

Community and landscape change in southeast Alaska

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Abstract

Since the early 1970s, social science research has addressed issues concerning the nature and distribution of values and uses associated with natural resources. In part, this research has tried to improve our understanding of interconnections between resource management and social and cultural change on the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska. In 1997, scientists at the Pacific Northwest Research Station (PNW) initiated a number of social science studies in response to information gaps identified while developing the Tongass Land Management Plan. Results presented here summarize findings from studies of traditional ecological knowledge, subsistence use of natural resources, tourism trends and the effects of tourism on communities, and social acceptability of alternative timber harvest practices. Management implications are discussed along with suggestions for further study.

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1. Background and purpose

Since the early 1970s, social science research has addressed the nature and distribution of values and uses associated with natural resources. In part, this research has tried to improve our understanding of interconnections between resource management and social and cultural change on the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska. Applied social science research fills an important role in resource planning activities. Pacific Northwest Research Station (PNW) scientists initiated a number of social science studies

to respond to needs identified during the revision of the Tongass Land Management Plan from 1995 to 1997. These became known as the follow-on studies.

This summary is limited in its coverage. Only social science studies completed as part of the follow-on studies are summarized here. Summaries from economic studies are provided elsewhere in this collection (Crone, this issue). A clear and common thread is the close connection between the Tongass National Forest and its management to life in southeast Alaska. I have summarized findings from studies of traditional ecological knowledge, subsistence use of natural resources, tourism trends and the effects of tourism on communities, and social acceptability of alternative timber harvest practices. Other than the alternative

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Fig. 1. Study locations in southeast Alaska.

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