventing the recurrence of conflict. The ADR process provides an informal method of resolving conflicts with the public, including those related to proposed projects undergoing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and those related to special-use permit administration.

Civil Rights & Tribal Government Relations

The Civil Rights and Government Relations staff monitors and enforces compliance with the requirements of federal laws such as the Civil Rights, Age Discrimination and Americans with Disabilities acts. They also ensure compliance with U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations and Forest Service policies regarding Civil Rights.

The Alaska Region is committed to carrying this out in a manner that ensures all customers and all employees are treated fairly and equitably, and with dignity and respect. The Civil Rights and Government Relations staff is committed to ensuring that the Alaska Region of the Forest Service is a multi-cultural organization, that provides equal opportunity for all segments of society to participate in the agency's employment programs and practices, its goods and services, and its benefits.

Alaska Native Liaison

Native peoples throughout Alaska continue to make their homes and their livelihoods from the rich resources of the land and sea. Within the boundaries of the national forests, Tlingit, Haida, Tshimshian, Eyak and Eskimo practice their traditional lifeways. As a major land manager in southeast and southcentral Alaska, the Forest Service must maintain a close working relationship with the numerous Alaska Natives peoples.

Examples of the types of work accomplished through the program include assisting Native organizations and villages; serving as an advocate for Native peoples within the Forest Service; providing a Forest Service contact for Native subsistence and cultural resources; and assisting in Native education and employment.

State & Private Forestry

Raging wildland fires and swarming bark beetles know no administrative boundaries. Since the very beginning of the Forest Service, wise leaders have understood the need to provide assistance to all those involved in managing forest ecosystems.

The role of the Alaska Region, State & Private Forestry program is to provide natural resource related assistance to other landowners and managers. This mission is accomplished through providing a variety of cooperative forestry and rural community assistance, forest health and fire programs. State & Private Forestry administers four major programs:

Cooperative Forestry
Fire Management
Forest Health Protection
International Programs

Close coordination between these program staffs provide a firm knowledge base as well as financial and technical assistance for land managers to address forest management issues, concerns, and opportunities.

Cooperative Forestry

The Cooperative Forestry program of S&PF manages a wide range of services for communities and landowners throughout Alaska.

Over the last two decades, timber harvest in southeast Alaska has declined. As timber-dependent communities have begun to transition their economies, the Cooperative Forestry program of S&PF has been vital in offering advice, coordinating grants and supporting communities' efforts.

One way the program helps is by awarding mini-grants to Alaskan communities through matching funds to stimulate improvements in the economic or social well being of rural citizens.

The economic recovery program targets the acute problems associated with federal or private sector land management decisions and policies such as the reduction in timber cutting in southeast Alaska. About $250,000 has been made available through federal appropriations to organize, plan, and implement natural resource-based projects and new economic activities identified by local plans.

The Cooperative Forestry program also works with communities to support community forestry. In Alaska, the urban and community forestry program is administered through the Alaska Division of Forestry. Arbor Day programs, grants, and training such as the Community Tree Stewards are all a part of this program. S&PF also coordinates the conservation education program for the Forest Service. The program promotes the critical thinking skills that enable people to recognize the complexity of resource issues and make informed choices within social, political, scientific and economic realities.

Fire Management

You might not think of Alaska as a wildland fire "hotspot". However, each year hundreds of thousands of acres of Alaska's forests burn. Incidents such as the Millers Reach wildfire near Big Lake burned more than 400 structures in the mid-1990s.

In response to the catastrophic fires of the last decade, the Forest Service has launched the **National Fire Plan**. This wide-reaching strategy builds partnerships to address the growing wildland fire threat. State & Private Forestry has taken the lead to recruit and train wildland fire fighters, restore burned areas, provide community assistance and training, and reduce hazardous fuels in wildlands. In the coming year, the program will focus on wildland/urban interface threats in the Anchorage area and in creating two, five-person fire fighting crews located in Thorne Bay and Hoonah.

S&PF also provides funding through grants to help train, equip and organize volunteer fire departments. In many cases, this is the only funding these small departments receive. Excess federal personal property is also loaned to the state and local volunteer fire departments to ensure sufficient and economical rural community and wildland fire protection. About five million dollars in property such as airplanes, protective clothing, radios and pumps are on loan to the state and volunteer fire departments.

Forest Health Protection

The majority of Alaska's forests are mature and unmanaged which means the state has a forest resource that is highly susceptible to insect and disease attack. This has been especially evident in southcentral Alaska where more than 2.3 million acres of spruce forests have been infested with bark beetles during the last decade.

The Forest Health Protection program provides expertise to identify, monitor and address forest health and pest management issues in Alaska. This program provides nearly the full extent of forest insect, disease and forest health expertise that is available to Alaskan forest land managers. Two positions are shared with the Pacific Northwest Station to maintain a close working relationship with research. Through a cooperative agreement with Alaska Cooperative Extension, seven individuals ('Pest Scouts') are available to provide information and technical assistance to the public in six of Alaska's major communities.

Annually, statewide forest insect and disease conditions are monitored and documented through cooperative monitoring and reporting with the State of Alaska Division of Forestry. The program also provides treatment application leadership for forest protection and rehabilitation and coordinated research and assistance to develop and implement integrated pest management strategies.

