

# FAQs

## **Q. Why was the amendment done?**

A. The Amendment is in response to the 5-Year Review of the Plan completed in early 2005, which recommended several updates, and a 2005 Ninth Circuit Court decision.

## **Q. What did the Ninth Circuit Court find wrong with the previous forest plan in August 2005?**

A. The court found the Forest Service had erroneously nearly doubled the market demand for timber from the Tongass that was projected by Forest Service economists. The court also found that this error influenced the selection of Alternative 11 in the 1997 ROD. The court found inadequacies in the 1997 EIS, including the following:

- The EIS did not provide decision makers and the public with an accurate assessment of information relevant to evaluate the Tongass Plan; had the accurate market demand forecast and related potential employment and earnings information been used, an alternative may have been selected with less environmental impact and in less environmentally sensitive areas.
- The Forest Service had not considered alternatives that set the allowable sale quantity (the maximum amount of timber allowed to be cut) equal to the correct demand scenarios.
- Each of the alternatives considered allocated some currently roadless areas to the land use designations (LUDs) that allow development; the EIS omitted an alternative that allocated less undeveloped land to the development LUDs.
- The EIS did not fully consider cumulative effects of disproportionate high-volume logging on non-federal land because the EIS did not include: (1) a catalog of past projects; (2) a discussion of how those projects (and differences between the projects) have harmed the environment; (3) a discussion of the connection between individual non-federal high-volume harvests and the prior environmental harm from those harvests; and (4) an assessment of the potential impacts of reasonably foreseeable continued “highgrading” in the future.
- A cumulative effects analysis in a programmatic EIS is necessary for the Forest Service and the public to make a rational evaluation of the proposed action balancing the competing goals of timber harvest, environmental preservation, and recreational use in the Tongass.

## **Q. Given the mandate from the Court, what was the Forest Service goal for the Amendment?**

A. The overall goal has always been to ensure the Tongass National Forest continues to be managed in a sustainable, multiple use manner. Multiple use describes the complicated task of balancing the competing uses for land, including outdoor recreation, timber, watershed, wildlife, fish, wilderness and subsistence. In addition, the goal of a sustained

yield requires the controlled use of natural resources to ensure a high level of valuable uses in the future. This amendment meets all of these requirements.

**Q. What is the record of decision?**

A. The amended Forest Plan, based on Alternative 6, with modifications outlined in the ROD, is approved. The amendment makes changes to four of the six components of the Forest Plan that are required by law and regulations governing forest planning. In addition to the required components, an adaptive management strategy for timber sales is approved. This new strategy is an additional step in implementing adaptive management and correcting the deficiencies identified by the Ninth Circuit Court. The forest supervisor has been directed to strengthen cooperative efforts with the State of Alaska on implementation and monitoring, including improving timber sale economics under the existing MOU.

**Q. What are some of the changes occurring as a result of this amendment?**

- A. Changes occurring as a result of this amendment include:
1. One new goal is to maintain viable plant communities and populations and a mixture of habitats capable of supporting the full range of naturally occurring flora.
  2. A goal to consult with Tribes to protect and maintain sacred sites across the forest has been added.
  3. A new objective was added to reduce the introduction, spread, and impact of invasive species.
  4. The goal for karst now focuses on maintaining natural processes and productivity while allowing other land uses as appropriate.
  5. Management prescriptions for the Wilderness and National Monument Wilderness LUDs have been combined to reduce duplication, while retaining separate goals and objectives for National Monument Wilderness.
  6. New standards and guidelines were developed to address invasive species and plants.
  7. Another new standard was added that requires old-growth forest structure (i.e., live trees, dead trees, and clumps of trees) to be retained after timber harvest in areas that have had considerable past harvest.

**Q. Are there other changes to LUDs?**

- A. The main changes from the 1997 Forest Plan in the land allocation to the various LUDs include:
1. Updated acreage figures for all LUDs as a result of refinements to the geographic information system and better inventory information regarding scenery.
  2. The addition of approximately 90,000 acres (includes approximately 50,000 acres added by previous amendments to the '97 Plan) to the network of small Old-Growth Habitat reserves. Some of these additional acres were previously allocated to development LUDs, others to non-development LUDs.

3. Expansion of Geologic Special Interest Areas to protect nearly 47,000 acres of newly identified karst lands that are most vulnerable to disturbance from development.
4. Reallocation of about 97,000 acres on the Juneau Icefield from Remote Recreation to Semi-remote Recreation, which would allow minor enclaves to be established above the snow accumulation zone.
5. Reallocation of about 43,000 acres on Chichagof Island at the head of Tenakee Inlet from Timber Production, Modified Landscape, and Old-Growth Habitat to Semi-remote Recreation to address the high sensitivity of this area to development and the low timber economics.
6. Reallocation of about 18,000 acres on Kupreanof Island east of Kake from Timber Production to Semi-remote Recreation to address public concerns and timber economics.
7. Reallocation of development LUDs near Bostwick Inlet on Gravina Island to Semi-remote Recreation in response to public concerns.
8. Allocations among the development LUDs were adjusted to reflect improved inventory data regarding scenery.
9. An expansion of the Minerals LUD overlay by approximately 80,000 acres (from 172,018 to 249,570 acres) to include portions of the Hyder area and areas on Prince of Wales Island associated with the Niblack, Ruby Tuesday, and Khayyam minerals prospects.

**Q. What is the allowable sale quantity under this record of decision?**

A. The allowable sale quantity is the upper limit on the amount of timber that may be offered for sale from suitable timber land, and that ASQ is remaining at 267 million board feet a year.

**Q. What does your adaptive management strategy do- how does it work?**

A. The strategy is being implemented in response to concerns that an overestimate of timber demand will lead to harvesting in areas perceived as more environmentally sensitive--such as higher value roadless areas--that would not have to be developed if the Plan were based on a lower estimate of timber demand.

Basically, it's a strategy that phases access to timber lands based on actual timber harvest. In Phase 1, timber sales will be restricted to roaded areas and low value roadless areas. If timber harvest levels reach 100 million board feet for two consecutive years, the Forest Service could begin planning timber projects on lands that include managed second-growth and moderate value roadless areas. The Forest Service could begin Phase 3 only if timber harvests reached 150 million board feet for two consecutive years. Phase 3 lands would include selections from the entire suitable land base.

**Q. How long will it take Southeast Alaska's timber companies to reach harvest levels of 100 million board feet a year?**

A. We don't know. The amended forest plan and adaptive management strategy don't guarantee an expansion of the timber industry; nor does the Plan prohibit development in all roadless areas. What they will do is provide a stable land base to provide timber to that industry within the approved ASQ while protecting perceived environmentally sensitive areas as much as possible for as long as possible.

Southeast mills have reached 100 million-board-foot per year harvest levels within the past 20 years, but it will take a more integrated industry than presently exists to reach that level again. My confidence in this strategy is further strengthened by the expected conversion to young-growth management over the next few planning cycles; and the increasing public interest in this conversion, which will ultimately reduce the need for old-growth timber resources and the associated need for development in roadless areas.