

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 16, 2009

Mr. Denny Bschor
Regional Forester
Alaska Region, USFS
PO Box 21628
Juneau, AK 99802-1628

Dear Mr. Bschor,

We write you with a heightened sense of urgency to urge you to reject the appeals filed on the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Logjam timber sale. We trust that you recognize the significance of your decision and the consequences it holds.

As you are surely aware, a failure to approve the Logjam sale will mean the end for the last remaining sawmill on Prince of Wales Island and the jobs of the dozens of workers it employs, along with many of the jobs of those working in the region's support industries. The Southeast Alaska timber industry is a shadow of its former self, and a failure to approve the Logjam sale could constitute the final nail in its coffin.

In 1980, through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Congress directed the Secretary of Agriculture to provide up to \$40 million to support a timber sale program in the Tongass National Forest and to provide 450 million board feet of timber for sale annually. However, the current Tongass Land Management Plan calls for sales of only 100 million board feet per year, and even this reduced amount of timber has never come to harvest. Today, we are fighting over a mere 73 million board feet and 27 miles of new road. There's no other way to say it—the federal government has not kept its promise to Southeast Alaska. In recent years, the timber offered for harvest has been a trickle while the need demands a waterfall.


The Conservation Alternative (CA) authored by one group of appellants is a pink slip for the remaining industry cloaked in compromise. Quite simply, the CA would cut the allowed harvest for the sale by more than half, which fails to provide the supply the industry needs, and would merely delay their inevitable collapse by one year. The Forest Service has no other viable projects nearing completion and any small projects that do get completed in the interim are likely to be appealed as well. Re-preparing the remaining timber for sale, would simply take too long—time the remaining mill does not have. Obviously, it is unsustainable to offer one-year sales that take three years to prepare, which is what the CA would cause.

In Southeast Alaska sawmills must maintain roughly three-years of timber under contract to remain sustainable and operate economically. The Viking sawmill has less than one year's supply of timber under contract. If the ROD is cut in half, then one year from now, they will again have less than one year of timber under contract.

There are no timber sale projects available to substitute for the Logjam timber sale. The Logjam project took three years to complete and, currently has sufficient volume for about two years of operation for the Klawock mill. Despite our best efforts, the Forest Service in Alaska does not have sufficient funding to maintain three NEPA teams for each sawmill. In order to avoid this dilemma, future timber sale projects must be made larger, not smaller.

We remain optimistic that you will make the correct decision and choose the jobs of Southeast Alaskans over these frivolous appeals and the dishonest tactics of delay that we have witnessed time and time again in the Tongass. We are encouraged by Tongass Forest Supervisor, Forrest Cole's reaffirmation of the ROD and implore you to come to a similar conclusion.

Sincerely,



Congressman Don Young
U.S. House of Representatives



Senator Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate