

USDA FOREST SERVICE
ALASKA REGION
P.O. Box 21628
Juneau, AK 99802

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND PROVIDER

Looking for the personnel information - transfers, retirements, promotions, awards? It's being moved to the internet and will be available soon through the R.O. FSWEB site at: <http://fsweb.r10.fs.fed.us>
Please send comments about this change to Sandy Frost, Editor (see page 2).

GIVE US YOUR BEST SHOT!

If a picture is worth a thousand words then a *great* picture must be worth a million!

In an effort to showcase the wonders of Alaska's National Forests, this summer the Regional Office is sponsoring a photography contest. We are on the trail of excellent, 35-millimeter color slides that capture the resources and the management of these public treasures. Submitted photographs will be added to the regional photo library and will be highlighted in upcoming editions of *Sourdough Notes*, and on the region's inter- and intranet sites. In addition to fame and glory, the Alaska Natural History Association will provide a cash prize of \$50 for first place and \$25 for second place in each category.



For more complete contest instructions and rules visit the Region's fsweb site at:
<http://fsweb.r10.fs.fed.us>

Region 10 employees, volunteers, and retirees are invited to submit their best, original photographs in the following categories:

- **People at Work or Play in Alaska's National Forests**
- **Fish & Wildlife**
- **Landscapes & Ecosystems**

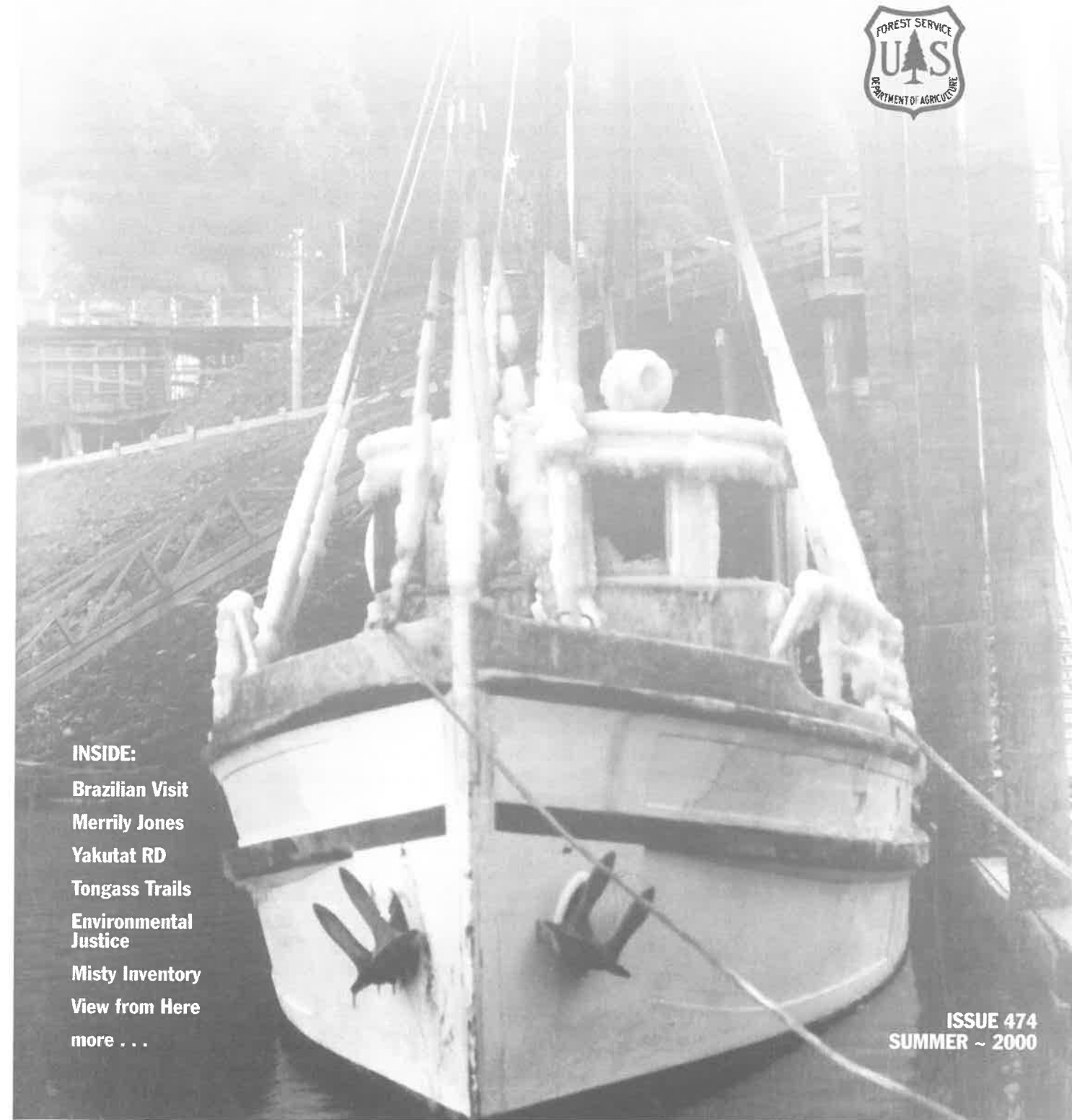
Photographs must be original, non-copyrighted images, and must include identification information. Send your best shot to *Sandy Frost*, Thorne Bay RD, P. O. Box 19001, Thorne Bay, AK 99919 by August 30, 2000. Winners will be announced in the next edition of *Sourdough Notes*.