International Forestry

In Alaska, S&PF coordinates International Programs. This program is the fourth 'arm' of the Forest Service and works with other nation's forestry programs. The International Programs branch is little known to those inside the United States but has been active for years in promoting assistance to other countries.

The great boreal forests do not stop at the U.S. border. Instead, after a relatively short distance across the Bering Sea, the forests continue into the broad expanses of eastern Russia. The Alaska Region maintains a close relationship with Russia to help manage this vast resource.

For example, the Forest Service has pitched in to help ensure the survival of the critically-endangered Siberian tiger. They have helped the Federal Forest Service of Russia to develop state-of-the-art greenhouses in two eastern territories. With loss of key tree species due to over logging and large forest fires, the planting of replacement forests is considered key to the tiger's survival.

The Forest Service has also trained fire fighting crews in fire behavior, hydraulics, and fire tactics to improve fire suppression performance and safety. The agency also provides assistance in forest planning and geographic information systems.

Research

The Pacific Northwest Research Station has led award-winning research in understanding the role of beavers in the Copper River Delta ecosystem.

How does timber harvesting influence diseases and insects in the forest? What are alternatives to clearcutting in southeast Alaska? How do beaver ponds support salmon? In Alaska, the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station pursues the answers to these and a myriad of other questions in its research and development programs.

Nationwide, Forest Service research employs about 500 scientists and hundreds of technical and support personnel. In their jobs they work to discover, develop and disseminate science-based ecological knowledge and technology.

The researchers and their collaborators annually publish findings in more than 2,200 scientific, technical and popular publications. Their work fills an essential role in protecting the health, productivity and bio-diversity of the nation's forests and grasslands.

Pacific Northwest Research Station

The Pacific Northwest Station is one of seven research facilities in the Forest Service. The station's headquarters is in Portland, Oregon, with eight laboratories in Alaska, Oregon and Washington. In Alaska, the labs are in Juneau and Anchorage. Another, in Fairbanks, has a limited research program through a cooperative agreement with the University of Alaska.

Forest Service appropriations include about $5.5 million for Forest Service research in Alaska. The funding enables world-class research to meet a national resource management situation of increasing complexity.

This complexity includes balancing society's needs with sustainable approaches to meet increasing demands for wood, other products, and values derived from public and private forest lands. Although current concerns center on federal lands, knowledge gained through the Pacific Northwest Station will benefit private and other landowners.

Unlimited Opportunities

Limited development of a vast land base coupled with potential resource development provides a unique opportunity for research to gain knowledge in protecting the resources of Alaska. The scientists seek to better understand the biological and physical science relationships and social and economic concerns.

The role of research is to ensure that sound scientific information about land management is made available to citizens, managers and policy makers.

As an example, in 1998 forest ecologists and researchers completed a paper on wind disturbance in the forests of southeast Alaska where windstorms create small and large clearings in the forests. The study suggested that some forests on wind-exposed southern slopes never reach an old growth stage. These wind disturbances create specific structural patterns during stages of a forest's growth.

This information, developed by research, is now being used by forest managers to design timber sales that will mimic these patterns caused by wind.

Research and Planning

The collaboration between research and management has been used to a significant degree in forest planning in Alaska. The Pacific Northwest Research Station worked closely with forest managers and planners to address high-priority information needs during the development of the revision for the *Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan*. The Pacific Northwest Research Station was an important vehicle for bringing science to bear on issues of importance to complete a scientifically credible, legally defensible, and resource sustainable forest plan.

This partnership continues as forest management is adapted to incorporate the best science. Among the many topics research continues to investigate for the Tongass National Forest, include:

Alternatives to clearcutting.
Goshawk habitat needs and use.
Social impacts of forest plan implementation.
Forest stand regeneration on wetland soils.

These, and other studies, will help decision makers adjust their activities on the ground or, if necessary, to make formal amendments to the forest plan.

Alaska Research Emphases

Anchorage

Ecosystem processes: addresses the long-term population trends and interactions of moose, bears and wolves to resolve questions about competition, hunting and predation.

Pacific resource inventory, monitoring and evaluation: conducts a multi-resource inventory of renewable natural resources on the forest lands of Alaska.

Managing natural disturbance to sustain forest health: develops approaches to reduce adverse impacts of the spruce bark beetle that is killing massive numbers of trees in southcentral Alaska.

Juneau

Aquatic land interactions: issues being addressed include slope stability and the effects of landslides and floods on forest streams and aquatic habitat; the role of large wood and trees in streams and effects of streams on riparian vegetation; the interaction between salmon production and logging; and habitat relations of riparian birds and mammals.

Resource management and productivity: silvicultural practices are being developed to reach a desired development of overstory and understory vegetation in coastal forests. The work includes examining impacts to fisheries, wildlife habitat, soils and stand structural development.

Fairbanks

Ecosystem processes: studies the climate, disturbance such as fire, and the vast area of discontinuous permafrost in the forests of interior Alaska.

Managing natural disturbances to sustain forest health: experiments are carried out in the boreal forest to understand the major changes caused by natural disturbance from fires and subtle changes in atmospheric conditions.

