



Tongass Transition Collaborative Meeting Summary

December 12, 2016, Ketchikan, Alaska

On December 12, 2017, the Tongass Transition Collaborative (TTC) met in Ketchikan, Alaska. The objectives of the meeting were to: finalize the TTC organizational structure; develop an annual operating budget for 2017; and prioritize activities for 2017. The meeting included a session in the morning for updates and TTC organizational business followed by substantive discussion in the afternoon in which the group reviewed progress to date and priorities for the coming year. Additional individuals joined the afternoon discussion. See Appendix A for a list of meeting participants.

TTC Organizational Business

Updates

Good Neighbor Authority: Chris Maisch provided an update about efforts to use the Good Neighbor Authority for the Kosciusko sale. An advantage of the Good Neighbor Authority mechanism is that it would allow more flexibility since it falls under State contacting rules rather than Forest Service rules. In addition, it could help alleviate capacity concerns, which are hampering both the State and the Forest Service, through the potential to enable bundling for more efficiency. Issues still to be addressed include the allocation of receipts, assurances, forward funding, where reimbursements go, etc. In response to a question, it was clarified that Mental Health Trust lands are not part of the Good Neighbor Authority process at this time.

Amendment Objections: Chris Maisch and Eric Nichols discussed the Forest Plan amendment objections process. While the process was viewed as not very productive, one potentially positive note was an emphasis on the importance of retaining flexibility to take the inventory results and analysis of economics into account. Jaeleen Araujo echoed frustration about the objections process, and provided an update on Sealaska's logging activities, which are ongoing out of a desire to keep the industry alive in spite of a poor market. She emphasized, however, that Sealaska cannot carry the burden by itself.

All Lands Cost Sharing: Jason Anderson reported that discussions are continuing about options for cost sharing and/or cost reimbursement for roads, with the hope that progress on the issue will help incentivize more coordination across landowners.

Inventory: See Stand-Level Inventory on page 3 for updates.

Sale Planning: Following the updates there was a brief discussion about sale planning, during which the group emphasized the need to involve interested stakeholders in the early planning of sales.

TTC Charter and Operating Procedures

The following points emerged from a general discussion about how the TTC should be organized and operated:

- Emphasize a culture of inclusiveness, while navigating the tension between openness and maintaining control over mission.
- Do not exclude potential members based solely on their participation in litigation.
- Be cognizant of limited capacity; specify desired outcomes and focus on those.
- Recognize that a collaborative group can be very helpful in informing small decisions that ultimately feed into big decisions, and by providing the Forest with “cover” when it has to make difficult choices.
- Consider developing a bylaws document at some time in the future.

The group then recommended a number of edits to the draft charter and procedures. Those documents, with edits accepted, are attached. There were also recommendations to:

1. Have the charter and operating procedures drafts reviewed by the Forest’s grants and agreements staff and general counsel to ensure that nothing in the documents would put the TTC out of compliance for obtaining federal funding. (Note: Jason Anderson will take the lead in ensuring this review is conducted.)
2. Develop a description of the TTC that clearly articulates its value. (Note: Erin agreed to develop a first draft.)

Funding

The group had only limited time to discuss TTC finances. There was, however, a recommendation to consider a mechanism that could enable industry to contribute funding to TTC via a “check-off” for a contribution to TTC on a per thousand harvested and/or sold basis.

TTC Priorities and Activities

In its first year of operations, the TTC accomplished a lot, and now has a foundation upon which to build. TTC members and others who have been involved detailed the activities and accomplishments to date and discussed the path forward.

Field Trips

The April 2016 and August/September 2016 field trips that were co-sponsored by the TTC and the Tongass Collaborative Stewardship Group (TCSG) provided venues in which stakeholders with diverse perspectives could develop a common understanding of on-the-ground challenges; talk together about how to put projects together, and how to apply concepts like co-intent and all lands management; and have the opportunity to connect practice and policy. The August/September field trips brought together Congressional committee leadership, local stakeholders, and Forest Service leadership and staff.

The focus now should be on sharing what was learned, and successfully implementing and building upon the good ideas that emerged (Good Neighbor Authority is just one example). There are currently no plans for another field trip this next year.

Challenge Cost Share (CCS) Agreement

The CCS Agreement has been the primary funding vehicle to begin implementing many of the Tongass Advisory Committee's (TAC's) key recommendations (e.g., stand-level inventory, workforce development, Prince of Wales Landscape-scale Assessment, etc.). A team comprised of Chris Maisch, Wade Zammit, Jason Anderson, Ed Soto, and Michael Shepard is working to keep the CCS on track and to identify future funding options and allocations for 2017-2018.