Sourdough Notes ~ Summer 2000



SOURDOUGH NOTES

ALASKA REGION USDA FOREST SERVICE EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER



INSIDE:

Brazilian Visit

Merrily Jones

Yakutat RD

Tongass Trails

Environmental Justice

Misty Inventory

View from Here

more . . .

ISSUE 474
SUMMER ~ 2000



A View from Here

by Regional Forester Rick Cables

ON THE COVER:

A 1940 photograph of the M.S. Forester, iced down after a trip from Hoonah to Juneau. The Forester was one of the ranger boats, later used as a mail boat in Southeast.

Photo by Anthony Thomas

Sourdough Notes

Quarterly newsletter of the employees of the
USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region
PO Box 21628
Juneau, AK 99802-1628
www.fs.fed.us/r10

SUMMER, 2000

PRODUCED BY:

Sandy Frost: Editor
Curtis Edwards: Writing/Graphics
Winnie Weber: Printing Specialist

SUBMISSIONS:

Sourdough Notes is a way for employees of the Alaska Region stay in touch and share their stories. If you would like to submit an article or photograph, have a good idea for a story, or have a suggestion or comment, WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU. Please contact:

Sandy Frost, Editor
Thorne Bay Ranger District
Tongass National Forest
PO Box 19001
Thorne Bay, AK 99919-0001
(907) 828-3202
sfrost@fs.fed.us

Please keep in mind that articles should be no more than 800 words and may be edited. Submitted articles may not all be printed.

Photos submitted electronically - scanned or digital - need to be about 5" X 7", at least 200 dots per inch resolution (300 dpi is best) and saved as grayscale TIF graphics.

Hello everyone.

As some of you already know, I believe this time of tremendous change is also a period of tremendous opportunity for us. For the first time in nearly 50 years we do not have the obligation of long term timber contracts as a driving force in our management of the Alaskan national forests. By adjusting our plans according to the future we see, by building on the respect and goodwill our employees have generated in their communities, and by honoring our past and those that came before us, I believe we can continue building credibility and public trust.

Looking out 20 years I see the national forests in Alaska being valued mostly as global open space, as living classrooms or laboratories, as part of a national sense of place, for recreation, for specialty products including wood, and for traditional subsistence uses. Underneath all of this is healthy land and water - without that, we have nothing.

Based on this view, we will focus on four areas in the next one to three years:

Communities: We will work with communities in and around the national forests to help them define their future, achieve their goals and improve their quality of life.

Alaska Natives: We will recognize the heritage and unique legal status of Alaska Natives. We will work to build closer relationships with Alaska Native leaders, federally recognized tribes, Alaska Native organizations, adjacent Alaska Native landowners and individuals in the Alaska Native community.

Recreation and Tourism: We will help make ecologically sustainable recreation and tourism a steady, reliable part of the economies of Southeast and Southcentral Alaskan communities.

Effective Organization: We will clearly define roles, expectations and priorities; continue to improve communication; and have outstanding leaders working throughout the Region. More trust, authority, responsibility and resources will be placed into the hands of those closest to the land and our publics. Those entrusted with this increased responsibility will willingly seek advice and counsel from higher levels of the organization.

At the same time that our focus is changing I expect budgets, programs and our organization to also continue to change. These could be trying times. It's important that we see this new focus as a beginning rather than an end. Even more important is that it is a beginning with an end in mind.

I encourage you to read more about this "View from Here" on our intranet, and I welcome your thoughts and comments.

Rick



Electronic Wetlands

New CD-ROM is a first

The information age touched down in the wet and boggy parts of Alaska courtesy of an interagency agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service. The two agencies worked together to map the wetlands of Southeast and Southcentral Alaska, digitize the map information and then squeeze it all onto a CD-ROM.

This is the first time in Alaska that such extensive and detailed wetlands mapping has been completed over such a large area. The effort showed that wetlands cover about 21% of the Chugach National Forest and about 29% of the Tongass National Forest.

"That CD Rom represents thousands of hours of work," said Jonathan Hall, National Wetlands Inventory Coordinator for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Anchorage. Hall has overseen the mapping project since it began. "I'm proud of this effort: I know it will be used by many people for years to come, and that land and wildlife management will greatly benefit from the work."

"This is a great example of inter-agency cooperation," said the Forest Service's Alaska Regional Forester Rick Cables. "It's also an example of the federal agencies moving into the information age, where people can expect good, detailed maps on their computers that can be used to track change and to help make better informed decisions about public land."

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has gathered wetlands data since the 1980's. Digitizing - turning the maps into electronic data and images - began in 1995. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees identified wetlands on aerial photographs and then verified the data in the field.

The Forest Service paid to get the wetlands maps digitized. Exxon Valdez oil spill settlement money paid for digitizing about 70% of the maps needed. Terry Brock, who led

the digitizing project for the Regional Office of the Forest Service in Juneau, estimated it cost .005 cents per acre to change the paper information to electronic data.