The Region's Special Places & Resources

Alaska's National Forests are among America's most spectacular treasures. The Alaska Region covers a land area the size of Indiana. Encompassed within their twenty-two million acres are vast, pristine wetlands, cathedral-like forests, stark, silent icefields, jewel-like islands, and bustling communities alive with independent residents. Yet, it is the interaction between the forest and the sea that best characterizes these public lands. The Tongass and Chugach National Forests contain over 15,000 miles of saltwater shoreline!

The following chapter highlights some of the outsanding resources and places that make the Alaska Region a public treasure.

Region-wide Wonders

Working Forests

Where does that fiber come from to produce the rayon in your clothes?; how about the silver in the shiny dime in your pocket?; or the wonder drug that cures breast cancer? In many instances these important resources come from Alaska's National Forests.

Visitors often imagine Alaska as pristine wilderness—largely untouched by human hands. Although this image is accurate for large areas of the State, it misses the fact that Alaska's National Forests have been, and continue to be, working forests that produce thousands of items we use in our daily lives. For the last one hundred years, people have lived and worked within the National Forests. In some instances, as people have moved on, the forest has reclaimed the land and erased their footprints. In Prince William Sound, it is difficult to find any evidence of the over one-hundred fox farms that operated there in the 1920s.

In other cases, clearcuts, roads, and structures are clear indications of ongoing uses of the land.

Today, throughout the Tongass and Chugach, people still lead resource-dependent lifestyles. People hunt and fish within the forest, they pan for placer gold in its streams, and they harvest timber for personal and commercial use.

Although southeast Alaska is in a state of transition as timber harvest levels decline, many communities still rely upon timber as their economic mainstay. Still other communities on the Tongass and the Chugach are primarily commercial fishing towns. Even the larger metropolitan areas such as Anchorage, Juneau, and Ketchikan rely upon the outstanding natural resources of coastal Alaska to lure the hundreds of thousands of visitors to their communities.

Alaska Marine Highway Interpretive Program

Take a voyage through your National Forest! During the summer, the ferries of the Alaska Marine Highway carry Forest Service interpreters. Since 1970 these shipboard guides have helped lead passengers on a voyage of discovery in the waters of southeast and southcentral Alaska. Interpreters present programs about wildlife, human history, native culture, geology and more.

For 30 years, the Alaska Region has partnered with the State of Alaska to provide interpretive services for ferry travelers.

Forest Service interpreters ride the ferries **Kennicott**, **Columbia**, **Malaspina**, **Matanuska**, and **Taku** through the waterways of the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska. In the Chugach National Forest *(Prince William Sound)* interpreters are on the **Bartlett** and **Tustumena** during the summer.

Alaska's Amazing Salmon

The streams and lakes in Alaska's national forests provide a key link in the production of major commercial, subsistence, and sport fisheries. Located along the fisheries-rich rim of the Gulf of Alaska, the 29,000 miles of streams and 189,000 acres of lakes on the Tongass and Chugach are important producers of fishery resources that are vital to the local and regional economies of the state. During the 1980s, Alaskan waters produced nearly 90 percent of the nation's salmon catch; waters associated with Alaska's national forests produced approximately 20 percent of the state's total salmon catch.

The seafood industry in Alaska is the state's largest basic employer, providing 33,000 direct, indirect, and induced year-round jobs. Salmon are responsible for about 40 percent of the total value of all seafood catch, and national forest waters are mainly associated with this segment of the industry. In addition to commercial fisheries, national forest waters annually produce one million pounds of salmon for subsistence users and 900,000 recreational fishing-use days for both anadromous and resident fish. Total economic value of these forest-related commercial, subsistence, and recreational fisheries is estimated at over $286 million.

Forest streams provide critical habitat for healthy populations of Pacific salmon.

Habitat protection is the highest priority for the fisheries program. To accomplish this, the Alaska Region employs approximately 40 fisheries professionals and technicians. Fisheries expertise is included on all major projects to ensure that fisheries habitat is protected and that adverse impacts are minimized.

Hiking Trails & Recreation Cabins

The National Forests in Alaska provide unique opportunities for a broad spectrum of outdoor experiences—from adventurous wilderness travel to peaceful scenery-viewing. Visitors also enjoy a variety of interpreted historic and prehistoric cultural sites.

In 1996, recreation use of the Chugach and Tongass National Forests totaled almost seven million recreation visitor-days. The majority of this use is related to viewing scenery and wildlife. Much of the activity is attributed to passengers on ferries, cruise ships, and charter boats, and to those traveling by vehicle on the road system of the Chugach National Forest. In Alaska, the Forest Service provides and maintains about 962 miles of road at passenger car standards. Another 1,220 miles are maintained for high clearance vehicles. These highways and roads lead visitors through some of the most scenic public land in the United States.

The Forest Service maintains a system of more than 190 remote cabins and 25 shelters for public and emergency use. Tucked in quiet saltwater bays, or along popular hiking trails, the cabins offer forest visitors a wide range of backcountry experiences. Reservations for these exceptional cabins are handled through the National Recreation Reservation Service. Rental fees vary, and range from $25 to $45 per night. The most popular cabins are available on a lottery basis.

Nearly 900 miles of hiking trails wind through Alaska's national forests. Leading to alpine meadows, across muskegs, or through quiet rain forests, these trails provide a range of hiking opportunities for visitors of all abilities.

