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### **U.S. Forest Service enters home stretch for amending Tongass National Forest management plan**

WASHINGTON – Today the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) released its [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) to amend the Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) for the Tongass National Forest. This is an important step towards transitioning Forest Service management away from industrial clear-cutting of old-growth and towards supporting the region’s sustainable industries that rely on a healthy forest. With the release of the statement, a 60-day objection filing period begins. This keeps the Forest Service on track to completing its final TLMP plan amendment by the end of 2016.

In November 2015, the Forest Service released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to revise the Tongass Management Plan. The draft largely incorporated the recommendations of the Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC), which is made up of local representatives including government, timber industry, Alaska Natives, conservationists and others. The TAC offered up a set of recommendations to the Forest Service with unanimous approval. More than 165,000 people commented on the plan, many of whom urged USFS to facilitate a faster end to large-scale old-growth logging.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Congressman Don Young (R-AK), however, are now aggressively working to push through separate bills that would block the transition plan. Allowing for such a delay would undermine the robust public process that has taken place in southeast Alaska during the past few years.

#### **Statement by Kristen Miller, Conservation Director at Alaska Wilderness League:**

“We are disappointed that today’s plan does not do more to rapidly end the unsustainable old growth logging practices of the past that threaten the intact ecosystems of the Tongass.

However, the Forest Service has made some important steps forward with this plan. We appreciate that the agency has recognized the importance of conservation in the Tongass by specifying places like high-value salmon watersheds, inventoried roadless areas, and other conservation lands where valuable resources exist as areas where logging should not be allowed to occur. The beauty and wildlife of the Tongass have made tourism and recreation a central piece of southeast Alaska’s economy, and the high-



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value watersheds represent some of the best salmon habitat in the Tongass and are critical to the region's booming fishing industry.

Southeast Alaska's economy has already transitioned away from logging, and the Forest Service is taking proactive steps to protect sustainable industries that will provide for people in the decades to come. The Forest Service is right to prioritize protecting the resources that sustain the region's communities and jobs.

Unfortunately, Alaska's representatives in Congress predictably continue to champion a narrow set of special interests instead of doing what's best for Southeast Alaskans. They continue to live in the past instead of doing what's best for the region's future. Delaying the transition away from old-growth logging will come at the expense of growing and sustainable industries; the abundant wild salmon, scenery and wildlife that are the backbone of the region's economy; and a locally-driven public process that has brought us to the doorstep of a new era for the Tongass."

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