"This is an excellent, comprehensive inventory of the wetlands," said Brock. "Plus the CD Rom also holds educational tools to help people recognize and better understand the functions and values of wetlands around their home."

To date, only about 33% of Alaska has wetland mapping completed and about 40% of that is in a digital



format. Mapping similar to this project has been completed for most of Alaska's population centers, transportation corridors, the North Slope, Tanana Valley, and other areas scattered throughout the state..

The CD-ROM has been distributed to Forest Service offices, plus other partners and tribes. For more information, visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's national wetlands website at www.nwi.fws.gov or contact Terry Brock at the Regional Office of the Forest Service in Juneau, (907) 586-7863.

Dr. Kessler is New WFEW Director

Dr. Wini Kessler is returning to the Forest Service as the director of wildlife, fisheries, ecology, watershed and subsistence for the Alaska Region Office in Juneau.



"I'm thrilled at the chance to come back where my career started," said Kessler. "It's a special place. I'm also glad to be coming back to the Forest Service." Dr. Kessler is currently a professor and the Chair of the Department of Forestry at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George.

Dr. Kessler began her Forest Service years studying wildlife responses to timber harvest as a seasonal worker on the old North Prince of Wales Ranger District in 1978. "I loved working there," she said.

Her career in the Forest Service has included a stint as the Alaska Region Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Relationships Coordinator in Juneau, and—all in Washington D.C.—the jobs of National Wildlife Ecologist, Assistant Director of Research and Development for New Perspectives, and Principal Rangeland Ecologist for the Forest Service. From those distin-

guished roles, she was hired away by the University of Northern British Columbia in 1993.

Recently, the Wildlife Society recognized Dr. Kessler with a Special Service Award (1999) and the State University of New York requested her as the fifteenth C.E. Farnsworth Memorial Lecturer (1998). She was named British Columbia Academic of the Year (1997).

Dr. Kessler's husband, Warren Eastland, who has a doctorate in wildlife ecology, will move with her to Juneau.

Dr. Kessler said she and her husband are outdoor-oriented: they love to fish, hunt, hike, and kayak. She says coho fishing is her favorite. "I used to be pretty successful," she said, laughing.



Graphic File Formats

What a lot of us just call “pictures” can exist electronically in any of more than 40 different file formats. They are identified by the “extension”, the letters that follow the period in the file name.

When you scan something or edit a digital photo, you’re working with a *bitmapped* or pixel-based image. It’s made up of tiny blocks of color – pixels – and you edit by erasing, replacing or changing those pixels. Bitmapped graphics tend to be larger files (more bytes) and they get grainy or fuzzy if you enlarge them very much. File types include .tif, .bmp, .gif, .jpg and .png.

If you draw in a program like Corel Draw or Adobe Illustrator, you’re creating a *vector* image. GIS maps and engineering (CAD) drawings are usually vector images. They are much smaller files (fewer bytes), can be blown up to billboard size and still be clear and sharp, and are edited by select-

ing and altering individual lines or shapes in the drawing. Vector graphics have nice smooth lines and colors, but lack the shading and color details of a photo. File types include .ai, .eps, .wmf, .drw, and .dxf.

Graphics for high quality *printing* need to be higher resolution (300 dots per inch for photos) which means they will be larger files. (A full-page color photograph, at 300 dots per inch, would fill up 20 floppy disks). Graphics for the web or Powerpoint presentations can be much lower resolution, usually 72 or 96 dots per inch, the resolution of most computer screens.

For graphics that will be printed, TIF (tag information format) and EPS (encapsulated postscript) are the best formats to use. (The .bmp format is okay too, but more specific to Windows based computers). TIF’s are bitmapped images and are an industry standard for photographs and fine art.

For web graphics, the formats of choice are GIF (pronounced JIFF), JPG and, more recently, PNG. To make the file size smaller, they are all “compressed”. Once you compress the image, you lose a little of its quality. The more you compress, the more you lose, which starts to show as fuzzy edges and details or a dirty/blotchy look. Because GIF’s have limited colors they are best for clipart type graphics (and okay for black and white photos). For color photographs JPG’s are best. PNG is a new, improved replacement for GIF that is gaining popularity.

Luckily, many current programs will recognize and accept a lot of the different graphics formats. But if you want to minimize troubles with transferring or printing graphics, you should try to stick with these recommended and most common types.

500 Pages of Good Advice

If you haven’t seen it yet, the Forest Service Health and Safety Code Handbook, that familiar collection of pages in the scuffed-up green binder, has been completely revised. It’s smaller, cleaner and still the best source of advice and tips for working safely. The last full revision was over 20 years ago.