The Alaska Region manages 27 campgrounds and 37 picnic grounds. Visitors also enjoy observing a wide diversity of Alaskan wildlife from the popular cabins and trails.

Forest Service recreation cabins vary from cozy A-frames to rustic log cabins to fully-accessible facilities.

Prince William Sound

Prince William Sound is located in the heart of the Chugach National Forest. It is over two million acres in size and encompasses over 3,000 miles of convoluted shoreline. The snow-capped Chugach Mountains provide a dramatic backdrop to this marine world of green forests and blue ice. Home to the massive Columbia Glacier, Prince William Sound has the highest concentration of tidewater glaciers *(glaciers that end in the sea)* in North America. The Sound is protected from raging North Pacific storms by the "big islands" of Hinchinbrook and Montague.

Prince William Sound contains over 3,000 miles of shoreine.

World-Class Ecosystems

Today, the Sound is treasured for its spectacular scenery and natural values. The western half of the Sound is managed as a 'Wilderness Study Area'; while the eastern half of the Sound is a mix of private and public lands. The Sound also supports a valuable salmon fishery. Pink, chum, sockeye and coho salmon are harvested throughout the summer.

In March, 1989 the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill propelled Prince William Sound to national prominence. Dumping eleven million gallons of crude oil into the the Sound, the spill was the worst in North American history. Images of heavily oiled shorelines, dead and dying wildlife, and the thousands of workers left an indelible mark on America's environmental consciousness. The spill eventually affected the western and southern part of the Sound while missing the northern and eastern areas. Since 1989 an army of researchers has been at work to understand the immediate and long-term effects of the spill. Although visitors to the Sound see little evidence of the spill, oil from the Exxon Valdez persists in the environment. Researchers in general have been amazed at the resiliency of the Sound—many areas and species appear to have recovered. However, the long-term effects of the oil spill will not be known for generations.

In 2000, the Whittier Access Road was completed, connecting the gateway community of Whittier with the highway system. With improved access, recreational use in western Prince William Sound is expected to increase. The Chugach National Forest is actively engaged in developing carrying capacity studies for the Sound and in planning for the increased use.

Spruce Bark Beetles on the Kenai Peninsula

Since 1990, the spruce forests of southcentral Alaska have been dramatically affected by the spruce bark beetle. In 1996 active statewide infestation peaked at 1.1 million acres. The result is substantial spruce forest mortality on over 4 million acres of mixed ownership forestland, with 1.2 million of those acres on the Kenai Peninsula.

Spruce bark beetles have impacted over one million acres of forest in ALaska.

In 1998 Congress directed the Forest Service to "establish, in cooperation with the Kenai and other affected boroughs, a multiparty task force to prepare an action plan to manage spruce bark beetle infestations in Alaska and rehabilitate the infested areas."

Since that time, State & Private Forestry has taken the lead in coordinating a wide range of programs to deal with the bark beetle impacts. Five months of meetings and work sessions produced a list of over 50 long- and short-term projects.

Focused on reducing wildfire risk and increasing public safety, these projects range from removal of hazardous trees in developed recreation sites, to removal of fuel loading conditions, to reforestation efforts, to public education. The new National Fire Plan will add additional resources and guidance for this collaborative effort.

The Copper River Delta

Nestled between Prince William Sound to the west and the Bering Glacier to the east, the Copper River Delta is the largest continuous wetland on the Pacific Coast of North America.

Much of this incomparable wetland ecosystem is public land, managed by the Chugach National Forest. Recognizing the significance of the Copper River Delta to the fish and wildlife resources of Alaska, in 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) stipulated that the delta be managed primarily for the *"conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats."* Throughout the National Forest System, there is only one other area with a similar Congressional mandate.

This productive coastal wetland supports a rich and varied array of fish, wildlife, and human uses. Brown bears stalk the tidal marshes where trumpeter swans nest, coho salmon spawn in groundwater-fed streams, and mountain goats scale the rugged peaks. Although seemingly remote, the delta is a cosmopolitan highway for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl traveling from wintering grounds as far south as Peru, South America.

In 1990, the Copper River Delta was designated as a Hemispheric Site in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

The richness of the bird populations makes the delta a focal point for the Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival. The festival, held each spring during the height of the shorebird migration, is sponsored by the Cordova Chamber of Commerce, and is supported by the Cordova Ranger District and other members of the community.

Recreation access to the wild and remote delta is enhanced by roadside interpretive facilities, hiking trails, and canoe routes, as well as the newly completed Pete Isleib Memorial Boardwalk along Alaganik Slough.

During the recent revision of the Chugach Land Management Plan, the Copper River Delta gained national attention as environmental groups lobbied for Wilderness designation.

Nearly 7% of the world's population of trumpeter swans nests on the Copper River Delta

A Paradise for Fish & Wildlife

Russian River

Located on the very western boundary of the Chugach National Forest on the Kenai Peninsula, the Russian River supports the largest recreational sport fishery in the world! Each year more than sixty thousand anglers try their luck at landing an Alaskan red salmon. During the height of the runs in mid-June and mid-July, anglers crowd the banks of the Russian River, creating "combat-fishing" conditions. With anglers at times elbow to elbow, the fishing here is not for those seeking peace and solitude.

Many people also visit this area to hike to the Russian River Falls and weir—watching and photographing the sockeye and other species of salmon that 'leap' the falls on their upstream migration.

