

June 30, 2016

Contact:

Austin Williams, Alaska Director of Law and Policy, Trout Unlimited awilliams@tu.org or 907-227-1590
Mark Kaelke, Southeast Alaska Project Director, Trout Unlimited mkaelke@tu.org, 907-321-4464



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

High-value salmon rivers receive new protections in Tongass National Forest Plan, amid ongoing threats in Congress

Sportsmen and businesses applaud shifting priorities in country's largest National Forest

JUNEAU, ALASKA – In the midst of a wave of Congressional initiatives that would impact land ownership and public access on the Tongass, today the U.S. Forest Service announced a new path forward that improves conservation measures for important salmon and trout streams within Southeast Alaska's 17 million acre Tongass National Forest. The measures are detailed in the draft record of decision for the latest Forest Plan Amendment.

“Commercial fishermen, guides and outfitters, conservationists and sport anglers commend the Forest Service, the Tongass Advisory Committee and the people of Southeast Alaska for recognizing that salmon drive Southeast Alaska's economy. Conserving healthy salmon habitat on the Tongass will help ensure that's always the case,” said Mark Kaelke, Southeast Alaska Project Director for Trout Unlimited. “This amendment to the Forest Plan does just that – it helps put fisheries and recreation on a more even footing with other industries on the Tongass.”

A [diverse group of more than seven thousand Alaskan businesses and individuals](#) that value and rely on wild salmon and trout for their livelihoods voiced support for conserving top fish-producing watersheds within the Tongass during the lengthy public process leading up to this plan amendment. However, a new suite of bills put this collaborative process in jeopardy.

“This plan amendment has the support of thousands of Alaskans that understand it's far past time we move beyond the conflict and controversy of timber management on the Tongass and recognize the great value our largest national forest provides for fishing and tourism,” said Austin Williams of Trout Unlimited. “This is a huge step in the right direction for sustainable and economically-sensible management of the Tongass. Having come so far, we encourage Congress and our own Senator Murkowski to not stand in the way of this plan amendment. Pushing legislation that threatens to turn back the clock and open the door to more litigation just increases uncertainty for everyone involved.”

The Tongass is the nation's largest National Forest, producing millions of wild salmon each year that support commercial and sport fishing industries that account for 10% of all regional employment and contribute \$1 billion annually to the local economy. Visitors from all over the world come to see the Tongass and support a booming travel industry accounting for another 15% of regional employment and another \$1 billion in economic activity.

###

Trout Unlimited is the nation's oldest and largest coldwater fisheries conservation organization. In Alaska, we work with sportsmen and women to ensure the state's trout and salmon resources remain healthy far into the future through our local chapters and offices in Anchorage and Juneau. Follow TU's Tongass efforts on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and visit us online at tu.org. Learn more about our work to conserve key areas of the Tongass National Forest at www.americansalmonforest.org