

Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community

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Newsletter **Issue No. 2** **September 2016**

GSACC's mission: *"To defend and promote the biological integrity of Southeast Alaska's terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations."*

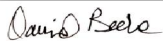
President's Thoughts

The Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community was founded in 2011 by a group of long-time dedicated, volunteer, citizen advocates for environmental integrity. We coalesced to counteract a profound, adverse paradigm shift in the principles, tactics, and effectiveness of regional representation on Southeast Alaska environmental issues.

We bring to bear a diverse array of skill sets and perspectives, including career professionals in resource management and biological research, and commercial fishermen from several gear groups focusing on a variety of species. We act on our personal ethics and out of urgent necessity.

Our planet and our region face a perfect storm of converging economic, environmental, and social threats. In the face of failed economic policy, this is no time to be greenwashing the fictions of "market based solutions" and accommodating business as usual, nor facilitating legislation promoting privatization and deregulation of public lands. Environmental justice matters.

So it is with great optimism we offer an alternative voice of reason in this newsletter. Much of the work reported herein was done jointly with a few allied organizations, with substantial involvement of Cascadia Wildlands, The Boat Company, Greenpeace, and the Center for Biological Diversity.



David Beebe, Board President



Southeast Alaska's fishing industry depends on old-growth forest habitat along salmon streams in the Tongass National Forest. (Bruce Baker photo)

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Federal Legislation by Don Hernandez

The Tongass National Forest is under assault. There are those who want to carve it up, remove protections for critical fish and wildlife habitat, and diminish the public's voice in how it is managed. These have long been the goals of pro-development, big timber interests, and now with the support of Alaska's Congressional delegation they hope to make it all happen.

Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, and Congressman Young have introduced a flurry of bills which would:

- Carve out 2 million acres of forest from the Tongass National Forest, to be put in State of Alaska ownership for rampant clearcutting (S.3203);
- Give Alaska Mental Health Trust 20,000 acres on Revillagigedo and Prince of Wales Island for clearcutting, in exchange for land AMHT cannot reasonably develop, and exclude the exchange from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements (S.3006 & 3203);
- Exclude the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule¹, opening pristine old-growth forest for logging (S.3203);
- Establish a pro-development Alaska Land Use Council to oversee federal lands in the state (S.3005);
- Give 115,000 acres of Tongass forest land to five new corporations the legislation would establish 23,000 acres each (S.3004 & 3273);
- In a good approach, *buy-out* Shee Atika Corporation's land holdings on Admiralty Island (S.3004 & 3273);
- Give Sealaska, Inc. 15,000 acres of forest land on Prince of Wales Island in exchange for the corporation's subsurface land under Shee Atika's above land (S.3004 & 3273);
- Allow Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI) to select its remaining 44,000 acres of land entitlement from nearly anywhere in the state, including from the Tongass, instead of from its own region or nearby areas (S.3004 & 3273);
- Reopen the already twice-extended period for Native Vietnam veterans to select 160-acre land allotments, potentially as much as 600,000 acres in total (S.3004 & 3273).

The table below gives a clear view of how those provisions are incorporated into the five Senate bills.

Table of Murkowski's 2016 bills

	S.3004	S.3005	S.3006	S.3203	S.3273
Gives 2 million Tongass acres to Ak State Forest				•	
Exchanges 20,000 Tongass acres to AMHT			•	•	
Excludes Tongass from Roadless Rule				•	
Estabs. Ak Land Use Council		•			
Gives 115,000 Tongass acres to 5 new corporations	•				•
Gives Sealaska 15,000 Tongass POW acres for Cube Cove subsurface	•				•
Buys-out Shee Atika lands at Cube Cove	•				•
Allows CIRI to pick 44,000 acres, incl in Tongass	•				•
Land Allotments to Native Vietnam Vets	•				•

What you can do! Needless to say, it would be game over for other users of vast areas of the Tongass if any of these bills were to be enacted by Congress. It is clear that the goal of the pro-development lobby is to resurrect the unsustainable boom times of the timber industry in Southeast Alaska, and that it has the full support of our Congressional delegation. Their strategy to accomplish this is to move as much acreage as possible into private and state ownership, to avoid effective public oversight. Their tactics are about to unfold in deal-making in the halls and back rooms. Knowing this, there is no other option than to adamantly oppose all of this legislation. Please send messages to each member of the delegation, especially Senator Murkowski, strongly opposing all of these bills.

