

Framework Committee Update
May 15, 2009

As we enter our fourth year of work on Tongass issues, the Framework Committee has seen much of the initial work it undertook taken on by staff and other Tongass Future Roundtable (TFR) processes. To prepare this report, I referred back to the Framework Committee's original charter which outlined a number of goals and principals for our consideration and deliberation (see attached). While we have not succeeded in reaching all the goals enumerated we have made progress on a number of fronts, but to date have failed to deliver on other aspects of the original charter.

The committee started out with an aggressive schedule of meetings in 2006/2007 and focused most of its attention on trying to develop the "time out" concept and a process to improve timber sales in the pipeline from both an economic and conservation perspective. The time out concept was intended to be a 12 month period of time where timber sales in roadless or undeveloped areas would not be offered so the TFR process could work toward solutions and changes in the overall timber sale program. At the same time, an effort would be made to ensure enough economic timber would be offered to keep the current mills alive until a long-term solution could be crafted. While we didn't reach consensus on a time out concept as envisioned, the committee was able to influence a number of processes internal and external to the TFR to keep the mills alive and the overall process moving forward. Litigation external to the TFR was settled and work began in earnest to review the timber sale program from top to bottom. This review quickly reached a point of agreement that because of NEPA process constraints, timber sales and projects already past the initial NEPA gate would be difficult to modify in significant ways and that efforts should be focused at the pre-NEPA stage of the process, otherwise known as the unit pool development.

The concept for this collaborative unit pool development embraced two key touch stones for this committee, economic timber and conservation. If both these perspectives could be worked out by representatives of these concepts at the initial stage of a timber project, then the risk of future appeals or litigation could be greatly minimized or even omitted. The workload associated with this effort is a large one and as the committee moved into 2008 it became apparent that a committee of volunteers was not going to be the best way to approach this challenge. A recommendation was made to seek funding to hire a conservation forester to work as part of an interdisciplinary and interagency team. The conservation community was successful in securing funds to make this happen and Keith Rush was hired by TNC to work with the state and forest service staff already engaged in this effort.

On a parallel track, the state allocated some significant resources to it's partnership with the forest service on TLMP plan implementation. In 2007 a full-time position was allocated to the Division of Forestry (DOF) via a \$100.0 increment and in 2008 a \$1.5 million three year capital budget appropriation was secured to further assist with the new TLMP implementation. A portion of these funds were used to hire an ADF&G habitat biologist Kyle Moselle who joined DOF forester Clarence Clark to participate in the unit

pool development and related timber sale process. These staff members work side-by-side with USFS employees and are breaking new ground on how timber sale projects are conceived and designed.

Combined, we now have three full-time professional staff members and a variety of volunteers working toward achieving some of the goals and principals outlined in our founding documents. While these members don't work for the Framework Committee, they are carrying on with much of the work the committee identified in our first two years of effort. Projects that have benefited by this early collaboration are:

- Log Jam
- Highbush Fools (now a 10 year sale project on Wrangell Island)
- Tonka

Other aspects of committee work have also move into other venues. The mapping and young growth committees have undertake important elements of items frequently discussed in the early days of the framework committee. The principal of transitioning from old growth to young growth and restoration opportunities are being addressed in the other committees. There remains a variety of specific tasks that need to be completed to enumerate the young growth resource. A brief list of items to address would include: located, age class distribution, pre-commercial thinning (PCT) and commercial thinning needs and opportunities, when sustainable volumes become available and young growth economics.

The Framework Committee has not met since September 2008 for the reasons stated above as well as one additional development. Many of the principal members of the committee are participating in an ad hoc effort outside the TFR process that is looking at a comprehensive solution to the timber supply issue. Thru the work of the framework committee and the TFR process as a whole, it became apparent that there was a need to work in a smaller group to try and forge a concept that would resolve the expressed "must haves" of the key interest groups and receive broad support from TFR participants. It remains to be seen if this can be accomplished, but an intense effort has been underway and was conceptually discussed before the full RT two meetings ago. Because of this effort and the ongoing efforts of the process that was developed and implemented, there has not been any real need for the committee to meet.