Stand-Level Inventory

Progress on the stand-level inventory is continuing through data collection and processing, as well as efforts to plan and implement sales. Approx. 1/3 of the 55 year plus age class inventory work was completed in 2016. It will take two more years for the 45 year plus age. In the meantime, the Forest and the State are working together on the analysis of new and existing data in order to better understand the "fall-down," evaluate the modelling, and understand how many acres are actually operable. Work is also underway on old growth inventory, and conversations are taking place between the Forest and industry to prioritize available locations for old growth bridge timber and how to sequence the offerings. However, the Forest is facing the same capacity challenges as others (and is looking at options to contract private industry foresters to help). Nevertheless, District Rangers are directed to meet deadlines in hopes of being able to meet projections for timber offerings in 2017-2018.

Workforce Development

Workforce development was a highlight in 2016, with no attrition from the eight individuals who completed training, and an expectation that most will continue future work. Forestry workforce capacity continues to be an enormous issue across the region, and therefore a priority for the coming year(s). A training academy focused on assessment is scheduled for

the first quarter of 2017 and there is a suggestion under consideration for a second training focused on cruising and layout, as well as possibly more targeted offerings in the future (e.g., transportation). There is also a need for basic outdoor skills training encompassing topics such as safety, first aid, and navigation, and for related skills like mechanics and timber harvesting.

The group acknowledged that outreach and training need to start at a young age (e.g., in high school). It was noted that Sealaska is targeting high school age and younger in an attempt to provide opportunities for youth who may attend college and/or want to stay close to home – for a variety of jobs, including forestry, stream restoration, etc. Sealaska is also encouraging contractors to come from outside, in an attempt to revitalize the industry. Similarly, there is also interest throughout the region (e.g., State, Forest Service, and private sector) in recruiting forestry interns from colleges around the country because it would be valuable to expose potential workers to the realities of operating in Southeast Alaska. However, to be effective such an internship program needs to be well supervised, and the capacity shortfall is acute among mid-range forester ranks that would provide such supervision. The State Departments of Commerce and Labor are keenly interested in workforce development as is the private sector. The University of Alaska could be a resource, but as a consequence of fiscal limitations, basic forestry is not included in the University's curriculum. A role for TTC in this arena could be to help advocate for additional funding and partnerships.

Prince of Wales Landscape Assessment

The Prince of Wales Landscape Assessment Team (POWLAT) was established to support the first of what is hoped will be several landscape-scale assessments (ideally completing one for each of the five working circles). POWLAT has a governance structure, a facilitator (Cathy Needham of Kai Environmental Consulting Services), tremendous community support, and a strong group of participants – many drawn from the Prince of Wales Community Advisory Council, and including some overlapping membership with the TTC. The Nature Conservancy is providing technical and information support, and the CCS is helping to fund the initiative, along with the Forest. The group will be seeking additional funding in the coming year from the National Forest Foundation. There is still a lot of work to determine what is meant by landscape-scale analysis and how to operationalize in a holistic manner across resources, fully engage the community, and produce needed outcomes.

The TTC helped launch the POWLAT effort (with financial support coming from the CCS, input regarding governance structure, etc.) and will continue to provide assistance and resources going forward. The TTC might also be a forum for transferring this idea into other working circles. There is interest from other District Rangers who are looking at the Prince of Wales example, but recognition that each landscape is unique; for example, Ketchikan will focus on old growth, and has a much larger community than exists on Prince of Wales. TTC could help bridge the efforts by, for example, identifying common, core aspects of

landscape-scale work, as well as helping to distinguish characteristics that require tailored approaches.

Socio-Economic Baseline Analysis

The intent of the socio-economic analysis is to measure benefits to communities from the Tongass National Forest – i.e., who benefits versus who is detrimentally impacted. This contrasts greatly from traditional National Forest monitoring. The first step is to establish a baseline from which to compare future data. Erin Steinkruger worked over the summer identifying data sources and has been in dialogue for the last 18 months with the University of Oregon Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP) on sequencing, protocols and methodology for the baseline study. With this foundation already in place, the work can begin once funding is secured and a contract is in place with an entity to conduct the analysis. Currently the funding that could support this work resides within the CCS 2018 allocation, but there is a desire to start sooner (e.g., perhaps by creating a connection to the workforce development component of the CCS). The EWP has deep expertise in this type of work and a level of objectivity that would be important; however, the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station has also expressed potential interest in the baseline. In any case, there is an expectation that the ongoing assessment work will move to an Alaska-based institution (e.g., University of Alaska) once the baseline is in place.

Timber Supply

The issue of timber supply was woven throughout the day's discussions in a variety of contexts, as summarized below. The timber industry has very limited "shelf supply," and is facing a "death spiral" without near-term supply. As a consequence, some industry players are looking to a Congressional fix in the form of transferring management responsibility from the federal to State government. TTC has a significant role to play in furthering collaborative problem solving and garnering support for constructive, environmentally responsible solutions to the challenges facing the industry and the communities of Southeast Alaska who depend on a sustainable wood supply. The group discussed that a potential starting point would be a third-party assessment (i.e., confidential interviews by a credible, trusted entity) that identifies industry needs, issues/challenges underlying the supply problem, and options to inform the path forward in a tangible and actionable way. An example of a path forward was to begin with larger clear-cuts in the near-term, followed by patch cuts later.