Please also encourage your friends and relatives throughout the nation to do so as well – their senators and representatives are likely to be the only brakes on this juggernaut, and in particular likely budget riders that we must fear.

Regarding the AMHT land exchange: This is a dire situation, with AMHT threatening to put its existing forest parcels out to bid for logging, which would greatly damage community viewsheds and most likely cause landslides into residential areas. But the solution we must press for is not a land exchange, but a *buy-out* of AMHT lands – just as with the above Shee Atika lands. Press our delegation to modify S.3006 to do a buy-out instead of an exchange – GSACC urges that approach and passage of the bill in that form.

¹ The Roadless Rule is a 2001 federal regulation intended to protect the social and ecological values and characteristics of inventoried roadless areas from road construction and reconstruction and certain timber harvest activities (source: U.S. Forest Service).

Murkowski's Madness by Becky Knight

Ingrained in the psyche of many western legislators, including Alaska's Congressional delegation, is the notion that federal regulations are too strict. If they could be circumvented by conveying Tongass National Forest lands to private interests or the state, industry would gain unfettered access to Tongass resources.

This was exactly the intent during a federal oversight hearing last fall, when a representative of the State of Alaska testified in support of a two million-acre state forest carved from the Tongass. It was a significant initial step toward a large-scale land grab. The testimony was intentionally distorted to paint a rosy picture of forest management under state jurisdiction versus federal. Fortunately, a thorough critique was provided to Congress which disproved the accuracy of the representative's numerous assertions.

Predictably, Senator Murkowski, chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, recently introduced legislation loaded with a cornucopia of sweetheart resource deals. Five of these bills are detailed in the previous article, *Federal Legislation*. They include, for example, creation of an up to two million-acre state forest, transfer of 115,200 acres to form new Native corporations, and a currently, very controversial Mental Health Trust land exchange, all carved entirely from the Tongass.

These forest lands would be managed under the weak Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA). Unlike stronger federal regulations, under FRPA there is no consideration of cumulative impacts, especially troubling since there is no limit on the size of clearcuts. Moreover, there are no enforceable provisions for wildlife or its habitat, and less protection for fish streams than required on the national forest. Variances for logging within the stream buffers are routinely granted by the state under FRPA.

Notable provisions in the various bills explicitly exclude review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the cornerstone of public participation for federal actions and leaves open possible withdrawals from various Tongass conservation units like Old-Growth Reserves and Land Use Designation II (LUD II) areas, the latter which provide better habitat protection than LUD's III and IV.

HALL OF SHAME



Recent Sealaska logging on Cleveland Peninsula, mainland just north of Ketchikan, Oct. 5, 2015. Under defederalization of the Tongass, this would be the standard style of logging. (Becky Knight photo)

Lynn Canal Road - Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan by Bruce Baker

As of this writing, neither the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) nor Governor Bill Walker's decision on the proposed road between Juneau and the Katzechin River south of Skagway, Alaska has been announced. The Draft SEIS was completed in September 2014 and public comment on it ended that November. GSACC submitted a 19-page letter to the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) critiquing the Draft SEIS. Our opposition to an upland road has also complemented efforts of other regional conservation groups.

It has been reported to us that backers of an upland road have been leaning on the Governor to decide in their favor. Conservationists need to make known to the Governor their arguments in favor of continued and improved Alaska Marine Highway System ferry transportation between Juneau, Haines, and Skagway instead of building a road which would cross multiple avalanche paths and be enormously expensive to build and maintain.