The Russian River Campground, with 83 camp sites, is the largest and one of the most popular of the sixteen campgrounds in the Chugach National Forest. However, in many respects, the anglers are loving the Russian River to death! The heavy foot traffic along the banks has caused the deterioration of protective vegetation, resulting in bank erosion, widening of the river channel, and degradation of fish habitat.

In 1997 the Chugach National Forest started a program to restore the river bank, improve and install river access sites, construct an environmentally friendly transportation system, and educate the public on riparian ecosystems. To accomplish these goals, the forest partners with the Youth Restoration Corps. The Corps is a non-profit hands-on education/work organization for youth working to restore riparian areas. This successful program has restored over thirty-six of the most seriously impacted sites and will continue in the future.

The Russian River supports the largest sockeye salmon sport fishery in the world.

Begich, Boggs Visitor Center in Portage Valley

Newly refurbished, the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center in Portage Valley is a world-class visitor facility.

Located fifty miles south of Anchorage off the Seward Highway, Portage Valley is Alaska's most visited recreation area. The valley is a showcase of glacial activity with a number of small, 'hanging' glaciers gracing the encircling mountains. At the end of the five mile Portage Valley road, Portage Lake and Portage glacier offer spectacular views. In the recent past, Portage Glacier calved enormous icebergs into the 650 foot deep lake. However, Portage Glacier continues to recede and the massive icebergs of the past are becoming uncommon.

Westours of Alaska, through a special use permit with the USDA Forest Service, operates a tour boat excursion on Portage Lake. On the one-hour voyage, visitors have the unique opportunity to experience a glacier—up close and personal. On each sailing, Forest Service interpreters provide information about glaciers and their effects on life and the landscape.

The Begich, Boggs Visitor Center, located on the northern shore of Portage Lake on a terminal moraine of Portage Glacier, has hosted seven million visitors since its opening in 1986. In summer of 2001, the visitor center reopened to the public after an extensive exhibit remodeling effort. The new, state-of-the-art exhibits help visitors explore the climate, geography, people and wildlife of the Chugach National Forest and Prince William Sound.

Visitors pass by a vibrant mural to experience and explore three distinct Chugach environments. Moving light patterns, the sounds of a rushing stream, and cool blasts of air excite the senses as visitors take a tour of the Chugach with video guides, explore life-size dioramas, or hop into a kayak for a paddle on Prince William Sound.

Interpretive programs at the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center, at other valley facilities, and on the Alaska Marine Highway ferries showcase the Chugach to a national and international audience.

A Visitor's Paradise

Seward Scenic Byway

The Seward Highway, between Anchorage and Seward, was recently designated an "All American Road"—the most prestigious designation in the National Scenic Byways system.

The spectacular Seward Highway was recently chosen as an "All American Road".

This popular route provides spectacular views of Turnagain Arm, Kenai Lake and snowcapped mountains. Travelers often see whales, moose, Dall sheep and bears.

About 75 miles of the highway's 127 miles pass through the Chugach National Forest and 25 miles pass through Chugach State Park. The highway is the major transportation route from Anchorage to the Kenai Peninsula.

Outdoor recreation is plentiful along the highway and includes gold panning, hunting, Nordic skiing, snowmobiling, dog mushing, wildlife viewing, back-country hiking, fishing, boating in streams and lakes, and camping in one state and nine national forest campgrounds.

Coastal Temperate Rain Forest

Alaska's National Forests harbor the largest remaining temperate rain forest in the world. The Tongass National Forest contains fourteen percent of the world's total acreage of these productive forests. The forests of Prince William Sound on the Chugach National Forest represent the northernmost extent of this rich, but uncommon, ecosystem.

Coastal temperate rain forests are found in wet, cool climates where the collision of marine air and coastal mountains causes large amounts of rainfall. Rainfall in southeast Alaska varies from four to twenty-five feet each year, depending on location.

Coastal temperate rain forests extend from Kodiak Island along the coast to California's "fogbelt" redwoods. Much of their remaining 75 to 100 million acres is found there and in Chile.

Ecologists use four features to distinguish coastal rain forests from other temperate forest types: proximity to oceans, the presence of coastal mountains, cooler summer temperatures, and higher rainfall levels with significant precipitation occurring in all seasons. These unique conditions lead to vital links between the marine and terrestrial environments. The rain forest ecosystem does not end at the high tide line—rather, nutrients are cycled throughout the system.

The Tongass National Forest contains the largest temperate rain forest in the Northern Hemisphere.

Coastal temperate rain forests foster a disproportionate share of the world's biological production. They accumulate and store more organic matter than any other forest type (including tropical rain forests)—as much as 500-2,000 metric tons of wood, foliage, leaf litter, moss, other living plants, and organic soil per hectare. Some individual trees in temperate rain forests have grown for two millennia and surpass fifteen feet in diameter. The adjacent waters are also productive. The upwelling zones and cold-water currents that bathe the edges of coastal temperate rain forests account for a substantial share of the biological production of the oceans. The productivity of these marine ecosystems is enhanced by the nutrients and organic debris washed out of the coastal watersheds.

Alaska's temperate rain forests are comprised of thick stands of Sitka spruce, yellow-cedar, redcedar, and western and mountain hemlock.