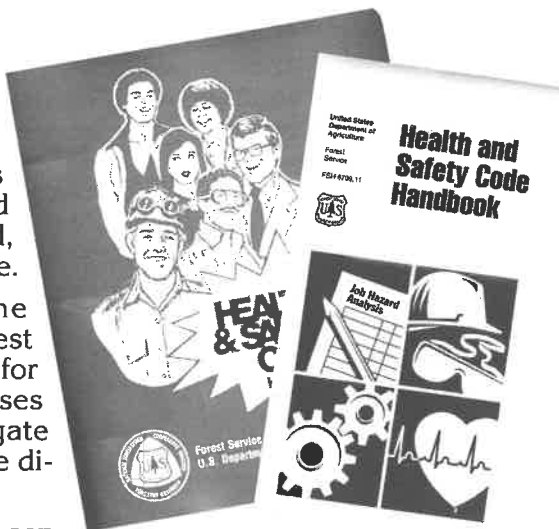
The first edition of the handbook, called “Safety Rules”, appeared in 1938. The Chief at the time was concerned with the number of accidents and injuries among the workers of both the Forest Service and Civilian Conservation Corps. He asked his head of personnel to try to do something about the problem and the result was a 47 page booklet of commonsense direction like “. . . be wide awake and alert, and watch out for fellow employees.” Over the next 40 years the handbook was revised 6 times to keep

up with the changing times. This edition is an impressive 503 pages, a reflection of the complexity of our jobs and work environment and the result of lessons learned, sometimes at the cost of a life.

The Handbook sets the safety standard for the Forest Service and is the reference for preparing job hazard analyses and a handy help for tailgate safety sessions. Some of the direction in it is mandatory.

In the new handbook, any sentence in ***bold italic*** type means a life was lost because a standard operating procedure or safety practice wasn’t followed.

Printed copies of the new Handbook (4” X 7-1/2” X 1-1/4” thick) can be ordered from Landover Warehouse Co., Central Supply, 3222



The new version of the Health and Safety Code Handbook is designed to be easier to carry and use.

Hubbard Road, Landover, MD 20785. The form number is FSH 6709.11. The Handbook is also available electronically.

“Is there a quiet more deafening than being in the woods just before daybreak, with fat snowflakes gently sifting down through the tree canopy, not a hint of breeze? It seems that all the sounds of the world are absorbed by the snow, nothing is moving... But if you sit there long enough, eventually you hear the hiss of snowflakes colliding with the trees, or hitting the frozen ground and breaking apart.”

For radio listeners in Juneau or in Ketchikan, this gentle and beautiful observation about winter in the woods was brought to them by, perhaps, an unlikely source – the Juneau District Ranger, Pete Griffin. For the last year and one-half, Griffin has been bringing his wry and delightful outdoor musings to listeners in northern and southern Southeast Alaska through the weekly *Tongass Trails* radio program.

Started by the Ketchikan Ranger District almost ten years ago, the radio program has been passed down through a number of dedicated communicators. As acting District Ranger on the Ketchikan – Misty Ranger District in 1998, Griffin saw the value of continuing this popular program. “It helps give listeners the idea that we’re not all plain, old bureaucrats in the agency. I hope that it inspires folks to get out in the woods and

appreciate their surroundings,” Griffin said.

In spring of 1999 Griffin moved to Juneau as the new District Ranger. And the radio program moved with him. Working with KTOO radio in Juneau, Griffin began recording a series of 3 – 5 minute programs for weekly airing.

Griffin draws his inspiration from his outdoor experiences. “The program gives me a reason to get out in the woods and look at things with fresh eyes,” he explained. His programs are based on personal observations and experiences and rarely stray into the controversial or contentious. Rather, he weaves stories of tree rings and Galileo, of poetry and mayflies. His programs are celebrations of the natural world and

“I hope that it inspires folks to get out in the woods and appreciate their surroundings.”

are generously spiced with self-deprecating humor. “I have a lot of fun doing the program. Stepping out of your normal role and doing something completely different can be awfully rewarding,” Griffin explains.

Tim Berry, of KRBD radio station in Ketchikan, captured the appeal of the program, “Pete’s program is a good example of the best kind of thing that we do. We have a member of the community sharing his expertise and passion with listeners.” Berry reported, “People love the program! When Pete moved, listeners let us know that they missed the program.”



Juneau District Ranger Pete Griffin’s popular *Tongass Trails* radio program can be heard every Tuesday in Juneau on KTOO.

Tongass Trails is aired on KTOO Radio in Juneau on Tuesdays at 6:20 am and 7:20 am, and on KRBD Radio in Ketchikan during the Tuesday Morning Edition. Additionally, KRBD plans to air the programs over the internet within the next year.

So, the next time that you’re in Juneau and you see a man hunkered over a porcupine quill or belly-deep in a beaver pond sniffing the lodge, don’t worry – it might just be the District Ranger gathering material for his next radio program.



Yakutat - A World Between

An interview with Meg Mitchell, Yakutat District Ranger

Miles and miles of sandy beaches; the largest glacial complex in North America; a mixing pot of cultures; world-class steelhead fishing. This is the unique Yakutat Ranger District (YRD), the northernmost on the Tongass National Forest. As District Ranger Meg Mitchell explains, "the look and feel of the place is a little like the Tongass, a little like the Chugach and a lot like nothing else!"

Established in 1986, the 1.2 million acre Yakutat District includes coastal beaches, level floodplain, and soaring mountains. The small permanent workforce at the District deals with large issues and works collaboratively with the community to resolve difficult issues such as the carrying capacity of the land for hunting and fishing, managing off-road vehicle use, and supporting community development.