This January, DOT&PF released a report, *The Economic Impacts of the Alaska Marine Highway System*, prepared by the McDowell Group. It found that the state run ferry system generates a return of more than \$2 to the state for every \$1 invested. "The ferry system provides a critical link for many communities," Governor Bill Walker said. "But I was surprised to learn just how widespread the economic impacts are, accounting for 1,700 Alaska jobs and more than \$100 million in wages and benefits." The report found Anchorage residents were the number two source of bookings, after Juneau. Some other key findings include:

- Two-thirds of AMHS users are Alaska residents.
- The state's general fund investment of \$117 million in 2014 resulted in a total return on investment of \$273 million.
- Over half of all summer ferry passengers visit Anchorage.
- AMHS nonresident summer passengers spend an average of \$1,300 per person while in Alaska.

- Non-resident summer passengers who enter or exit Alaska via AMHS spend an average of \$1,700, compared to \$941 average among all Alaska summer visitors.
- AMHS carried 319,000 passengers, 108,000 vehicles, and almost 4,000 container vans in 2014.



Two of the more than 40 avalanche paths that would make construction and maintenance of a road up Lynn Canal very costly.
(Bruce Baker photo)

GSACC is Pressing for a Virtuous Tongass Forest Plan by Larry Edwards

In late August, GSACC and its allied organizations submitted a formal objection to the Forest Service’s Draft Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) Amendment and accompanying final environmental impact statement. Our [objection document](#) is 213 pages, and 105,000 words. The agency intends, late this fall, to issue a decision finalizing the amendment. We thank all of you who commented on the Draft EIS in February.

At stake are the future of the region’s wildlife and the people who use the Tongass, and our ability to have a rational long-term economy. Along with many Southeast Alaska citizens, early in the planning process we called for an immediate end to old-growth logging on the Tongass National Forest, and for a “Tongass transition” that depends very little on logging during the next few decades. That is the only path to sustainability.

In 2010 the Forest Service’s top Alaska official announced a “rapid” transition out of old-growth logging, and to logging second growth. Now, over six years later, the transition is yet to begin, and we are confronted instead with a TLMP amendment that would continue to log the old-growth forest indefinitely. Four hundred fifty-million board feet of old growth would be cut over the next 15 years, part of up to 800 million board feet by century’s end. That’s in addition to the cumulative loss of forest land during past decades.

To make this so-called transition work the Forest Service plans to cut second growth as soon as it reaches a marginally economic size, even if it is in areas set aside for wildlife in the agency’s Tongass Conservation Strategy, such as riparian management areas, beach fringe and old-growth reserves. This would come mainly from low-elevation, high-productivity sites that were clearcut in the 1950’s-1970’s. This forecloses regrowth toward an old-growth condition, the needed priority.

Further, the Conservation Strategy, adopted in the 1997 TLMP, is inadequate to its purpose of protecting the viability of Tongass wildlife populations. Our February TLMP Amendment comments urged the agency to strengthen the strategy, but it refused to conduct a review. This issue is a big part of our September objection document, in addition to our other objections on misguided economics and climate change.

An entirely different kind of forest transition is needed, to a different kind of economy for the few small communities that are affected, not to just another kind of logging. Unfortunately, the process was rigged. USDA Secretary Vilsack dictated the kind of transition the Forest Service is pursuing, leaving no room to consider a better approach. The agency then hand-picked a Tongass Advisory Committee, including the three weakest “conservationists” it could possibly find, to provide the needed smoke screen.

We won’t give up, we aim to prevail, and our objection letter to the Forest Service is an important step.

¹ http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd517316.pdf

Big Thorne - Still Awaiting a Decision from the 9th Circuit Court by Larry Edwards
On February 3 in Seattle, Chris Winter (of Crag Law Center) represented GSACC and our co-plaintiffs in oral arguments before a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. At stake is whether the Big Thorne timber project can continue to destroy the ecological integrity of old-growth forest on Prince of Wales Island, or whether the project will be halted. Also at stake are ineffective Tongass Land Management Plan standards and guidelines that were supposed to protect habitat that wolves, deer, and hunters rely upon. Our lawsuit asks the court to vacate that part of the plan, to be replaced by better measures from the previous plan.

Over seven months later we still await the court’s decision. Such a wait is not unusual at the appellate level, but it is unfortunate. Having been denied a preliminary injunction earlier in the case, logging is on-going in the meantime.

The Forest Service signed the Big Thorne decision in June 2013, and we appealed administratively. The appeal decision required a “supplemental information report” on impacts to wolves, completed in August 2014. Timber was sold that month, and we sued immediately.