Co-intent: There is still a lot of confusion and consternation with respect to co-intent. There is a need for early and on-going involvement of stakeholders with expertise to help think through where and how to utilize co-intent principles (while understanding that it does not belong everywhere on the landscape), design stewardship components, accomplish goals of stewardship contracting, and participate in multi-party monitoring of sensitive areas (e.g., beach buffers, etc.).

Old Growth Bridge Timber: There was a suggestion to reach out to conservation groups to help identify the most versus least critical acres for conservation goals, and discuss which areas should be prioritized for bridge timber versus those that should remain off-limits. It would be very useful (and could potentially help mitigate litigation risk) to have a rationale and balanced support for where to harvest old growth. TTC could play a constructive role by helping to convene these conversations.

New Markets: To survive the transition and prosper in the long-term, the timber industry needs new markets for young growth. It is important to think about future market opportunities now, before the “wall of wood” arrives. Mass timber, such as the use of laminated wood for large construction projects and tall buildings, could represent such an opportunity. While a lot is currently happening in terms of testing and experimentation (for example, testing of strength, burn rates, etc.), the group identified the following as priorities moving forward:

- Lay the groundwork for greater utilization of the new technology (e.g., starting with building codes, fire codes, etc.);
- Build support (e.g., getting Senator Murkowski to visit the mass timber display in DC – which presents a great visual of what small diameter wood could do); and
- Understand the economics (e.g., knowing that China is probably where the near-term markets will be, it was suggested that unless we do something there we will be stuck with round log shipping forever).

TTC could potentially help build awareness (e.g., by getting information from the big conference on mass timber scheduled to take place in March in Portland) and to find allies (e.g., the Softwood export council) regarding the mass wood opportunity.

TTC Priorities and Activities for 2017

In summary, TTC priorities and activities for the upcoming year include:

- Help facilitate input from the timber industry and other interested stakeholders earlier in the timber sale planning process.
- Convene/facilitate discussions about an array of issues related to supply and markets (e.g., tracking and nurturing the provision of old growth bridge timber, co-intent, and mass timber).
- Continue progress with workforce development.
- Fundraise for and launch the development of a baseline study for the socioeconomic benefits analysis.
- Continue to support landscape-scale planning, and coordination/cooperation among multiple landowners.
- Ensure that further investment in the Challenge Cost Share is made to continue to implement TAC recommendations

- Facilitate progress on Kos landscape both with timber sales and integrated projects using Good Neighbor Authority, and in “all-lands” planning to achieve scale and long-term benefit from Kos Timber management
- Further Implement TAC recommendations and new tools in the land management plan

Near-Term Action Items

1. Finalize the TTC Charter and Operating Procedures documents. (Lead: Meridian)
2. Have the charter and operating procedures drafts reviewed by the Forest’s grants and agreements staff and general counsel to ensure that nothing in the documents would put the TTC out of compliance for obtaining federal funding. (Lead: Jason Anderson)
3. Develop a description of the TTC that clearly articulates its value. (Lead: Erin Steinkruger)
4. Help convene a meeting in early 2017 to further discussions among the timber industry (and Alaska Forest Association in particular), the Forest Service, and other landowners regarding how to accelerate both young and old growth sales, where and how to operate, and how to promote more coordination/cooperation among land-owners. (Meridian staff will be working with the co-chairs and other TTC members to clarify specific next steps)

Appendix A: Meeting Participants

TTC Members (*full day attendance except as otherwise noted*):

- Jaeleen Araujo (partial participation)
- Les Cronk
- Eric Nichols
- Chris Maisch
- Carol Rushmore (virtual participation)
- Andrew Thoms
- Wade Zammit

Forest Service and State of Alaska Staff (*full day attendance except as otherwise noted*):

- Jason Anderson, Tongass Deputy Forest Supervisor
- Ed Soto, State of Alaska (representing the fiscal side of the CCS Agreement)
- Doug Hanson, State of Alaska (helps execute the CCS Agreement)
- Earl Stewart, Tongass Forest Supervisor (virtual/partial participation)

Additional Participants (*afternoon discussion only*):

- Sarah Campen, Tongass Collaborative Stewardship Group
- Michael Kampnich, The Nature Conservancy
- Brian Kleinhenz, Sealaska Corporation
- Conor Reynolds, The Nature Conservancy
- Austin Williams, Trout Unlimited

Facilitation Staff:

- Connie Lewis, Meridian Institute