Meg Mitchell carved out time from her busy schedule to answer a few questions about her district.



Yakutat RD scenes. Above: ice on Harlequin Lake. Right: one of Yakutat's well known beaches.

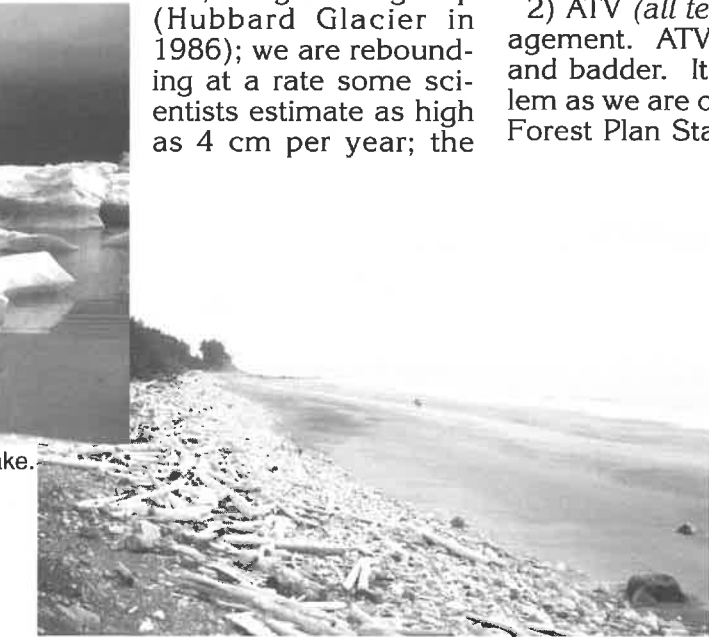
What factor(s) make the YRD unique within the Region?

Small District We're the smallest district personnel-wise, with six permanent employees, one NTE and a law enforcement officer covering 1.2 million acres. We all wear multiple hats; we don't have "departments" and when the phone rings, whoever is not busy picks it up.

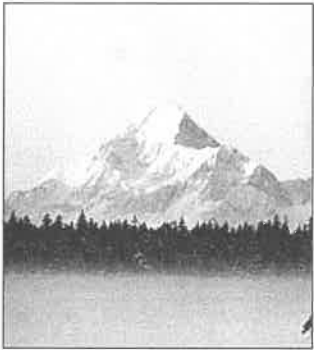
Beaches! 48 coastline miles of sandy beach with crashing waves, no permanent developments and few souls in sight... it's wondrous... I imagine it's like a cold-water version of the California coast before there were people... people surf and body board here in 4 mil wetsuits.

More than Tourists People live for months at a time on the National Forest at temporary fishcamps, outfitter camps, and subsistence camps. The setnet fishery here means we have the second highest number of lands special uses and workload in the region. With two Alaska Airline flights a day, there are also plenty of fishermen or hunters arriving continuously for six months out of the year.

A Dynamic Land The land is young and constantly changing and moving. Earthquakes are fairly routine; the glaciers gallop (Hubbard Glacier in 1986); we are rebounding at a rate some scientists estimate as high as 4 cm per year; the



ocean pushes land in, while the streams push it out... Since I've been here, the Lost River found it's way into the Situk and both have moved about a mile.



Bountiful Fish and Wildlife The productivity of this land for fish, wildlife and people is amazing. All the foreland streams are primary salmon producers and YRD

streams produce 15% of all the coho salmon on the Tongass National Forest. The wildlife and people followed. Yakutat is historically a Tlingit stronghold with each stream supporting one or more villages. Today, Yakutat is known throughout the world for it's fishing and hunting bounty.

What are biggest management challenges for the district?

1) Situk River Management and other carrying capacity issues (sportfishing and hunting). We are at capacity for commercial sportfishing and commercial hunting or very close, especially during peak seasons.

2) ATV (*all terrain vehicles*) Management. ATVs are getting bigger and badder. It's our biggest problem as we are out of compliance w/ Forest Plan Standard & Guidelines for streams and wetlands.

3) The changing and challenging face of subsistence. Yakutat is 4th of all Southeast Alaska communities in the pounds/person/year of wild food harvest.

4) Collaborative processes (Situk planning, ATVs, Subsistence, Ophir Creek) take lots of care and...but it's the only way I know to make progress. It's also very deeply rewarding when there's a sudden spurt of momentum and everyone you've been working with realizes it together.

Interpretive Writing

Good writing is difficult. Interpretive writing, because it has to convey so much information, create images or evoke feelings in just a few words, is particularly tough.

There are as many ways of writing as there are writers but for most the process is 90% thinking and 10% scratching. When you set out to create interpretive text – for signs, brochures, labels, programs – you might be just as well off to take a walk, go for a drive or sit by the water as you would be to grab a pencil or boot up your computer. But before you tackle the words you'll need to take care of these preliminaries:

- Research your topic – read, talk to people, study what's been done
- Decide who your audience is – very important. Who are you mostly writing for?
- Decide on the length –usually based on the audience (and attention span), available space, the topic and the setting where the message will be read
- Organize your messages – summarize your points and put them in priority
- Talk to your "client" – that person with the final say or the one reviewing and approving your work. Find out what they expect and like and how much control they want.

