

# The Facts: Tongass National Forest

## —America's Rainforest—

On our continent's shimmering western edge, lies a mist-shrouded place of emerald islands, towering, ancient spruce, rugged mountains and fast-running rivers bursting with fish. It is America's Tongass National Forest located in southeast Alaska. Rising majestically from the deep, clear waters of southeast Alaska's Inside Passage, this is a land of huge bears grown fat on salmon, eagles soaring the endless skies, and 500-year-old trees standing silent sentry over a rich and verdant world.

It is a rare place where people can still travel over timeless glaciers, fish in pristine streams, or find solace at a remote cabin, immersed in the breath-taking beauty of wild Alaska. It is our National Forest System's crown jewel. Yet, despite its vast bounty and its value to America and the world, our Tongass has been severely impacted by past unsustainable old-growth logging practices within sensitive areas, risking essential salmon and wildlife habitat.

The Tongass National Forest is – at 17 million acres – by far our largest national forest and is one of the last coastal temperate rainforests left on our changing planet. Its value to us – and the world – flows from its uniqueness, its vast scale, and from the diversity of wildlife and traditional ways of life it supports.

- The Tongass' eastern edge is bordered by the highest coastal mountain range in the world.
- **Grizzly bears are estimated to number nearly → 7,000 in the Tongass.**
- As many as 10,000 bald eagles – the world's largest concentration – reside in the Tongass.
- About a million acres of Southeast Alaska's coastal rainforest old-growth trees have already fallen to clear-cut logging.
- As much as 200 inches of rain falls each year in the Tongass.
- The Tongass contains nearly 30 percent of the world's remaining old-growth, temperate rainforest.
- Eighteen federally-recognized tribes use the resources in the Tongass for traditional living and cultural uses.



Photo by Jason Soza



Photo by Erin McKittick

- Five species of Pacific salmon – Chinook, Coho, Sockeye, Pink and Chum – spawn in the streams and rivers of the Tongass.
- Sustainable salmon fisheries contribute more than \$600 million annually to local economies and represent nearly 11 percent of all employment.
- Commercial fishing in the Tongass contributes nearly \$1 billion dollars annually when combined with sport and personal use fishing.

← **The Tongass and Southeast Alaska attract approximately 1.2 million visitors every year.**

Alaska Wilderness League is committed to protecting this national treasure — ensuring that our Tongass remains a place of wild majesty. Working in Southeast Alaska with numerous stakeholders, including native groups, commercial and sport fishing interests, local business owners, loggers and conservationists, the League is leading the charge to keep America's Rainforest the ecological wonder it is today.

Alaska Wilderness League is working hard to ensure that future resource extraction from our Tongass does not destroy the forest's rich yet fragile ecosystem. If we hope to pass this unique place on to future generations, then we must prioritize protection and restoration of the region's fragile ecosystem.

The Tongass National Forest belongs to all Americans, and we need your help to conserve and restore this national treasure. We still have the chance to conserve our Tongass National Forest on an ecosystem scale for future generations.

With your help and your voice, we can achieve the strongest possible protections for our Tongass.



Photo by Joe McCabe