

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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### Keep forest plan

EDITOR, Daily News:

Last month, Sen. Lisa Murkowski's office issued a press release that said she "welcomed the Government Accountability Office's determination that the U.S. Forest Service's 2016 Amendment to the Tongass Land Management Plan is a 'rule' and therefore subject to the Congressional Review Act."

Sen. Murkowski went on to say that: "Every sector of the Southeast Alaska economy needs greater access to the Tongass, but this rule failed to provide it. Most concerning was the Forest Service's decision to accelerate a transition to young-growth timber harvesting, even though it never completed an inventory to ensure it would be carried out successfully. While this rule can be improved administratively or legislatively, disapproving it entirely is now another option that we will consider in the days ahead."

The 2016 Amendment to the Tongass Land Management Plan is a win-win for all parties involved. It protects high-value fish and wildlife habitat while transitioning to a young-growth timber harvest over a 15-year period. Intact watersheds result in healthy nurseries for our thriving salmon. Salmon, in turn, provide economic activity through commercial fishing, sport fishing, subsistence fishing and tourism. Transitioning to young-growth timber will utilize the existing road system built over the past 70 years, avoiding the cost of new road construction.

Our economy has evolved from being heavily dependent on old-growth timber harvest to a more diverse economy where tourism accounts for more than 14 percent of our regional employment. Commercial, sport and subsistence fishing accounts for another 10 percent of our employment. The watersheds off-limits for harvest in the TLMP amendment directly support these economic sectors by protecting some of the most high-value fish and

wildlife in the Tongass.

The TLMP amendment received more than 270,000 comments over a two-year period. More than 7,200 Alaskans voiced support for protecting high-value fish and wildlife habitat as part of the TLMP amendment. The amendment was based on the recommendations of the Tongass Advisory Committee. At the TAC table were members of the logging industry, the State of Alaska, Alaska Native tribes and corporations, municipal leaders and conservation organizations. Their directive was to work together to move the Tongass National Forest away from old-growth timber harvest and build a road-map for sustainable harvest of young-growth timber. They accomplished a win-win.

Please Sen. Murkowski, do not seek the repeal of this important, collaboratively-developed forest plan.

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