Now you can take that inspirational walk. Then it will be time to:

PUT INTO WORDS INFORMATION FOR WRITERS

WRITE – get something down to start with.

EDIT – rearrange, trim it back, try other words

REVIEW – ask your client, friends and coworkers to look it over

REWRITE – use the good suggestions you get

REVIEW AGAIN – this time try people from your target audience

REWRITE – unless, of course, everyone loves it by now

READ IT OUT LOUD – this can be very revealing.

EDIT AGAIN – or at least have another look

LET IT SIT – an hour, a day, a week

TAKE A LAST LOOK – any way to make it even shorter or cleaner?

As you write you should strive for:

- The fewest possible words – try to make every one count
- The heart of the matter – get straight to the point
- The active voice – "this DID that", rather than "that WAS DONE by this"
- Simplicity – Einstein explained his theory of relativity by asking us to imagine that we could ride on a piece of light
- Respect – don't write down to your audience . . . arrogance shows

Interesting but Useless Trivia Corner

This writing tips column was formerly called The Catbird Seat. Before we leave that name behind . . .

The Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang defines the term, "in the catbird seat" as meaning "in a position of ease." The phrase probably started being used in the South in the 19th century. The catbird is a relative of the mockingbird found in the Southern

U.S. Like most birds, it likes to sit on a high perch out of reach of predators.

The phrase caught the public eye in the 1940's when James Thurber wrote a short story called "The Catbird Seat" In the story, a meek accountant is driven to contemplate murdering a fellow employee who won't stop babbling trite catch phrases, including, you guessed it, "in the catbird seat." The babbler, so the story goes, picked up the phrase from the sportscaster Red Barber.

And you should keep in mind that:

- Most readers aren't interested in the mission, objectives or jargon of the Forest Service, but they are interested in the forests and what's happening to them.
- Readers deal with information overload every day. They want you to get to the point quickly.
- Your goal as an interpretive writer is to present a picture or concept in a clear, uncluttered way so that the reader can react and draw conclusions. Don't tell the audience that a tree is majestic or a river is mighty. Give them the ingredients and let them cook the stew.
- The job of the scientist who might help you with your research is to be specific and accurate. An interpreter's job is to convey an idea or message with a few simple, expressive words. The two don't always mesh. Accuracy you must have. Specificity you can often do without. For example, you say "Blue bottlefish spawn in the fall." The biologist says that actual spawning times vary according to water levels, temperatures and hormonal levels in the fish. You are accurate – they do spawn in the fall. You just aren't as specific as you could be.

Happy writing. Any time you are stuck, think about riding on that piece of light.



Brazilian Scientists Visit Copper River Delta

Massive jabiru storks and minute sandpipers may seem to have little in common, but for a small team of Brazilian biologists, they connected two very different worlds. The scientists came from a land of giant river otters and school bus-length snakes to learn about an Alaskan world of teeming shorebirds and schooling salmon.

Angela Tresinari and Laurenz Pinder from The Nature Conservancy – Brazil, and Adelberto Eberhard, from the Ecotropica Foundation, visited the Copper River Delta and the Cordova Ranger District this spring. They were hosted by Jan Engert and Valdis Mezainis of the Washington Office of International Programs.

The Brazilian biologists are advocates for the Pantanal – a wetland the size of Florida stretching between western Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay. The Pantanal is home to over 650 species of birds, including laughing falcons, and giant jabiru

storks, and eighty species of mammals, including the world's largest rodent, the capybara, and the reclusive jaguar. But this "Everglades" of Brazil is little known by outsiders and little understood by scientists. Most of the wetland is in private hands. Only 1% of it is protected.

"The Nature Conservancy and the Ecotropica Foundation, their local non-governmental organization partner, are currently involved in planning for the Pantanal National Park and surrounding reserves," explained Val Mezainis, director of International Programs. The visit to learn more about the management, research and environmental education on the Copper River Delta was "an excellent opportunity to share information, learn from each other, and provide new perspectives as the Brazilians conduct their planning," according to Mezainis.

The Forest Service will be helping The Nature Conservancy's ecoregional planning process. "Dur-

ing the coming year, Fred Everest, retired Research Hydrologist with the Pacific Northwest Research Station, will be working with partners to develop an aquatic classification analysis to identify critical areas within the watershed," said Mezainis. "Once the planning process is complete, we hope to continue in an advisory role during the implementation phases," Mezainis said.

Cal Baker, Cordova District Ranger, and Dan Logan, Cordova Wildlife Staff, were instrumental in making the visit a success. As Logan explained, "I think the real value of these types of programs is to exchange ideas with people struggling with the same issues from other countries which share our migratory flyways. It makes us realize that we're not the only place with these issues and that we can work together with other countries to maintain all the pieces of the flyway."

FSL helps London TV crew

An old Alaskan story – the Lituya Bay wave - was re-discovered by the British Broadcasting Corporation this spring, and Forestry Sciences Laboratory botanist Ellen Anderson was asked to be part of a program being produced for BBC television.

In July of 1958 a massive landslide at the head of Lituya Bay, in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, created a 1700 foot "splash wave", one of the largest ever observed in the world. Boats anchored in the bay when it happened were carried over an island and out to sea. One of the survivors of that wild ride – who will also be filmed for the BBC program – went on to become Captain of the Forest Service's *Sitka Ranger*.