With its 150 million board feet of timber, over 6,000 acres of old-growth forest logging units, and 80 miles of road construction, the Big Thorne project is by far the largest Tongass timber project in over 20 years. Prince of Wales Island has suffered the brunt of Tongass logging for over 60 years, and the population of Alexander Archipelago wolves there has plummeted over the last decade to only an estimated 50-159 individuals, and only 25 percent females.

We learned through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) information that Big Thorne logging this spring forced an alpha wolf pair to move their four pups away from their natal den. This highlights the ineffectiveness of the current management plan, which supposedly was designed to prevent this from occurring.



Sitka black-tail deer and their wolf predators require old-growth forest habitat. (David Beebe photo)

GSACC Actions on Tongass and State of Alaska Timber Sales and Plans

by Larry Edwards

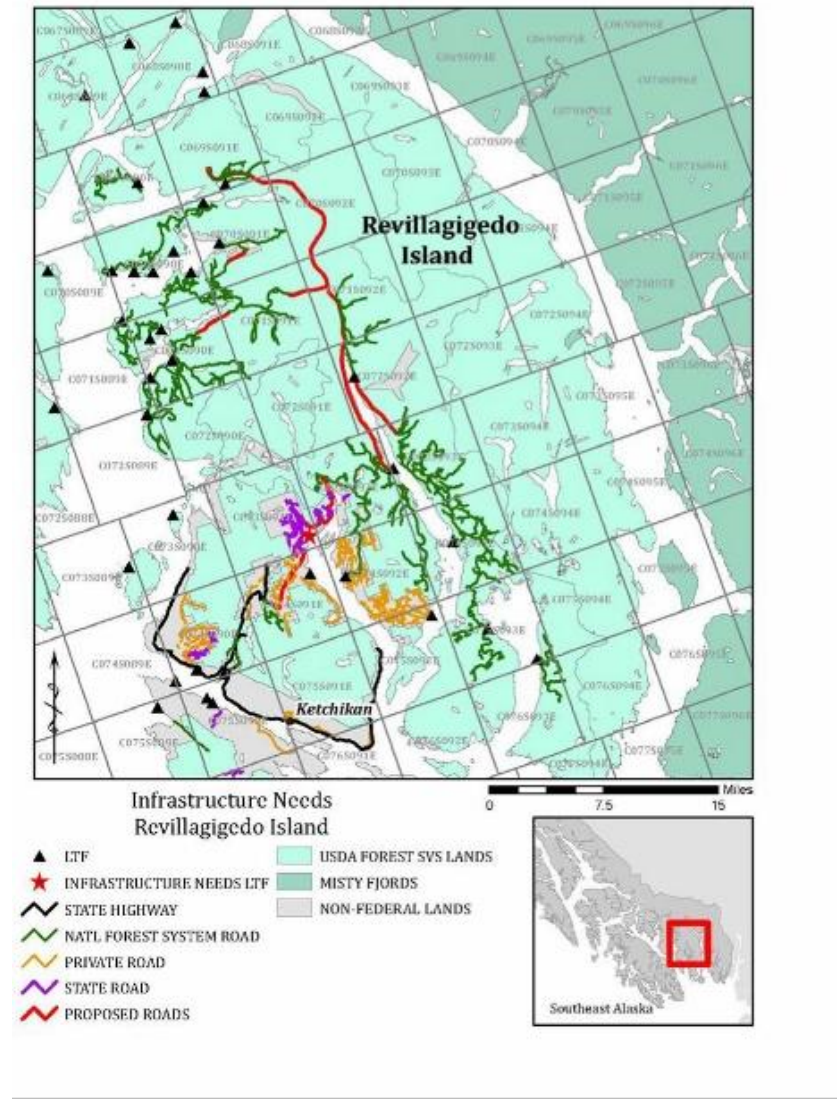
State and federal initiatives for planning and selling timber from Southeast Alaska's forests kept us busy the past year. We have had several successes, and other work is in progress.

Other newsletter articles cover the Forest Service's Big Thorne timber project and the agency's ramrodding of its Tongass Land Management Plan amendment. Below we report our efforts on other state and federal timber sales and on the state's Southeast State Forest Management Plan.