World-Class Ecosystems

Hubbard Glacier & Russell Fjord

More than 70 miles long, the Hubbard Glacier near Yakutat has been advancing since 1900. During the summer of 1986, Hubbard Glacier advanced across the mouth of Russell Fjord and sealed it off to create the world's largest glacier-formed lake. As word spread, glaciologists and groups from all over the world converged on Yakutat to try and rescue the marine mammals trapped by the ice dam. As the weather warmed and the streams filled with snow melt, the water behind the glacier-dam eventually reached almost 90 feet higher than the level of Disenchantment Bay on the other side.The ice dam abruptly broke on October 8, 1986 and the lake disappeared.

Glaciologists believe that Hubbard Glacier will again advance. The most likely scenario is that it will firmly block off the northern end of Russell Fjord, which will in turn create Russell Lake. The lake will then rise to the Old Situk Creek outlet at the southern end of the fjord and a major river will be reborn.

The glaciers and icefields surrounding Yakutat are the largest in North America.

This new river will most certainly affect the livelihood of the people of Yakutat. The fish, wildlife, archeological and other cultural resources may be affected along with the area's transportation facilities, ground water and vegetation.

Prince of Wales Island Karst Cave System

Resource managers are still inventorying and mapping the extensive caves of Prince of Wales Island.

World-Class Ecosystems

Located in the southern tip of the Alaska Panhandle, Prince of Wales Island is the third largest island in the United States. Much of the northern portion of the island is underlain by limestone rock formations. In fact, nearly eight percent of the Tongass National Forest is characterized by this geology. Composed of calcium carbonate, the bedrock is extremely soluble in water. In the wet, rain forest climate of southeast Alaska, the bedrock is transformed into a series of sinkholes, disappearing streams, and caves. This type of topography is called karst .

The karst topography of northern Prince of Wales Island has produced some of the most remarkable cave systems in the world. It holds the distinction of having the longest cave *(over 2 miles of mapped passage)* in Alaska and several of the deepest vertical pits in the Americas.

Over the last decade, Prince of Wales Island caves have been the focus of an international, multi-disciplinary effort to study the Ice Age and post-Ice Age environment and earliest occupation of the island. Research includes archaeological and paleontological excavation as well as studies of fossil pollen and glacial history.

On Your Knees Cave is one of 500 inventoried caves on Prince of Wales and its outlying westerly islands. In addition to a human skeleton discovered at the cave, black bear bones dating back to over 41,000 years were excavated at the cave. The age of the bones reveals that an ecological niche that supported bears during the last Ice Age could have also supported humans as long as 14,000 to 15,000 years ago—these data support changing ideas of how humans may have entered the Americas. Since the turn of the century, it was thought that the Bering Land Bridge had provided the only possible migration corridor for animals and humans throughout the last Ice Age. Now, based upon P.O.W. research, a coastal migration theory must also be considered.

Misty Fiords National Monument

Untamed Wilderness & National Monuments

Spectacular glacially-carved fiords and inlets characterize Misty Fiord National Monument.

Misty Fiords is an unspoiled coastal ecosystem containing extraordinary geological features of scientific importance. These features include fiords, steep sea cliffs, active glaciers, natural channels and a lava flow. The fiords are contained within Misty Fiords National Monument east of Ketchikan at the southern end of the Alaska panhandle.

The wildlife in the area is representative of nearly every ecosystem in southeast Alaska. The purpose of the monument is to protect wilderness values and objects of ecological, cultural, geological, historical, prehistorical and scientific interests. Because of the dramatic and scenic fiords, the Rudyerd Bay area of monument has become a major tourist attraction.

This national monument was established on December 1, 1978, by Presidential Proclamation. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 reaffirmed the national monument classification and designated all but 145,724 acres as wilderness.

Tracy Arm – Fords Terror Wilderness

The Forest Service established Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Scenic Area in 1960. With the enactment of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980, the area became the Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness.

Encompassing 653,179 acres, Tracy Arm-Fords Terror is the third largest designated wilderness in the Tongass National Forest.

John Muir visited in 1879 and described it as *"shut in by sublime Yosemite cliffs, nobly sculptured, and adorned with waterfalls and fringes of trees, bushes and patches of flowers."* Today, Tracy Arm-Fords Terror is the same scenic land that John Muir saw more than 100 years ago.

Tracy Arm Fiord wends its way for 25 miles through southeast Alaska's coastal range and empties into Holkham Bay adjacent to Stephen's Passage. Along most of its length, the fiord is less than a mile wide, and sheer cliffs reach 2,000 feet or more above the icy waters. The maximum charted depth is 1,242 feet. Two tidewater glaciers are found at the head of the arm, often surrounded with hundreds of seals in the spring.

Traveling south of Holkham Bay on the Endicott Arm Fiord, visitors reach Dawes Glacier. This tidewater glacier has been receding since its location was first recorded in the 1800s. Fords Terror, a side fiord of Endicott Arm, was named for Harry L. Ford in 1889 when he was trapped by surging tides at the the entrance into this fiord. These tidewater surges, with standing five foot waves, have reached fifteen knots.

The tidal flats in Tracy Arm-Fords Terror are frequented by many species of waterfowl. In spring and summer, black and brown bears are commonly spotted. Wolves and wolverines inhabit timbered areas, as do mink, weasels, and river otters.