In a little bit of a twist, the story being captured for British television

began several years before the 1958 landslide. Research then was showing that a similar catastrophic event had happened before – that giant waves were not new to Lituya Bay. The evidence is in the rings of trees around the bay and Ellen Anderson will be the on-camera expert explaining the story in the tree rings, providing the footage survives the edit.

Alaska again captures a piece of the world's imagination and the Forest Service is part of the story being told. The program will be a science documentary, likely to be aired by BBC television more than once.

RECENT COMMENTS

(from customer comment cards)

"Both officers were simply terrific! Will not easily forget the scene as they kayaked away to the wilderness. Thank you. I'll pay my taxes this year."

"The Tongass . . . seems to me to be among the most beautiful places in the world. I am counting on you to see that it remains as such."

"Excellent job. Helpful information sent. I'm excited about coming to Alaska!"

"The [Forestry Sciences Lab] library has provided outstanding support for my work on the Tongass."

"Very quick turnaround time. Thank you."

"All the field offices in Alaska are seriously understaffed. While the Cordova Ranger District was able to process my application in a timely, professional manner, other Ranger Districts in Alaska have been difficult to work with due to chronic understaffing."

What do you see as the future of the district?

1) The community of Yakutat desires a shift to tourism, away from the consumptive toward the non-consumptive because it agrees with their subsistence lifestyles and desire to share and keep alive the culture. There continues to be a shifting economic picture here as commercial fishing takes an economic "hit." Management of the surrounding National Forest plays a key role to help enable the community's vision for itself in ways it can sustain, not just economically but socially and culturally.

2) We won't have more employees. Being this small means that we rely heavily on help from SO and RO (especially in special uses) staff... we can't afford isolationism and we have some folks we've "adopted" as part of our district team. We'll get more done by helping others - expanding partners and enabling groups, guides and outfitters, organizations, other governments and other agencies.

Can you list a few district accomplishments that you are especially proud of?

Gosh, what ranger doesn't like to brag about their staff? I think it's amazing what seven people accomplish in a year. We're doing some excellent hands-on fishery and wildlife management and monitoring. We've cut into the 10 year backlog of projects including some old special use controversies, commercial bear guiding and permitting issues, and collecting Situk use data.

I guess I'm most proud of how well we work together, the positive attitude of every employee and the productivity. I'm proud of our relationship with other governments.

One of the coolest moments in my three years here was helping to find the main village on the Akwe River that had been abandoned about 1865. Forest Service staff and archeologist Kathy Brown, a National Park Service archeologist, and local tribal members found it. It was an honor to bear witness to people connecting with their past.

(The Yakutat District website is at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/yakutat/yakutah.html>)

Enjoying the Ride

Merrily Jones jumps into new technology

Twenty three years ago if you paid Merrily Jones a visit at work, you would have found her at the Forest Service office in Petersburg, parked behind a typewriter. Today you'll still find her at the Petersburg office, but the typewriter is now a computer, and the documents she produces exist only in cyberspace.

Merrily has ridden the changing times and technology from typing pool to webmaster, a task that takes up most of her time as public affairs specialist for the Tongass National Forest.

Never afraid of a challenge, Merrily first tackled web work in late 1998 when there was a need to combine several existing web pages into one for all of the Tongass. "I was part of the organizing group for those first sites for the Stikine Area," Merrily explains, "but I was pretty new to building web pages. Still, somebody needed to get it done and I was available and interested."

Merrily used the work of others, the help of a computer specialist and her own quickly learned skill with web page editing software to create the new Tongass page. "The graphics – the look and feel of the page – were done by the Chugach Design Group," she explains. "I learned mostly by diving in and doing it." Now Merrily is using Photoshop to create and prepare web graphics, editing HTML code at times, and starting to work with Javascript, one of the newer ways of putting flair into



Merrily Jones is webmaster for the Tongass National Forest. Names of her assistants (in the background) were not available at press time.

web pages."I'm interested", she says. "I look forward to it."

In addition to the regular maintenance of the Tongass internal and external web site, Merrily is also working on a new page for the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center and new pages about the recreational cabins on the Tongass. She helps others develop FSWEB pages and is even getting tapped in her private life to create pages for local community groups. As a 36 year resident of Petersburg, she knows the community well.

"It's funny, but I wasn't even online at home until a few months ago," Merrily confides. That, combined with her quick trip to becoming web savvy, has led her to two conclusions: "I think the web deserves more attention than the Forest Service seems to be giving it," she says. "I also believe you could spend about your whole life online."

(Merrily Jones can be reached in Petersburg at 907-772-5801. The Tongass National Forest home page is at www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass)



Taking a Close Look . . . at 2.3 Million Acres

The Misty Fiords inventory

During a visit to the University of Alaska Fairbanks last November, Governor Tony Knowles cataloged the 50,000th mammal specimen in the University Museum's collection. It was the heather vole, a species found in British Columbia but never before identified in Alaska.

