



RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

March 20, 2026

Submitted electronically via: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=64039>

U.S. Forest Service
Tongass National Forest, USDA Forest Service
648 Mission St, Ste 110
Ketchikan, AK 99901



Re: Tongass National Forest Land Management Plan Revision

To Whom It May Concern:

The Resource Development Council for Alaska (RDC) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the revision of the Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP).

RDC is an Alaskan statewide, non-profit professional trade association founded in 1975. Our diverse membership is comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's fishing, tourism, forestry, mining, and oil and gas industries and includes Alaska Native corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC's purpose is to advocate on behalf of these industries and encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through the responsible development of our natural resources.

RDC supports a revised TLMP that ensures the Tongass fully delivers on its established multiple-use mandate and functions as a true working forest. The current 2016 TLMP establishes a multiple-use framework with defined land use designations and resource objectives; however, in practice, access constraints and land designations have limited the ability to realize balanced economic and resource outcomes across the forest.

RDC aligns with and supports the comments submitted by the Alaska Miners Association (AMA), which highlight the Tongass' significant and largely underexplored mineral potential. As currently structured, the Minerals Land Use Designation represents a very small portion of the forest and functions as a secondary consideration within other land use designations, which does not reflect the full mineral potential of the Tongass.

In particular, RDC emphasizes the following recommendations:



TOURISM



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MINING



FORESTRY



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- Expand the Minerals Land Use Designation (LUD) to include all lands not withdrawn from mineral entry, or eliminate the overlay approach altogether, so that mineral development is recognized as a viable use across U.S. Forest Service lands in the Tongass.
- Review all existing mineral withdrawals and rescind Public Land Orders where the original purpose for the withdrawal no longer applies.
- Remove recommendations within land use designations that call for withdrawal from mineral entry based on perceived conflicts with other uses.
- Do not pursue additional mineral withdrawals unless and until a full economic geologic assessment has been completed, recognizing that the Tongass remains significantly underexplored.
- Recognize that modern mining operations in Southeast Alaska have demonstrated the ability to coexist with other land uses, including fisheries, recreation, and tourism.

The revised TLMP should better align land use designations, access policies, and permitting frameworks with the plan's stated goals of supporting economic opportunity, resource development, and community sustainability. Responsible development of the Tongass' mineral resources can occur alongside strong environmental stewardship and continued support for fisheries, tourism, recreation, and subsistence uses that are vital to the region.

The revision of the TLMP presents an important opportunity to modernize the plan and ensure that its implementation reflects both the multiple-use mandate and the economic realities facing Southeast Alaska communities. A more balanced and predictable management framework will help unlock the Tongass' full potential while maintaining the values that make it unique.

RDC appreciates the opportunity to comment and stands ready to work with the Forest Service throughout this process.

Sincerely,

Connor Hajdukovich

Interim Executive Director

Resource Development Council for Alaska

Celebrating 50 Years of Responsible Resource Development in Alaska



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