Dawes Glacier in Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness has been steadily receding since the 1800s.

Untamed Wilderness & National Monuments

Admiralty Island National Monument – Kootznoowoo Wilderness

Located just west of Juneau, Admiralty Island is internationally known for its brown (grizzly) bears and bald eagles. Each year, visitors go to Pack Creek to watch bears in their natural habitat. The site is co-managed with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and is managed as a Recreation Fee Demonstration area. Pack Creek permits, issued by Admiralty National Monument in Juneau regulate the number and timing of visits.

Admiralty is one of two national monuments managed by the Forest Service in Alaska. It consists of about 1 million acres and encompasses nearly all of the island except the northernmost tip, Mansfield Peninsula. The Kootznoowoo Wilderness, within the monument, is the most visited of any Tongass wilderness; its use has increased dramatically in recent years.

Public recreation facilities include 15 public cabins, 10 recreation shelters and the Pack Creek Bear Observation Tower. The Forest Service maintains 16 trails for a total of about 28 miles of trail—most are part of the portage system of the Cross Island Canoe Route, which was originally constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

While much of the monument is designated wilderness, the monument has a very active land use program, with about 40 private land uses and 23 outfitter guides under permit. The monument also manages the Kennecott Greens Creek Mine, the largest silver producer in North America, and a large and active lands acquisition program.

Often called the "fortress of the bears", Admiralty Island National Monument has the highest concentration of brown bears in North America.

Stikine – LeConte Wilderness

The Stikine River Delta is a critical staging area for migrating birds.

Among the wildernesses of the Tongass National Forest, the Stikine-LeConte is unique because it crosses the Alaskan panhandle and goes to the British Columbia border along the navigable waters of the Stikine River.

This feature has made the Stikine River historically important to both countries. The value of maintaining the river's navigability is recognized through long-standing international treaties.

The Stikine River delta is a major stopover on the migration route of hundreds of thousands of shorebirds traveling the Pacific Flyway. A run of eulachon *(sea-run smelt)* draws a large concentration of eagles, Steller's sea lions and other wildlife to the lower reaches of the river each spring.

The Stikine River valley, north of Wrangell, is easily reached by small boat. However, the river's delta requires local knowledge for navigation.

The rest of the 448,926-acre wilderness is seen primarily by flying in small planes. Occasionally, goat hunters or rock and ice climbers venture beyond the main river valley and go to the alpine environment of Horn Cliffs and the LeConte icefield.

LeConte Glacier, the southernmost tidewater glacier on the continent, calves into a narrow fiord. The spectacular scenery, numerous seals and fantastic shapes and colors of the icebergs draw visitors to the LeConte Bay portion of the wilderness by boat or plane.

The area is rich in wildlife and fisheries. Fishing, hunting, subsistence and sight-seeing are the primary uses. The river supports commercial traffic such as freight hauling into British Columbia. Tidal areas, the main river channel, and other waterways are within the jurisdiction of Alaska.

Facilities along the Stikine River include twelve Forest Service recreation cabins which all receive moderate to heavy seasonal use. Also, the Forest Service has developed one of the river valley's hot springs and has built enclosed bathhouse facilities.

A Paradise for Fish & Wildlife

Bear Viewing Opportunities on the Tongass

Alaska is the only place in the United States that has all three species of North American bears. Although visitors won't be treated to seeing a polar bear in Alaska's national forests, there are many outstanding opportunities to view both brown (grizzly) and black bears.

Throughout the Tongass National Forest, the agency has developed special recreation facilities that provide visitors the opportunity to view bears. Spawning salmon draw large concentrations of bears to special areas. At these sites, the Forest Service has constructed viewing platforms, boardwalks, and viewing towers. During the viewing season, the sites are staffed by knowledgeable forest guides. The goal at these sites is to provide for both the safety of visitors AND the bears!

Anan Creek is one of Alaska's best places to view black bears.

Located in Admiralty National Monument, west of Juneau, Pack Creek (Stan Price State Wildlife Refuge) offers visitors an exceptional opportunity to view brown bears. Visitation is limited and bear watchers must first obtain a viewing permit from the Juneau Ranger District.

Anan Creek Wildlife Observatory, southeast of Wrangell, offers a premier opportunity to view black and brown bears in their native habitat. As the salmon return each year, Anan's estuary becomes a stunning setting for eagles, seals and brown bears.

Spawning chum salmon draw brown and black bears to the Hyder Bear Viewing Observatory. The only area located on the road system, the small town of Hyder is in the very southern tip of the Tongass NF. A new observatory will be completed in the near future.

Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area

The Mendenhall Glacier is born in the Juneau Ice Field. It slowly flows down into the Mendenhall Valley, home to the majority of Juneau's residents. The Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center and surrounding area have long been a scenic attraction for residents and visitors of Alaska's capital city. Its location affords visitors a unique opportunity to view a glacier at close range and to study the effects of glaciation on the landscape.

The center was built in 1962 as the first visitor center in the National Forest System. The original structure was primarily a large observatory where people could get out of the rain and look at the glacier. It was designed to accommodate 23,000 people a year. Over the years, a few exhibits were added. Thirty-five years after it first opened, the center was hosting over 250,000 people a year. Between 1997 and 1999 the building was renovated and enlarged. Workers dug a tunnel into the rock under the visitors center and an elevator shaft to make the center accessible to everyone. A new theater, lobby area and exhibits were constructed. Trail reconstruction improved hiking access to the surrounding area. The newly enlarged facility was reopened and dedicated in 1999.

