



# Alaska Trollers Association

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January 30, 2012

Harris Sherman, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Under Secretary Sherman:

The Alaska Trollers Association (ATA) supports increased investment in watershed restoration on Tongass National Forest lands. Securing and improving watershed health and salmon production, and maintaining healthy fishing communities, are at the heart of ATA's mission and are critical to Southeast Alaska's economy.

The Southeast troll fleet is one of the largest in the state - about one of every 35 people in our region works on the back deck of a troll boat. Trollers are small boat fishermen that target salmon with hook and line. Our fleet fishes both state and federal waters from Dixon Entrance to Cape Suckling. The troll fishery has three distinct seasons and occurs in every month of the year. The fleet is 85% resident and a great many of our members live in rural communities. With over 2,500 permits, nearly half of those active each year, our boats cover a lot of area and fish almost every nook and cranny of the Tongass. A healthy forest and watershed is important not only for the salmon and other fish we harvest, but also to provide safe fishing areas and anchorages.

**The Tongass National Forest provides roughly \$1 billion in annual revenues** to commercial, sport and subsistence fishermen. Each year, about **24% of Alaska's annual statewide salmon harvest is spawned in the Tongass.** Commercial fishing is the main economic driver in Southeast Alaska, providing economic stability and good-paying jobs that are the foundation of our communities. **Commercial fishing and seafood processing alone account for more than 10% of all jobs in Southeast Alaska.**

Forest Service reports indicate that logging has impacted about 46% of salmon watersheds on the Tongass. We have been informed that over \$100 million is needed to restore lost habitat. With current investment rates in the ballpark of \$1.5 million per year, it will take the Forest Service more than 50 years to address the habitat problems affecting wild salmon in the Tongass.

By increasing its investment in watershed restoration, the Forest Service could improve salmon habitat and production, and, in turn, create new jobs and economic opportunities for Southeast Alaska communities. However, in these tough economic times, sustaining jobs is as important as creating new ones. Therefore, it is imperative to our region and state that USDA and Forest Service increase its investment in watershed restoration on the Tongass, and support the many jobs and economic services wild Alaska salmon already provide.

Wild salmon habitat and production contributes significantly to the social-economic vitality of Southeast Alaska. Key habitats in the Tongass have been degraded by development activities and could benefit from rehabilitative treatments. ATA asks that you increase the budget for watershed restoration and act to rejuvenate salmon habitat in the Tongass, which has long supported our jobs and communities.

Thank you in advance for your favorable consideration of our concerns. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information about Southeast Alaska fisheries, or our member's point of view on this or other issues.

Sincerely,

Dale Kelley  
Executive Director