Revillagigedo Island

The Forest Service's planned 47-million board foot Saddle Lakes timber sale project is in the middle of Ketchikan's Revilla Island, between George Inlet and Carroll Inlet. It would have 2,300 acres of logging units and construction of 27 miles of road.

The general area has been heavily logged by the Forest Service, the Alaska Mental Health Trust (AMHT), and Cape Fox (Saxman's Native corporation). Preventing further damage is critical. Several years ago AMHT completed a nearly 4,000-acre clearcut, from the



Map Developed by Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office

head of George Inlet to Leask Lakes. AMHT has been negotiating a land exchange with the Forest Service for an additional 8,000 acres between that clearcut and the Saddle Lakes project, with the Forest Service to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS), a public comment opportunity.¹ As another article in this newsletter discusses, the AMHT/Forest Service deal is now off, with Senator Murkowski recently having introduced legislation to directly execute the exchange and blocking the use of an EIS or public comment in the exchange. Since August, AMHT has threatened – if the bill is not passed by mid-January – to log high landslide hazard areas within Ketchikan and Petersburg that are among the lands offered up in the exchange. GSACC instead urges modification of the bill to *buy-out* AMHT's offered lands, avoiding any logging at all in resolving AMHT's problems.

We commented on the Saddle Lakes project's DEIS in November 2014, and formally objected to the Final EIS and draft decision last December. This March, in deciding on our objection, the Forest Service's Alaska Regional Forester ordered preparation of a Supplemental EIS, blocking for now the timber portion of the project. This win was because the Final EIS failed to consider impacts of the nearby proposed AMHT land exchange. However, the decision allows a critically bad road link for the Shelter Cove Road to go ahead, and we have sued over that.

Our lawsuit over the Shelter Cove Road. A consortium of the state Division of Forestry, AMHT and the timber industry has schemed a massive interconnection of old, isolated logging road systems in central and northern Revilla Island, connecting to Ketchikan and a marine terminal where export log ships could be loaded. (See [map](#)² above.) The road link connecting Ketchikan to the Shelter Cove road

system is the key. The road system would allow exploitation of the island's old-growth and second-growth forests, and the wildlife habitat they provide, on a scale never before imagined. Immediately after the decision on our Saddle Lakes objection, we sued the Forest Service and US Army Corps of Engineers over their permitting decisions allowing the road link to move forward. Briefing is on-going.

¹ The trade also includes about 12,000 acres of Tongass National Forest land on Prince of Wales Island.

² See p.77 of the document.

Kosciusko Island

Large-scale logging in Southeast Alaska began during World War II on Kosciusko's high-volume forest. The western half of the island has been massively clearcut, with more to come. In December 2014, a federal budget bill rider awarded Sealaska 12,000 acres of old second-growth forest and much of the remaining old growth there. The University of Alaska has contracted the logging of its forest land on the south shore to Alcan Forest Products, and the state and the Forest Service are planning nearby timber sales.

In March, our formal objection to the Forest Service's euphemistically named Kosciusko Vegetation Management Project caused the draft decision to be remanded to the decision maker, for reexamination of the project's impacts to deer and wolves. The intended decision was to log one million board feet of old growth and 30 million board feet of old second growth, on 1,520 acres. We await an update.

In June, our appeal to Alaska Department of Natural Resources' commissioner of the Edna Bay Parlay Timber Sale caused the Division of Forestry to withdraw its Final Best Interest Finding. DOF had claimed that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game supports the sale, but our inspection of the planning record found that the ADF&G was in fact strongly opposed.

Wrangell Island

In July we commented on the Draft EIS for the 65-million board foot Wrangell Island Project and its 5,300 acres of logging units and 32 miles of road construction. The island has been heavily logged, the project is unjustifiable, and our comments ask for cancellation.

Gravina Island

We began challenging the state's 12-million board foot Vallenar Bay Timber Sale early last year. Our November 2015 appeal of the Final Best Interest Finding won a reprieve, with the finding to be reconsidered after completion of the state's first Southeast State Forest Management Plan. The management plan is now done, and the reconsideration is awaited.

