

FISCAL YEAR 2004



Tlingit Elder, Elizabeth Katasse, embodies the vibrant Alaska Native culture found throughout Southeast Alaska. (photo by USDA-FS, A. Atkinson)

Promoting respect, knowledge and understanding . . .

The Tongass National Forest continued its efforts over the past year to incorporate the unique cultural heritage, legal status and traditional knowledge of Alaska Natives into its programs and processes. One event spotlighting these efforts was the retrieval of Alaska Native artifacts from Washington State University. A team from the university conducted archeological investigations in Southeast Alaska more than 40 years ago. During their exploration they recovered Tlingit artifacts near Hoonah. Last year, members of the Tongass returned to the university to re-examine, re-categorize and retrieve the thousands of items and returned them home to the Hoonah community. During the university's analysis, a world-renowned archeologist determined that some of the collection dated back more than 10,000 years. This was significant in validating the oral tradition of Hoonah Tlingit elders who claim they have existed in the area from "time immemorial" or forever. This was truly a case of western science confirming traditional beliefs. Perhaps even more valuable were the efforts of Tongass employees to return these items to their rightful home. Currently, the Forest Service is working with the Hoonah Indian Association to display some of the more culturally significant discoveries in the new Hoonah Heritage Center.

Serving the people of Southeast Alaska . . .

During fiscal 2004, Tongass National Forest staff continued their critical endeavor to improve the health, stability, quality of life, economic vitality and adaptability of communities in Southeast Alaska. They carried out this important task by working closely with the public to help them achieve local objectives and foster good will. A vital part of this ongoing pursuit is the Southeast Alaska Resource Advisory Committee program which was formed in 2002. The three committees, located in Yakutat, Ketchikan, Wrangell and Petersburg, are composed of members from local communities that are an integral part of the 17-million acre Tongass National Forest. These committees work hand-in-hand with Tongass employees on projects such as trails and roads maintenance, soil productivity improvement, ecosystem health, watershed restoration and management, fish and wildlife enhancement and invasive species programs. For more than two years, these groups have worked in partnership to fund projects on the Forest under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000. More than \$1 million dollars in beneficial projects like fisheries habitat improvement in Yakutat, trails in Wrangell, campground restoration in Petersburg, and a picnic shelter in Ketchikan have been approved for funding so far.



Art King and Mike Bowen sort oyster spat at the Naukati Shellfish Nursery on Prince of Wales Island, Alaska. (photo by C. King)

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