A few months before, Forest Service seasonal employees Joni Reese and Jackie Heinen collected that specimen. They were working in Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness (MFMNW), helping with one of the most comprehensive wilderness inventory and monitoring efforts in the national forest system. The project, now in its fourth season, was developed by Pat Cook of the Ketchikan-Misty Ranger District, with the support of management interested in quality wilderness stewardship.

"We are putting together an observational record of existing conditions", explains Cook, "an inventory that's ecosystem driven. It is not a research project, but it will help identify research needs. Having good baseline inventory data is critical in trying to detect change over time." Pat estimates it will take another 6-7 years to finish the initial inventory work.

Knowing that inventory and monitoring was a high priority for wilderness nationally, Pat saw a chance to go beyond the smaller and more focused efforts happening elsewhere in the country. He went to resource specialists for help creating a list of indicators and organized the program around value comparison units, or VCU's.

Each summer teams of two tackle one VCU at a time, inventorying wildlife, fisheries, recreation, heritage, aquatic, and other resource needs. They travel mostly by kayak, canoe or on foot, which Pat believes



Summer employees travel mostly by kayak, canoe or on foot and practice leave-no-trace as they gather baseline data on the Misty Fiords National Monument.

makes it easier to make careful observations and pay attention to details. It is also a way to lead by example by practicing Leave-NO-Trace principles and setting a standard for wilderness travel and use.

This summer there is only one crew – Amber Ashenhurst and Chris S'gro. For the first time, others in the field – kayaking interpreters and cabin maintenance workers – will also assist with these management goals as they have time. "It's definitely a young person's job", says Cook, noting that just the wilderness travel and camping can be demanding enough. "It also takes a hard-to-find mix of field, observational and writing skills – someone who's as comfortable putting together a report as they are camping in brown bear country, portaging a canoe or kayaking in big water."

The Misty Fiords inventory and monitoring program is different because of the breadth of information being collected and the fact that existing conditions are being carefully documented in a relatively untouched wilderness area. "We not only measure and record existing

recreation sites," notes Cook, "but also potential sites – places we feel have a good chance of seeing use in the future." In 1999 the program won the national Aldo Leopold Award for best overall wilderness program management.

The information from this careful, once-over look at how things are in Misty Fiords will likely be part of the foundation for planning for the area and an important reference point for management activities later on. "In many areas," Pat says, "managers are working to restore natural conditions – to bring things back closer to how they were before major human expansion and influence. In a lot of cases no one is really sure what those conditions were." In Misty Fiords Pat Cook, Wilderness Resource specialists and a growing list of summer employees are working hard to make that valuable knowledge available for future generations.

(Pat Cook can be reached at (907) 228-4121 or pcook@fs.fed.us)

Exploring Environmental Justice

Alaska Region's first workshop is a notable success



Dolly Garza (left) is an Associate Professor of Fisheries with the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. She spoke on native perspectives of environmental justice.



Above: a panel on subsistence led by Bob Shroeder of the Forestry Sciences Laboratory



Left: time for questions during one of the discussions at the Environmental Justice Workshop in Ketchikan

Almost ninety people, representing ten federal and state agencies and universities, thirteen tribes, and five community groups, attended the Region's first Environmental Justice Workshop in Ketchikan this spring. Hosted by the Forest Service and the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), the workshop explored issues surrounding environmental justice, a term brought to life in President Clinton's 1994 Executive Order "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations". Although similar workshops are taking place elsewhere in the country, this was the first for Alaska and the contacts and support of CCTHITA made it unique. The workshop was so successful it is being considered as a national model for the Forest Service.

Environmental justice is "The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." The Executive Order focuses attention on the human health and environmental conditions in minority and low-income communities. It directs that no group of people should bear more than their fair share of the negative consequences of industrial, municipal and

commercial operations, or federal, state, local, and tribal programs or policies affecting the environment.

Participants at the March workshop discussed the history of the environmental justice movement, barriers Alaskan Natives encounter in the natural resource decision-making process, executive orders and statutes, subsistence resources, and the context of environmental justice in the NEPA process. The group raised and answered questions about the important step of applying environmental justice policies to project decisions, and explored the relationship of the executive order to tribal consultation and various civil rights, environmental, and Alaska native subsistence regulations and statutes.

Better communication surfaced as one of the common interests at the workshop, particularly in situations where there are differences in cultural values, perspectives, and experiences. Learning, listening, understanding, empathy, patience, and feedback were all felt to be a necessary part of good communication, as well as regular encounters and day-to-day practice.

The 2-day meeting also led to these recommendations:

- Use personal contact and two-way dialogue. Listen to concerns. Use common language and avoid agency jargon.
- Work toward more public involvement BEFORE the draft (NEPA document).
- Consider native protocol when organizing groups; remember one tribe cannot/does not speak for another and that each TRIBE needs to be represented
- Go to experts at the local community for help with guidelines (such as those for special forest products).
- Have Forest Service liaisons in the Tribes, much like the Tribal Liaisons in the Forest Service.
- Take the time needed for communication and understanding. Consult to find the issues that need to be addressed

The concept of environmental justice is relatively easy to grasp. Putting it into practice is more complicated. Most at the Environmental Justice Workshop agreed that communication was one of the most important parts of the formula. Communication is what the workshop was mostly about.