The Southeast State Forest Management Plan and the Forest Inventory

We challenged the draft management plan, and appealed the final plan in March. It covers 50,000 acres of scattered forest parcels in southern Southeast. Our basis was failure to meaningfully protect wildlife habitat, and that the plan was based on a never-completed 2011 draft Forest Inventory. In April the ADNR commissioner ordered reconsideration of the plan, but affirmed the plan in June, after the inventory's finalization. We are dissatisfied with the plan, but the annual allowable cut is reduced from 12.1 to 11.2 million board feet.

Tongass Stewardship Restoration by Joe Mehrkens

Stewardship/Restoration is a new bundle of federal "authorities" to conduct land management while providing opportunities for local employment. It was designed for the lower 48 where climate change is causing massive insect and wildfire damage. In Southeast Alaska, however, restoration uses a flawed logic that more old growth must be destroyed today in order to restore damage from past logging. Why, you ask?

Stewardship policies divert timber revenues from the logging of old-growth forest stands, previously destined for the Treasury, to forest restoration projects and/or to help fund non-timber uses such as recreation and wildlife. An underlying assumption is that stewardship will also create

a regional restoration economy. Sounds good on paper but in reality the diverted timber revenue is minuscule in comparison to the economic and ecologic cost. More importantly, the same stewardship/restoration results can be delivered by alternative programs at a much lower cost, than by logging old growth to get the funds.

It is well established that Tongass logging results in federal taxpayers losing 90-95 cents for every dollar spent on Tongass timber and roads. It is very irrational to justify reinvesting the meager 5-10 cents-on-the-dollar revenues on stewardship/restoration. It is far cheaper to leave the old growth standing and use less costly congressional appropriations to restore second-growth forests and promote economic diversity and employment.

Even more disingenuous are the false expectations that a regional restoration economy will be created. Stewardship is not a sustainable community industry but merely more government contracting. For example, one timber industry representative said that fixing all the plugged culverts could be accomplished in 5-10 years by two people using a dump truck and tractor shovel. This work needs to be done, since the ongoing damage was not prevented decades ago. Simply, there are more efficient ways for repairing the second growth while protecting old growth at little or no cost.

Woody Biomass by David Beebe

Heavily subsidized boosterism for a region-wide conversion to woody biomass energy is best understood by its absence of circumspection and full disclosure addressing well known [economic](#), [social](#), and [ecological consequences](#). Precluded topics include the [nationwide community backlashes](#) to biomass energy, and many cheaper alternatives, such as [air source heat pumps](#) powered by Southeast Alaska's hydroelectric grid.

The first public discussion of woody biomass as "renewable energy" from forests of this region resulted in the paradoxical, "*Statement of Biomass Energy*" passed unanimously at the Tongass Futures Roundtable (TFR) in 2009 (see box next page). The exclusive TFR voting membership comprised what was touted by the Forest Service as "a diverse group of stakeholders," yet was limited to foundation funders, their conservation grantees, and representatives of government agencies, industry, communities, and Native interests. Many other conservation and public interests were excluded. The TFR membership summarily rejected the attending public's concerns regarding economic, social, and ecological impacts the statement's achieved goals would cause through the region-wide conversion to "biomass energy."

Economics

The *Statement's* biomass goals include expansion of a timber industry which has been, and continues to be, heavily dependent on federal taxpayer subsidies, totaling well over a billion dollars in the Tongass since 1980. Additionally, building further from that, the *Statement's* goals rely on a slice of the [billions of dollars in federal subsidies](#) that have been dedicated to biomass energy in recent years, nationwide. Furthermore, the *Statement's* economics rely on a record spike in oil prices to make an unrealistically favorable pellet fuel pricing comparison. The *Statement* also fails to consider secondary subsidies to the biomass industry. Those are the unaccounted economic and insidious non-economic costs that emissions cause to unsuspecting individuals and the public through negative social and environmental impacts.

