

“As a conservationist, I’d love to see the Forest Service get out of old growth right now, but our involvement in the advisory committee really followed this ethic of trying to come up with a collaborative solution and make Tongass management work for all the stakeholder groups,” Thoms said.

Thoms said Alternative 5 protects high-value habitat and provides a road-map for a full transition to young growth. He added that dissatisfaction on the part of some timber industry representatives and some conservation groups indicates that the decision is a true compromise.



*Earl Stewart, Tongass Forest Supervisor. (KRBD file photo)*

There has been some concern by Alaska’s congressional delegation that the amendment is moving forward before a complete inventory of young growth is complete, and there is pending legislation to delay the transition. But Tongass Forest Supervisor Stewart said that isn’t an impediment.

He said the Forest Service considered hundreds of thousands of comments on the issue, along with the TAC recommendations and input from scientists.

“We believe we have enough information at this time to go forward with the forest plan amendment, yet concurrently we will continue with the inventory for more on-the-ground decisions,” Stewart said.

And if that inventory shows there isn’t adequate young growth to support the industry, Stewart said there is flexibility within the Tongass Land Management Plan to evolve.

You can read the draft Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision [here](#). The link also provides information on how to comment.

A final Record of Decision is expected by the end of the year.