Opened in 1962 as the Forest Service's first visitor center, the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center is now the third most-visited attraction in Alaska.

Today, Mendenhall Glacier is the third most visited attraction in Alaska. The recreation area is operated as a fee demo site with the majority of collected funds being returned to operate the program.

The Alaska Natural History Association is a partner in interpretive sales and services, offering a range of products that includes publications and videos on glaciation and natural resources.

The Forest Service hosts the popular Fireside Series of lectures at the center on Friday evenings in winter.

A Visitor's Paradise

Southeast Alaska Discovery Center

Located in the bustling waterfront of downtown Ketchikan, the impressive Southeast Alaska Discovery Center serves as a gateway to the natural and cultural wonders of the Alaska Panhandle. Each year, over 700,000 cruiseship visitors sail the calm waters of Alaska's inland passage and experience the Tongass National Forest.

The center was opened in 1995. It is one of four Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (APLICs), that were mandated by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. These visitor centers, managed under the guidance of eight state and federal agencies, provide information about recreation opportunities on all of Alaska's public lands. The Forest Service is the lead agency for the Discovery Center, while other agencies lead the operation of the other APLICs.

As visitors enter the spacious lobby, they are surrounded by authentic totem poles, natural wood, and scenes of Alaska. Located here is the information desk, center store, trip planning room, and the entrance to the exhibits. A life size diorama of the temperate rain forest ecosystem is a highlight of the center. Fascinating displays on the cultural history of southeast Alaska and its dependence on resources round out the center. Visitors also can enjoy the award-winning twelve projector slide program in the centers comfortable auditorium.

The Discovery Center is operated as a fee demo site and a nominal entrance fee is charged.

The Southeast Alaska Discovery Center welcomes and orients visitors to the unparalleled natural and cultural history of the region. Photo by USDA FS - S. Skrien

Amazing Alaska

Name
The word Alaska comes from the Aleut term *'Alyeska'* which means *'The Great Land'*.

Land Area
Alaska is the largest state in the union. At 586,412 square miles it is one-fifth the size of the 'Lower 48.'

Weather
The greatest annual precipitation in Alaska occurred in MacLeod Harbor in Prince William Sound where 332.29 inches were recorded. Record snowfalls were recorded north of Valdez at 974.5 inches. The coldest recorded temperature ever recorded in Alaska was minus 80 at Prospect Creek.

State Population
Alaska's population is 626,932 (*2000 Census*). Nearly half of the state's residents live in Anchorage. Alaska has almost one square mile for each person in the state. By comparison, New York has .003 square miles per person.

Mountains
Of the 20 highest peaks in the United States, 17 are in Alaska. Mt. McKinley, the highest peak in North America, is 20,320 ft. above sea level. 'Denali', the Indian name for the peak, means *'The Great One'*.

Caves
At over 2 miles in mapped length, El Capitan Cave on Prince of Wales Island is the longest cave in North America.

Islands
Kodiak and Prince of Wales Island in Alaska are the largest and third largest islands in the United States.

Water Bodies
The Yukon River, almost 2,000 miles long, is the third longest river in the U.S. There are more than 3,00 rivers in Alaska and over 3 million lakes. The largest, Lake Iliamna, encompasses over 1,000 square miles.

Glaciers
Alaska has an estimated 100,000 glaciers, covering about five percent of the state. There are more active glaciers and ice fields in Alaska than in the rest of the inhabitated world. The largest glacier is the Bering Glacier Comp.lex at 2,250 square miles (approximately the size of Delaware).

Compass Points
Alaska boasts the northernmost (Point Barrow), the easternmost (Semisopochnoi Island in the Aleutians), and the westernmost (St. Lawrence Island) points in the United States.

Coastline
Alaska has 6,640 miles of mainland coastline. Including islands, it has 33,904 miles of coastline.

Volcanoes
There are more than 70 potentially active volcanoes in Alaska. Several have erupted in recent times.

Earthquakes
On March 27, 1964, North America's strongest recorded earthquake, with a magnitude of 9.2, rocked Alaska. Each year Alaska has approximately 5,000 earthquakes, including 1,000 that measure above 3.5 on the Richter scale. Of the ten strongest earthquakes ever recorded in the world, three have occurred in Alaska.

Amazing Birds
The largest known concentration of bald eagles in the world spend time each fall and winter along the Chilkat River in southeast Alaska. More than 3,500 bald eagles gather to feed on salmon. Literally billions of birds of more than 440 different species occur in Alaska.

Commercial Fishing
Alaska leads the nation in quantity of commercial seafood landings. In 1991, Alaska's catch was over four times greater than the amount landed by fisheman in Louisiana, the second ranking state. Alaska accounts for approximately 93 percent of the United States commercial landings of salmon.

National Forests
The nation's two largest national forest, the Tongass and the Chugach, are located in Alaska.

State Motto -	State Tree	State Bird	State Flower	State Insect
"North to the Future"	Sitka Spruce	Willow Ptarmigan	Wild Forget-me-Not	Five-spotted Dragonfly