Social Costs

Research demonstrates air pollution from "efficient" biomass combustion is several times worse than oil, its smallest particulates being the most dangerous. Consequently, the American Lung Association, American Heart Association, and World Health Organization, oppose large-scale biomass energy. Children, the elderly, asthmatics, and the unborn bear the costs of biomass combustion. Paradoxically, schools such as Craig elementary and middle schools and public offices such as Ketchikan's GSA Federal Building have been among the first to be converted to biomass heating.

Ecological

The rainforests of Southeast Alaska store, but stand to lose when clearcut, some of the highest volumes of carbon per acre of all North American forests. Forest-derived biomass energy exceeds the carbon emissions of any fossil fuels. Thus, the *Statement's* goal to "Reduce energy costs and carbon footprint" by increasing clearcutting "to meet regional energy needs" isn't possible. It's paradoxical. Scores of scientists have urged federal agencies to recognize that forest-derived biomass accelerates global warming while [destroying wildlife habitat essential to ecosystem integrity](#).



Viking Lumber's mill on Prince of Wales Island receives \$45 per ton in taxpayer subsidy for sawdust used to produce biofuel. (David Beebe 2009 photo)

Tongass Futures Roundtable - Statement on Biomass Energy¹

*"The Roundtable believes meeting Southeast energy needs is urgent and critical. Biomass energy provides one of several near-term and long-term solutions to many problems in Southeast, including moderating the cost of home and commercial heating, the efficient utilization of **waste products**, and an additional revenue source for our local mills.*

The Roundtable would like to see any biomass project meet the following goals:

- 1. Improve regional energy self-reliance*
- 2. Improve community viability and **prosperity***
- 3. Increase resiliency and **competitiveness** of regional sawmills*
- 4. **Reduce energy costs** and carbon footprint*
- 5. **Create jobs** and **stimulate** secondary manufacturing of wood products*
- 6. Make forest restoration more **economically viable***
- 7. Reduce volume of municipal and **forest waste/turn into a resource***
- 8. **Scale industry** to regional energy needs*
- 9. **Scale industry** to regional municipal, commercial, and **forest byproduct waste** streams*
- 10. Does not create unsustainable exploitation of forest ecosystems or open remote and pristine areas exclusively for **biomass feedstock production**, although use of feed stock as part of wildlife and fisheries habitat is encouraged."*

Adopted by consensus of the Roundtable, May 8, 2008, revised February 27, 2009

Betrayals of Trust by David Beebe

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) is a state corporation with a mission to "improve the lives of beneficiaries," that is, Alaskans coping with mental health issues and associated crises such as domestic violence, suicide, alcohol, and drug addiction.

AMHTA is funded in part through its Trust Land Office (TLO) whose mandated [resource management strategy](#) (Strategy) is to “solely” prioritize revenue generation despite adverse results. Social scientists recognize that such priorities often result in social, environmental, and economic consequences. The Strategy’s mandate is diagnostic of addiction itself: “... *engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences.*”

In Southcentral Alaska, the Strategy’s mandate justifies the threat of an 8,000-acre coal strip mine within a mile of more than 100 homes in [Chickaloon](#). Adverse consequences include families confronting plummeting home property values, health risks from coal dust, bitter disputes between neighbors hoping to get jobs, and contributing to community and global climate disasters.

In Southeast Alaska, on August 11, the TLO Resource Management Committee emerged from executive session threatening to log over 2,600 acres of old-growth forest behind homes in Petersburg and 900 acres of Deer Mountain in Ketchikan, should Senator Murkowski’s Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Exchange Act of 2016 (S.3006) fail to be enacted. Much of the highest value, old growth is perched on steep, unstable slopes. Logging unstable slopes would also increase landslide hazards to the nearby roadways and public utilities.

The groundwork for these threats by the TLO, as well as for the privatization and deregulation of public lands that Senator Murkowski’s bill would mandate, was unanimously approved by the Tongass Futures Roundtable’s voting conservation representatives in 2012, contrary to the opposing unrepresented views of environmental organizations, including GSACC. Our position is gaining traction in regional news media: Rather than the land swap approach of the current legislation, GSACC advocates a simple federal buy-out of the [same trust lands](#).



