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**Statement by Steven Kline, Senior Government Affairs Representative,
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Forest Service Budget, Vision to Spark Jobs, Sustainability for Southeast Alaska Region

“We applaud Agriculture Secretary Vilsack’s vision for our national forests – we agree that prioritizing restoration of our forests and managing forest lands first and foremost to improve watershed health, while contributing to vibrant local economies are vital steps for the future of our national forests and forest-dependent communities.

We are pleased to see that the 2012 proposed budget for the US Forest Service reflects these priorities and we look forward to supporting the Forest Service to help advance their vision for the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska.

The Tongass National Forest contains over 3,500 salmon-filled streams and rivers and all five species of Pacific salmon – it is truly a “salmon forest,” and a powerful economic engine. This budget continues to implement a management regime that prioritizes restoration, realizes the inherent economic value of conservation, and highlights the need for a new, sustainable vision for the Tongass, one that works for the communities of southeast Alaska, and the resource itself. It is no longer enough to manage the forest for the trees – conservation for important fish and wildlife habitat, the promotion of forest-dependent jobs, and the vision to create sustainability in these rural communities are the answers to creating a forest for the 21st century.”

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