Islets of Port Camden, north Kuiu Island (David Beebe photo)

The Population Challenge by Bruce Baker

As Southeast Alaska conservationists address regional conservation issues, we do so with full awareness of the world-wide context within which they arise. Two major trends which form the backdrop for everything we do are 1) an ever increasing human population, and 2) an ever increasing desire of people everywhere to maintain or increase their material standard of living.

I suggest that to one degree or another, the effects of unbridled human population growth and a parallel increase in the average per capita consumption of the earth’s resources, especially in more prosperous nations, can be found in most of the world’s environmental, social, and political problems.

In my lifetime, the world’s human population has surged from 2.4 billion to more than 7 billion today. Many wildlife populations and species have plummeted in that period due largely to inroads on their habitats by human activities. It is estimated that there may be 10 billion of us by 2083. In

recent years, terms like global warming, ocean acidification, rising sea levels, ocean dumping, water shortages, desertification, species extinction, and declines in world fisheries have worked their way into our vocabulary. It's not that these trends are entirely new. One can cite extirpation of American bison and the passenger pigeon, declines in Atlantic salmon, and countless other examples which demonstrate that wildlife habitat, wildlife population, and species losses have been largely caused by or significantly exacerbated by human activity. And the Industrial Revolution is said to mark the onset of increasingly elevated human contributions of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

Most alarming is the increasing pace at which these trends have been occurring during the last 100 years or so. The effects of climate change, the need to recycle consumer products, and conversion from fossil fuels to cleaner energy sources are topics of daily public discussion and have made their way onto the international political stage.

However, the idea that our collective contribution to climate change and other environmental problems are rooted in human population growth and increased per capita consumption of natural resources has yet to become a socially acceptable discussion topic. If we are to address environmental issues most effectively in the long run, society needs to have that conversation.

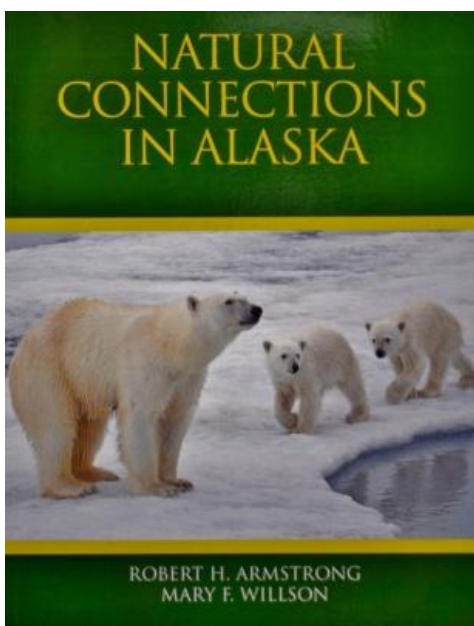
DONATIONS ARE WELCOME

We are an all-volunteer board, yet there are expenses that need to be met in order to accomplish as much as we do. To pay those expenses, we count on donations, annual membership renewals, and increasing our membership. We are qualified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization, the donations to which are tax deductible.

If you would like to join, make a donation, or have not yet made a 2016 membership renewal contribution, we hope that you will take this opportunity to do so in whatever amount best fits your budget. Our donation/membership webpage is newly improved. Alaskans might consider donating a portion of their Permanent Fund Dividend. Secure on-line donations can be made on our web site www.gsacc.net or a check can be mailed to:

**Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community
P. O. Box 6064
Sitka, AK 99835**

All who contribute in 2016 will be mailed a confirmation early in the new year of the total they contributed in 2016 for use in preparing their federal income tax return.



SPECIAL DONATION INCENTIVE

Those donating \$50 or more will receive, upon request, a complimentary copy of Bob Armstrong's and Mary Willson's 80-page book, "Natural Connections in Alaska." It contains over 175 color photos and makes for interesting and informative reading for students and anyone who appreciates Alaska's fish and wildlife treasures.

From the authors' Introduction:

"This is a book about natural connections among organisms, so we should make clear at the outset what we mean by 'connections.' Here is an excellent example that began to be understood when researchers noticed that populations of sea lions and sea otters in western Alaska had declined markedly, even catastrophically.

As researchers delved more deeply into probable causes, they began to understand that these declines were probably the result of a long chain of interactions, reaching back into history . . ."